

The Effect of Achievement Content Exposure and Social Comparison on Social Pressure Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Social Media; Generation Z; Social Comparison; Social Pressure

Social media usage among Indonesia's Generation Z evolved beyond information and entertainment, empowering users as content creators who frequently showcased academic, career, and lifestyle achievements. Repeated exposure to these success narratives shaped digital social success standards, potentially increasing social pressure through social comparison. This study investigated the influence of achievement content exposure intensity and social comparison tendencies on perceived social pressure among Generation Z. A quantitative survey collected data from 102 active Indonesian Generation Z social media users using Likert-scale questionnaires that measured exposure intensity, social comparison behaviors, and social pressure levels. The data were analyzed with Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling. Results showed that exposure intensity had no significant effect, while social comparison positively influenced social pressure. The model explained that more than 50% of social pressure variation among respondents. Findings highlighted individual comparison tendencies over exposure frequency, contributing to digital communication studies on Generation Z social media experiences.

1. Introduction

Social media has become a major part of our lives. As an internet-based platform, social media allows users to communicate, collaborate, and share information interactively (Qadir, 2024). It is undeniable that social media provides convenience access for society to support their daily activities. Based on DataReportal, there were around 180 million social media users in Indonesia, equivalent to 62.9% of the total population in Indonesia in October 2025 with an average usage time of more than 21 hours per week. This data shows that social media has become an integral part of Indonesian society because more than half of the Indonesian population are social media users. The high intensity of social media use by the Indonesian people proves that social media is not only a communication tool, but it is also plays a role in shaping mindsets, behavior, and how individuals form their views on themselves and others. Social media users in Indonesia come from various generations. Statista explains that Generation Z is the generation with the dominant population in Indonesia. Generation Z or gen Z or commonly referes to as centennials is the generation born between 1997-2012, namely after the millennial generatin or generation Y (Generasi & Kesiapannya, 2023).

Generation Z born, raised, and surrounded by technology, are also known as digital natives. This demonstrates distinct characteristics compared to previous generations. Social media, which has become an integral part of their lives, is used not only as a communication tool, but also a place for self-expression (Tatasari et al., 2025). According to Derlega (2002), self-disclosure or personal expression is the way an individual reveals thoughts, emotions, and experiences to others. On social media, this often manifests as sharing achievements in academic, career, and lifestyle domains.

As digital natives, Generation Z faces high intensity of exposure to various content, including achievement narratives. Achievement content typically highlights only the best aspects of an individual's life, presented attractively. However, such high exposure can have both positive and negative impacts on cognitive patterns, behavior, and social relationship quality (Tatasari et al., 2025).

Intensity is defined as the level or magnitude of a phenomenon. According to Sari (1993), media access intensity can be assessed through three aspects: media usage, frequency of interaction, and duration spent interacting with the media. High exposure to achievement content prompts Generation Z to evaluate themselves by comparing their own accomplishments with those of others. This phenomenon is known as Social Comparison. Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory explains that individuals have a drive to evaluate themselves by comparing their views, attitudes, or achievements with others (Octa & Devi, 2025).

Repeated or continuous comparison can lead to negative psychological impacts, such as self-dissatisfaction, feelings of being "left behind", and the emergence of social pressure. Astuti (2024) states that social pressure describes the direct or indirect impact a person receives from their social environment to act in a certain way or make certain choices. Social pressure can appear in various forms, including peer pressure, family pressure, and social media trends (Saputra & Wala, 2024).

Based on this framework, exposure to achievement-based content does more than just shape individual perceptions of success, it acts as a catalyst for social comparison, which ultimately manifests as social pressure. This suggests a critical interplay between achievement content exposure, social comparison tendencies, and resulting social pressure within the social media ecosystem of Indonesia Generation Z. Consequently, this study aims to empirically analyze the influence of achievement content exposure and social comparison on social pressure among active social media users within this demographic.

2. Method

This research, titled "The Effect of Achievement Content Exposure and Social Comparison on Social Pressure", uses a quantitative explanatory approach to explain the relationship between variables, Achievement Content Exposure (X1), Social Comparison (X2), and Social Pressure (Y). Quantitative research involves the quality of data and aims to understand the explanations and motives for actions, and also the way individuals perceive their experiences and the world around them. It also creates perceptions into a problem's context and provides ideas and hypotheses (Ghanad, 2023).

The population in this study consists of Generation Z in Indonesia who actively use social media. Generation Z is the current generation that has attracted much attention from researchers and practitioners and they are defined as those who were born after 1995 and are characterized by their digital nativism and unique characteristics (Generation Z – A New Lifeline: A Systematic Literature Review, 2023). The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% (0.1) error rate. The Slovin formula is a popular sampling method used in quantitative research (Husen, 2023). Based on the population of social media users in Indonesia, which is approximately 180 million individuals, a minimum sample size of approximately 100 respondents was obtained. However, this research uses 102 respondents to ensure data validity and meet the minimum threshold.

