

Literature Review: The Role of Self-disclosure in Mindful, Meaningful, and Learning in The Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes to the learning paradigm, shifting traditional approaches towards more interactive, reflective, and collaborative learning models. Self-disclosure has become an important element in building authentic educational interactions between educators and students. Through self-disclosure, learners can constructively express their thoughts, emotions, and personal experiences, making the learning process more mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable. However, the practice of self-disclosure in the digital space presents new and complex challenges, particularly regarding privacy issues, ethical boundaries of communication, and the balance between self-expression and social responsibility. This study aims to analyze the role of self-disclosure in building a digital learning ecosystem that supports students' psychological well-being and engagement. The research method uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach by examining various relevant national and international scientific publications. The results of the study show that self-disclosure contributes significantly to strengthening interpersonal relationships, increasing empathy, and forming mutual trust, which are the basis for creating a collaborative learning climate. When managed consciously and reflectively, self-disclosure not only enriches learning interactions but also fosters self-awareness, emotional regulation, and healthy digital literacy. Thus, self-disclosure functions as a pedagogical instrument that supports humanistic learning in the digital age. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of pedagogical strategies based on self-reflection, communication ethics, and digital balance to create meaningful, inclusive learning experiences that are oriented towards the psychological well-being of students.

Keywords: *digital learning, mindful learning, psychological well-being, self-disclosure*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the landscape of education, especially in the way teachers and students interact, construct meaning in learning, and form emotional engagement in the learning space. This transformation has not only opened up new opportunities in the learning process, but has also raised challenges related to the quality of pedagogical relationships, the depth of learning experiences, and the fulfillment of students' psychological needs. Therefore, learning in the digital age should not only focus on mastering technology, but should also prioritize approaches that pay attention to the human dimension in the learning process.

In line with the demands of 21st-century pedagogy, learning is required to be mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable (Lombardi, 2007; Langer, 2014). Mindful learning emphasizes full awareness and the complete presence of learners in the learning

process, enabling them to consciously reflect on their learning experiences (Langer, 1989). Meaningful learning emphasizes the connection between subject matter and learners' experiences, values, and life goals, enabling the formation of deeper and more sustainable understanding (Ausubel, 1968). Meanwhile, enjoyable learning is rooted in a positive emotional climate that encourages intrinsic motivation, creativity, and psychological security (Fredrickson, 2001; Pekrun, 2006).

Although these three principles have been widely discussed in pedagogical literature, their implementation in learning especially in digital environments still faces various obstacles. One aspect that is often overlooked is the quality of interpersonal interaction between teachers and students. Learning interactions that lack emotional closeness have the potential to make the learning process mechanical, less reflective, and disconnected from the personal experiences of students.

It is in this context that self-disclosure becomes relevant to study. Self-disclosure is not merely understood as sharing personal information, but as an interpersonal process that plays a role in building trust, closeness, and emotional connection between individuals (Jourard, 1971; Derlega et al., 1993). In learning, the practice of self-disclosure by both teachers and students can create a more authentic and humanistic space for dialogue, so that students feel recognized, accepted, and valued as individuals (Cayanus & Martin, 2008).

A number of studies show that self-disclosure has an important contribution to various dimensions of learning. In mindful learning, self-disclosure can increase self-awareness, emotional recognition, and reflective abilities in students (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In meaningful learning, self-disclosure helps learners relate the subject matter to their life experiences, thereby supporting a more personal meaning-making process (Kember et al., 2008). Meanwhile, in enjoyable learning, self-disclosure plays a role in creating emotional warmth, social closeness, and a classroom atmosphere that supports positive motivation (Titsworth et al., 2010).

However, the digital age presents its own complexities in the practice of self-disclosure. Digital media allows self-disclosure to be carried out through various forms of communication, such as text, audio, and video, which have the potential to increase social presence in online learning (Garrison et al., 2000). On the other hand, this practice also raises issues related to professional boundaries, privacy, and ethics that need to be carefully managed so that self-disclosure continues to function pedagogically and does not pose a risk to teachers or students (Ledbetter et al., 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the role of self-disclosure in supporting mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable learning within digital

learning contexts. The review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability in the review process (Page et al., 2021).

The SLR process consisted of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Through these stages, relevant studies were systematically identified, evaluated, and synthesized to map conceptual relationships and pedagogical implications related to self-disclosure and mindfulness in digital learning environments. The review was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How is self-disclosure conceptualized in digital learning contexts?

RQ2: What roles does self-disclosure play in supporting mindful and meaningful learning in digital environments?

