

Self-Disclosure in Interpersonal Communication among Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in One-on-One Learning

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ABSTRACT

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Communication characteristics of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder influence the process of self disclosure in interpersonal communication. This study aims to analyze the role of the one-on-one class learning system at SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya in supporting students' self-disclosure based on the dimensions of self-disclosure proposed by Joseph A. DeVito. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques including in depth interviews, observation, and literature study. The study found that the one-on-one learning approach creates intensive and supportive interpersonal relationships that help students gradually develop self-disclosure. The process is influenced by emotional conditions, feelings of comfort, and closeness with teacher assistants, and is expressed through both verbal and nonverbal communication. The dimensions of valence, as well as purpose and intention, were found to be more relevant in the self-disclosure process of ASD students, while the dimensions of amount, accuracy, and depth have not developed optimally due to students' communication limitations.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process of message exchange that enables individuals to convey information, feelings, and needs to others, thereby creating mutual understanding in social interactions (Supriani et al., 2023). The effectiveness of communication is influenced by an individual's ability to understand and interpret messages according to the intended purpose of the interaction (Yizengaw, 2022). Furthermore, communication plays an important role in shaping social relationships and individuals' interactions with their surrounding environment (Satria et al., 2025). However, communication skills develop differently in each individual, resulting in varying levels of communicative competence (Syaffira & Agus, 2023). In individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), difficulties in communication and social interaction may affect their ability to understand social situations, maintain conversations, and express emotions openly (Husadani & Wiliyanto, 2024).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition characterized by differences in cognitive, behavioral, socio-emotional, and sensory aspects (Rakhmatin & Amilia, 2018). ASD is also associated with neurobiological disorders accompanied by repetitive behavioral patterns and limitations in social interaction (Ilmiah et al., 2021). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (cited in Dewi & Morawati, 2024), the prevalence of autism in Indonesia has increased from 1 per 1,000 individuals to 8 per 1,000 individuals, exceeding the global average of 6 per 1,000 individuals. This condition indicates the importance of appropriate learning approaches for students with ASD, as barriers in social interaction may influence their ability to engage in self-disclosure when expressing feelings, experiences, and personal information (DeVito, 2013). Self-disclosure is an important aspect of interpersonal communication because it enables individuals to communicate emotions, needs, and personal

experiences, thereby facilitating mutual understanding and the development of interpersonal relationships. For students with ASD, the ability to disclose personal information supports emotional expression and helps teachers better understand their communication needs during the learning process. Self-disclosure refers to the verbal expression of thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences during interpersonal communication (Nasyar & Ahmad, 2020).

SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya is one of the inclusive schools implementing a one-on-one class learning system, in which one teacher assists one student individually. This learning system enables more intensive interpersonal interaction between teachers and students, which may support the development of self-disclosure among students with ASD. Previous studies have mainly discussed the social communication abilities of children with ASD in general, whereas studies focusing on self-disclosure in interpersonal communication within one-on-one learning settings remain limited, particularly in special education contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine the process of self-disclosure among students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in interpersonal communication within a one-on-one class learning system at SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya based on the dimensions of self-disclosure proposed by Joseph A. DeVito.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Disclosure and Interpersonal Communication

Self-disclosure is a form of interpersonal communication in which individuals share personal information, thoughts, feelings, and experiences with others to build mutual understanding and interpersonal closeness (DeVito, 2013). Effective interpersonal communication involves verbal and nonverbal interactions influenced by openness, empathy, supportiveness, and emotional comfort during social interactions (Aminah et al., 2024). According to Joseph A. DeVito, self-disclosure consists of the dimensions of amount, valence, accuracy, purpose, and depth, which describe how individuals express personal information during communication. These dimensions provide a framework for understanding how interpersonal communication develops through openness and mutual trust. In students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), communication limitations and difficulties in social interaction may influence the