The data were collected via online questionnaires using Google Forms with a Likert scale format. The Likert scale is a scale developed by Likert (1932). A Likert scale consists of four or more questions combined to form a score or value that represents an individual's characteristics, such as knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Scale, 2013).

It is important to note that methods must be written in the same order in the results section. The order of writing methods must also be logical according to the type of research. The method for one type of research will be very different from other studies. For example, writing survey research methods is very different from laboratory test research methods that involve a lot of equipment and materials. The method section can be created with several separate subtitles such as materials, tools, and data collection procedures.

Very likely, a novelty from a study is in the method section, even though the topic is the same as previous studies. New methods that are simpler but have the same ability to answer research questions are superior so that they can be replicated or applied by subsequent researchers. In addition, if the equipment has accuracy tolerance in reading data such as thermocouple, transducer, air flow meter, etc., it must also be stated clearly and honestly in the method section.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

Instrument Test Result

Outer Model

Data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Square (PLS) with the help of SmartPLS software is to measure the validity and reliability values of constructs, as well as analyze the relationship between variables in the study.

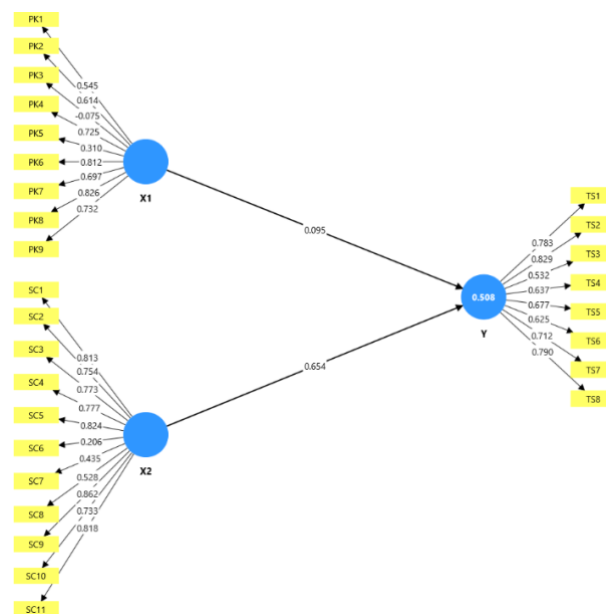


Figure 1. Measurement Model Result

Validity Test

Indicators with outer loading values below 0.7 were eliminated in the first test. The eliminated indicators were PK1, PK3, and PK5 in variable X1, SC6, SC7, and SC8 in variable X2, and TS3 in variable Y. After the elimination, there were still some indicators that had values below 0.7 (between 0.5 – 0.7). However, these indicators were retained because they were still within acceptable limits and had Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values that met criteria. Following table shows the results after the test evaluation.

Table 1. Outer Loading Test Results

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading
Achievement Content Exposure	PK2	0.598
	PK4	0.730
	PK6	0.802
	PK7	0.737

Social Comparison	PK8	0.842
	PK9	0.745
	SC1	0.819
	SC2	0.738
	SC3	0.767
	SC4	0.796
	SC5	0.838
	SC9	0.870
	SC10	0.741
	SC11	0.815
	TS1	0.784
Social Pressure	TS2	0.836
	TS4	0.631
	TS5	0.670
	TS6	0.620
	TS7	0.718
	TS8	0.794

After conducting an evaluation and eliminating several indicators due to non-compliance of the figures with the provisions, the data can be declared valid and can be used for the next test, the test to obtain the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Value

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading
Achievement Content Exposure (X1)	0.557	VALID
Social Comparison (X2)	0.639	VALID
Social Pressure (Y)	0.527	VALID

The results in the table above show that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for each variable indicator is above 0.5. Therefore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test results meet validity standards. The Fornell-Larcker Criteria table is attached as part of the research tool testing.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker

	X1	X2	Y
X1	0.746		
X2	0.546	0.799	
			0.527

Y	0.475	0.726	0.726
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Based on the results of the Discriminant Validity Test, it can be concluded that the discriminant validity meets the specified requirements. This can be seen from the square root value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which is greater than the correlation between the variables. Tests that meet these criteria can proceed to the next stage.