RQ3: What pedagogical implications emerge from the integration of self-disclosure and mindfulness in digital learning?

2.2. Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using several academic databases to capture relevant and high-quality studies. The databases included Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, as these platforms index peer-reviewed journals in education, psychology, and communication studies. The search process was carried out between January 2025 and March 2025.

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Articles were included if they met the following criteria:

1. Published between 2015 and 2025
2. Written in English
3. Published in peer-reviewed and reputable journals
4. Addressed self-disclosure, mindfulness, meaningful learning, or related constructs within digital or online learning contexts
5. Presented empirical findings or conceptual analyses relevant to the research questions

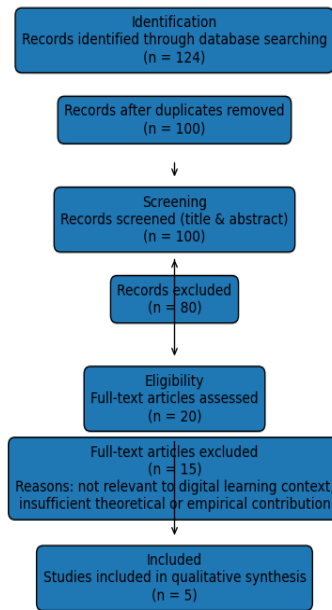


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

To comprehensively understand how self-disclosure contributes to mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable learning in the digital age, it is necessary to examine the key findings from various recent studies. The literature reviewed in this section includes studies that highlight self-disclosure in the context of online learning, interpersonal relationship dynamics, psychological well-being on social media, and the role of mindfulness in the learning process. Each study provides a different but complementary perspective, ranging from how teacher self-disclosure strengthens social presence, how reciprocal disclosure mechanisms build interpersonal closeness, to how mindfulness as a trait and as a learning process shapes the quality of interactions and learning experiences. The following table summarizes the main references and their key findings to show how self-disclosure and mindfulness create a more humanistic and engaging learning ecosystem in the digital space.

Table 1. Summarizes The Main References

Reference	Result
Song, H., Kim, J., Park, N. (2019). I Know My Professor: Teacher Self-Disclosure in Online Education and a Mediating Role of Social Presence. <i>International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction</i> .	Teachers' self-disclosure enhances social presence, which in turn strengthens learning satisfaction, emotional connection, and student engagement. Positive effects emerge when disclosures are relevant, professional, and purposeful.

Reference	Result
Sprecher, S., & Treger, S. (2015). The benefits of turn-taking reciprocal self-disclosure in get-acquainted interactions. <i>Personal Relationships</i> .	Self-disclosure that is done alternately (turn-taking) and reciprocally increases closeness, mutual trust, and sympathy more effectively than one-way disclosure.
Chu, T. H., Sun, M., & Crystal Jiang, L. (2023). Self-disclosure in social media and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i> .	There is a positive relationship between self-disclosure and psychological well-being, depending on the valence of disclosure, privacy control, and social support provided. Supportive responses to disclosure increase well-being, while unsafe digital contexts can have a negative impact.
Yeh, Y.-C., Chang, H.-L., & Chen, S.-Y. (2019). Mindful learning: A mediator of mastery experience during digital creativity game-based learning among elementary school students. <i>Computers & Education</i> .	Mindful learning, which includes full attention, reflection, and conscious engagement, mediates the positive impact of digital creative experiences on learning outcomes. Design elements such as feedback and structured reflection play an important role.
Ketay, S., Thorson, K. R., Roy, A. R. K., & Welker, K. M. (2023). Trait Mindfulness is Associated with Self-Disclosure and Responsiveness During Social Interactions with New Acquaintances. <i>Mindfulness</i> .	Individuals with higher levels of mindfulness tend to express themselves in a more contextually aware and balanced manner, and demonstrate greater responsiveness in social interactions.

DISCUSSION

A synthesis of the literature shows that self-disclosure plays a central role in shaping the quality of learning in the digital age, which is not only informative, but also mindful, meaningful, and enjoyable. Findings from various studies indicate that the quality of self-disclosure by both educators and learners contributes to the creation of more humane, reflective, and emotionally adaptive learning interactions.

Research by Song, Kim, and Park (2019) shows that teacher self-disclosure that is conveyed in a relevant and professional manner can increase social presence in online learning. This increase in social presence has an impact on increasing learning satisfaction, a sense of connection, and student engagement. These findings indicate that educator self-disclosure is not merely a form of personal communication, but a pedagogical strategy that can strengthen the quality of attention, warmth, and harmony of interaction important elements in mindful and meaningful learning.