development of each self-disclosure dimension, particularly in expressing emotions, conveying personal experiences, and responding appropriately during interpersonal communication. Therefore, DeVito's framework is relevant for analyzing how communication characteristics among students with ASD shape their self-disclosure process.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by limitations in social interaction, communication difficulties, repetitive behaviors, and differences in socio-emotional development (Dewi & Morawati, 2024). Individuals with ASD often experience challenges in verbal and nonverbal communication, including difficulties in maintaining conversations, expressing emotions, understanding social situations, and building interpersonal relationships (Nisa et al., 2025). Communication patterns among students with ASD tend to differ from those of typically developing individuals, requiring supportive learning approaches and individualized communication strategies to facilitate social interaction and emotional expression during the learning process.

Previous Studies & Research Gap

Previous studies have generally focused on social communication and interpersonal interaction among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), particularly regarding communication limitations, emotional expression, and adaptive learning approaches. However, studies specifically discussing the self-disclosure process of students with ASD within one-on-one learning systems remain limited, especially in special education contexts. The one-on-one class system allows more intensive and personalized interpersonal interaction between assistant teachers and students, which may create emotional comfort, trust, and communication support during learning activities. Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the self-disclosure process among students with ASD who develop close interpersonal relationships with assistant teachers within the one-on-one learning system at SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the process of self-disclosure

among students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in interpersonal communication within a one-on-one learning system at SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya. A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena based on participants' experiences and interactions in their natural setting (Sugiyono, 2013).

The participants consisted of three assistant teachers who had accompanied students with ASD for at least one year, three students with ASD from elementary, junior high, and vocational levels who possessed basic communication abilities, and the school principal. The three students and three assistant teachers were selected purposively because they met the research criteria and were directly involved in the one-on-one learning system. The inclusion of students from different educational levels was intended to provide a broader understanding of self-disclosure experiences, while assistant teachers with at least one year of experience were considered capable of providing comprehensive information regarding students' communication development.

Data were collected during active learning activities through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with assistant teachers, students with ASD, and the school principal. Observations were carried out directly during classroom learning activities to examine interpersonal communication patterns and self-disclosure behaviors among students with ASD. The collected data were analyzed using Joseph A. DeVito's theory of self-disclosure and the interactive analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (B.Miles et al., 2014). Data validity was ensured through technique triangulation by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation studies to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULT

Amount/Quantity

Overall, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) demonstrated limited but gradually developing self-disclosure, particularly when interpersonal closeness with assistant teachers had been established. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) tended to be more open when they had established

interpersonal closeness with assistant teachers who were perceived as providing a sense of comfort and security in communication.

"KVN is quite introverted, so sometimes we need to encourage him first before he starts telling stories. He still cannot open up to everyone, especially to people he is not close to." (Assistant Teacher of KVN, 2026/04/09)

Self-disclosure was demonstrated through verbal communication, such as answering simple questions, as well as nonverbal communication including eye contact, facial expressions, and body gestures. In the dimension of amount or quantity, the self-disclosure of students with ASD was still relatively limited and inconsistent.

Valence

The findings indicate that emotional conditions played a significant role in determining students' willingness to engage in self-disclosure. Emotional conditions influenced the self-disclosure process among students with ASD. Students showed more positive communication responses when they were in a comfortable emotional state and felt secure within their environment. In contrast, negative emotional conditions caused students to become silent, avoid communication, or refuse interaction.

"When he feels happy, he becomes very expressive, such as singing and showing various reactions. However, when he is upset, he may become silent or cry. His responses are also unpredictable because they depend on his emotional mood at that time." (Assistant Teacher of HKL, 2026/04/09)

Students with ASD expressed emotions more frequently through nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, crying, laughter, and specific gestures, rather than through structured verbal communication.

Accuracy and Honesty

Overall, the findings show that students still experienced difficulties in providing accurate and consistent information during interpersonal communication. The accuracy and honesty dimension of self-disclosure among students with ASD did not always reflect actual conditions. During interpersonal interactions, several students experienced difficulties in conveying information accurately and consistently.