Reliability Test

Reliability test is performed by examining the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. A reliability test is performed if both the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are greater than 0.7. The table below shows the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for each variable in the study.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Achievement Content Exposure (X1)	0.845	0.882	Reliable
Social Comparison (X2)	0.919	0.934	Reliable
Social Pressure (Y)	0.849	0.885	Reliable

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all variables show a value above 0.7, which can be interpreted as having a good level of reliability. The three variables, namely Exposure to Achievement Content (X1), Social Comparison (X2), and Social Pressure (Y), meet the reliability requirements based on the test results in the attached table. These test results are sufficient to continue the analysis or testing in this study.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

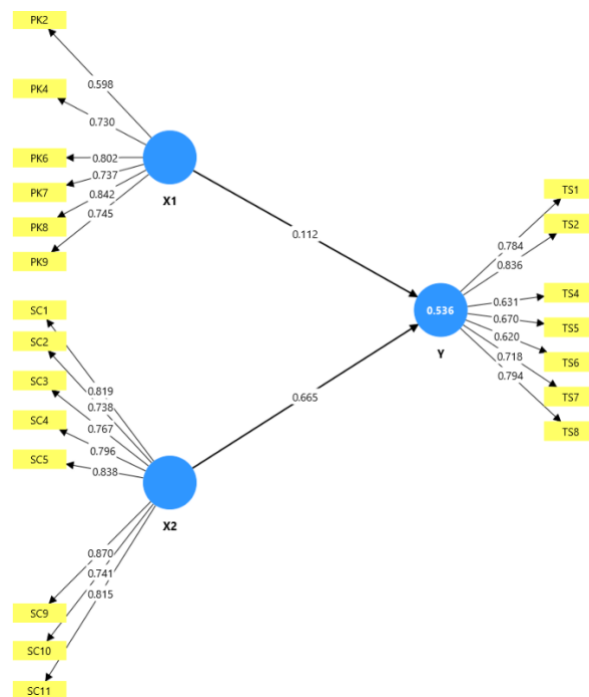


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

R-Square Test

Table 5. R-Square Value

Variables	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Y	0.536	0.527

Based on the R-Square test conducted, the Adjusted R-Square value for the Social Pressure variable (Y) is 0.527. the Adjusted R-Square value shows that 52.7% of the variation in Social Pressure can be explained by two independent variables: Exposure to Achievement Content (X1) and Social Comparison (X2). The remaining 47.3% is influenced by factors outside of this study.

F-Square Test

The F-Square test is conducted to determine how much influence one variable has on another.

Table 6. F-Square Value

	X1	X2	Y
X1			0.019
X2			0.669
Y			

Based on the results of the F-Square test, it can be said that Social Comparison (X2) has a significant impact on Social Pressure (Y), which is indicated by a figure of 0.669. In addition, Exposure to Achievement Content (X1) has almost no influence at all with a test result of 0.019.

Direct Effect Test

Table 7. P-Value and T-Statistics (Direct Effect)

	Original Sample (O)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O-STDEV))	P Values
X1 $\square$ Y	0.112	0.127	0.091	1,230	0.219
X2 $\square$ Y	0.665	0.665	0.081	8,191	0.000

The results of the direct influence test shows that Exposure to Achievement Content (X1) does not significantly influence Social Pressure (Y) with a coefficient value of 0.112 and a p-value of 0.219 (> 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis (H1) is not supported.

In contrast to the results of the Achievement Content Exposure (X1) test on Social Pressure (Y), Social Comparison (X2) has a positive and significant influence on Social Pressure (Y). The coefficient value of 0.665 and p-value of 0.000 (> 0.05) indicate that the second hypothesis (H2) is supported.

Hypothesis Testing Results or Path Analysis Results

Table 8. Path Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Connection	Path Coefficient	P-Value	Information
H1	Exposure to Achievement Content (X1) has a positive but insignificant relationship to Social Pressure (Y)	1,230	0.219	Hypothesis Rejected

H2	Social Comparison (X2) has a positive and significant relationship with Social Pressure (Y)	8,191	0.000	Hypothesis Accepted
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3.2 Discussion

Based on the research results, it can be seen that exposure to achievement content does not significantly influence social pressure. This suggests that the intensity of individuals' exposure to achievement content on social media does not directly trigger social pressure. This finding suggests that content exposure alone is insufficient to trigger psychological impacts without specific cognitive processes.

In contrast to the intensity of exposure to achievement content on social pressure, social comparison has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on social pressure. This finding aligns with Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, which states that individuals tend to evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others' achievements.

These findings suggest that social pressure in Generation Z is more determined by the social comparison mechanism in processing information than by the frequency of exposure to achievement content alone. This emphasizes that internal psychological dispositions play a more crucial role in determining the psychological impact of social media activity

4. Conclusion

The analysis shows that the social pressure experienced by Generation Z is rooted in how individuals process information through social pressure, rather than the intensity of exposure to achievement content. This finding confirms that the effect of exposure to achievement content on social pressure is indirect and dependent on individuals' self-evaluation processes.

Furthermore, social comparison was shown to have a positive and significant effect on social pressure. This means that the higher an individual's tendency to compare themselves, the higher the level of social pressure they experience.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of cognitive factors in understanding the impact of social media use, especially on Generation Z. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine other variables that can influence social pressure to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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