"He was once asked whether he had eaten or not, and he answered, 'I already ate spinach soup,' even

though he was actually bringing grapes. After I told him, 'Come on, answer correctly,' he finally said, 'Yes, RZI brought grapes.'" (Assistant Teacher of RZI, 2026/04/09)

Students with ASD still required guidance from assistant teachers to provide responses that matched the intended questions.

Purpose and Intention

The findings suggest that self-disclosure primarily functioned as a means for students to express emotions, intentions, and personal needs during interpersonal communication. Self-disclosure among students with ASD functioned not only as a way of conveying personal information, but also as a form of emotional expression and communication of personal intentions and needs within interpersonal relationships.

"When his answer is correct, he feels relieved. However, when he cannot find the appropriate answer, he becomes anxious. Usually, I ask him to write down and explain what he wants." (Assistant Teacher of KVN, 2026/04/09)

Students tended to express their intentions and emotions through both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication during one-on-one learning activities.

Depth

Overall, students demonstrated relatively limited depth of self-disclosure, although gradual improvement was observed after sustained interpersonal interaction with assistant teachers. The self-disclosure of students with ASD tended to be simple and situational. Most information conveyed by the students was limited to daily experiences. However, several students began to demonstrate more personal forms of self-disclosure after intensive and consistent interactions with assistant teachers in the one-on-one learning system.

"Children like this cannot easily feel comfortable with everyone. Once they refuse something, they will continue to refuse it. They require sufficient interpersonal approaches because they tend to be more sensitive. Children with autism can sense whether our intentions toward them are sincere." (Assistant Teacher of KVN, 2026/04/09)

Students with ASD were more likely to disclose personal experiences when they felt comfortable and emotionally connected with their assistant teachers.

DISCUSSION

Amount and Quantity of Self-Disclosure

The findings suggest that repeated interpersonal interaction within the one-on-one learning system plays an important role in facilitating the gradual development of self-disclosure among students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Students were more likely to disclose personal information when they experienced emotional comfort and interpersonal closeness with assistant teachers (Satria et al., 2025). This condition supports Joseph A. DeVito's concept of self-disclosure, which explains that trust and interpersonal intimacy influence an individual's willingness to share personal information (DeVito, 2013). In the context of students with ASD, the intensive interaction pattern within one-on-one learning creates a more supportive communication environment that encourages students to express thoughts and experiences both verbally and nonverbally (Nasyar & Ahmad, 2020).

This condition is also consistent with previous studies stating that students with ASD often experience limitations in social communication and require adaptive interpersonal approaches to establish communicative comfort (Husadani & Wiliyanto, 2024). Differences in communication abilities among individuals also influence the development of communicative competence (Syaffira & Agus, 2023). The presence of assistant teachers who consistently accompany students during the learning process contributes to the gradual development of students' communication openness and interpersonal interaction.

Valence of Self-Disclosure

The findings indicate that emotional comfort is a key factor influencing students' willingness to engage in self-disclosure during interpersonal communication. Positive emotional states encouraged students to become more expressive, while negative emotional conditions reduced their willingness to communicate (Husadani & Wiliyanto, 2024). Emotional expression among students with ASD was more frequently demonstrated through nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, crying, laughter, gestures, and tone of voice, as communication enables individuals to convey feelings and emotional needs during social interaction (Supriani et al., 2023).

Previous research has emphasized that individuals with ASD commonly experience difficulties in expressing emotions through structured verbal communication (Husadani & Wiliyanto, 2024). Therefore, nonverbal communication becomes an important medium for expressing emotional states and interpersonal responses. Within the one-on-one learning system, assistant teachers were able to recognize students' emotional changes more effectively due to the intensive and individualized interaction process. This situation supported the development of emotional openness and facilitated students' self-disclosure processes during interpersonal communication (DeVito, 2013).

Accuracy and Honesty of Self-Disclosure

The findings indicate that difficulties in providing accurate responses should be understood as communication characteristics associated with ASD rather than intentional dishonesty. Several students experienced difficulties in providing accurate and consistent responses during interpersonal interactions, as the effectiveness of communication is influenced by an individual's ability to understand and interpret messages appropriately (Yizengaw, 2022). However, these conditions should not be interpreted as intentional dishonesty, but rather as limitations related to communication abilities, comprehension of questions, concentration levels, and emotional conditions (Syaffira & Agus, 2023).

Previous studies have explained that communication barriers among individuals with ASD may affect their ability to process information and respond appropriately during social interactions (Husadani & Wiliyanto, 2024). The one-on-one learning system allowed assistant teachers to guide students more intensively in understanding questions and expressing responses more accurately. Consequently, interpersonal communication within individualized learning environments contributed to the gradual improvement of students' communicative abilities.

Purpose and Intention of Self-Disclosure

The findings suggest that self-disclosure among students with ASD primarily serves as a communication strategy for expressing emotions, intentions, and personal needs during interpersonal interactions (Supriani et al., 2023). Students demonstrated self-disclosure when attempting to

communicate feelings, seek understanding, or express desired outcomes during learning interactions (Nasyar & Ahmad, 2020).

This condition reflects Joseph A. DeVito's perspective that self-disclosure serves interpersonal purposes beyond information exchange, including emotional expression and relationship development (DeVito, 2013). The individualized communication process within one-on-one learning enabled assistant teachers to better understand students' communicative intentions and emotional expressions. Emotional support, empathy, and responsive interactions from assistant teachers also contributed to students' willingness to communicate more openly during classroom activities.

Depth of Self-Disclosure

The findings imply that deeper self-disclosure among students with ASD develops gradually as interpersonal trust and emotional comfort are established through continuous one-on-one interaction (Syaffira & Agus, 2023). Most disclosed information was related to daily experiences and simple emotional expressions (Nasyar & Ahmad, 2020). Nevertheless, some students demonstrated more personal forms of self-disclosure after developing intensive and consistent interpersonal relationships with assistant teachers.

Interpersonal trust and emotional comfort became important factors influencing the development of deeper self-disclosure among students with ASD (DeVito, 2013). Previous studies also explained that individuals with ASD often require longer adaptation processes to establish emotional trust within interpersonal relationships. Through the one-on-one learning system, assistant teachers were able to provide consistent interpersonal approaches that supported students' emotional security and communication comfort. As a result, students gradually became more willing to share personal experiences and emotions during interpersonal interactions.

Overall, these findings indicate that the one-on-one learning system provides a supportive interpersonal environment that facilitates the gradual development of self-disclosure among students with ASD through emotional support, individualized communication, and consistent teacher-student interaction. Although the dimensions of self-disclosure have not developed optimally, students gradually demonstrated greater

openness when they experienced comfort, trust, and consistent interpersonal relationships with assistant teachers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the self-disclosure of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at SLB Harapan Bunda Surabaya developed gradually and was influenced by communication abilities, emotional conditions, emotional comfort, and the quality of interpersonal relationships with assistant teachers. Based on Joseph A. DeVito's dimensions of self-disclosure, the dimensions of valence and purpose appeared more prominently, whereas the dimensions of amount, accuracy, and depth had not yet developed optimally due to limitations in communication and social interaction abilities. Self-disclosure among students with ASD tended to be situational and was more frequently expressed through nonverbal communication. In addition, the findings showed that differences in educational levels, including elementary, junior high, and vocational levels, did not significantly affect the self-disclosure process. Instead, the intensity of interaction, emotional comfort, and interpersonal approaches within the one-on-one learning system became the primary factors supporting the gradual development of self-disclosure among students with ASD.

This study was limited to a small number of participants within one special school setting, which may not fully represent the broader characteristics of students with ASD in different educational environments. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to examine self-disclosure among students with ASD in broader educational contexts, involving more diverse participant characteristics and communication abilities. In addition, schools and educators are expected to strengthen interpersonal and individualized communication approaches to support the emotional comfort and communication development of students with ASD during the learning process.

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