In line with this, research by Sprecher and Treger (2015) emphasizes the importance of reciprocal and turn-taking self-disclosure in building healthy interpersonal relationships. Alternating patterns of disclosure encourage more balanced interactions, based on mutual trust and sympathy. In the context of digital learning, this principle can be adapted into activity designs that foster social awareness and emotional presence, such as reflective discussions, small group work, or structured

sharing sessions. This reinforces that self-disclosure is not merely an interpersonal activity, but a pedagogical instrument for fostering enjoyable and supportive learning experiences.

From a psychological well-being perspective, a meta-analysis by Chu, Sun, and Crystal Jiang (2023) shows that self-disclosure has a moderate positive relationship with well-being, especially when it occurs in a safe context and receives supportive social responses. These findings emphasize that mindful digital learning designs need to consider aspects of emotional safety, communication ethics, and privacy regulations. This allows learners to express their experiences and reflections without the risk of negative judgment, ultimately increasing their comfort and motivation to learn.

Furthermore, the study by Yeh, Chang, and Chen (2019) places mindful learning as an important mediator between digital creative learning experiences and mastery of material. The mindful process—which includes full attention, reflection, and conscious engagement—not only strengthens learning effectiveness, but also creates psychological conditions conducive to the emergence of safe and meaningful self-disclosure. In other words, mindfulness serves as an emotional foundation that allows learners to share their learning experiences honestly and reflectively.

In terms of individual characteristics, Ketay and colleagues (2023) found that dispositional mindfulness levels are associated with more adaptive self-disclosure and higher interpersonal responsiveness. This suggests that integrating mindfulness practices into learning can help students develop social sensitivity, emotional awareness, and balance in self-expression. Improvements in the quality of interpersonal interactions directly contribute to the creation of a more positive, enjoyable, and psychologically healthy learning experience.

IMPLICATIONS

This study confirms that the development of learning experiences in the digital age needs to be based on pedagogical strategies that integrate self-reflection, communication ethics, and balance in the practice of self-disclosure. The synthesis of findings from various studies provides a strong conceptual foundation for formulating a more humanistic, adaptive, and psychologically well-being-oriented direction for digital pedagogy.

Strengthening self-reflection in both educators and students is a key component in building mindful and authentic learning interactions. Research by Yeh, Chang, and Chen (2019) shows that mindful learning acts as a mediator in improving learning outcomes through digital learning experiences. Thus, learning strategies that emphasize full attention, emotional awareness, and structured reflection practices have the potential to strengthen academic engagement and the quality of conceptual understanding.

Digital communication ethics must be positioned as an important pillar in the design of online learning. A meta-analysis by Chu, Sun, and Jiang (2023) confirms that self-disclosure that occurs in a safe environment and receives supportive social responses contributes significantly to improved psychological well-being. This implies the need for an interaction space that minimizes the risk of negative judgment, upholds privacy control, and prioritizes supportive communication. This approach is also in line with the findings of Song, Kim, and Park (2019), who identified that teacher self-disclosure plays a role in increasing social presence and the quality of pedagogical relationships in online learning.

Balance in self-disclosure practices is an important principle in building healthy and constructive educational interactions. Sprecher and Treger (2015) emphasize that reciprocal and turn-taking self-disclosure results in more supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships. In the context of digital learning, this principle can be realized through structured experience-sharing activities, reflective dialogue, and group collaboration that emphasizes equality and responsiveness. Findings by Ketay et al. (2023) further strengthen this argument by showing that individuals with high levels of mindfulness tend to engage in self-disclosure in a more adaptive, proportional, and responsive manner to the social context.

In addition, the application of self-disclosure guidelines as proposed by Devito (2023) is essential in ensuring that self-disclosure practices are conducted ethically and responsibly. Before disclosing, educators and students need to critically assess the motivations behind the action, so that the disclosure is truly aimed at supporting the quality of relationships, personal integrity, and the emotional well-being of others. Considerations regarding contextual appropriateness include time, place, level of intimacy in the relationship, and characteristics of the communication medium, including privacy settings on digital platforms, which are crucial aspects to prevent interpersonal dissonance or psychological boundary violations. Self-disclosure should also ideally be done gradually to allow for reciprocal self-disclosure and to give individuals space to evaluate the social responses that arise before continuing with deeper disclosures. In addition, every act of disclosure needs to consider the potential emotional burden and social implications that may arise for oneself or others. Thus, these guidelines serve as an important ethical framework in guiding self-disclosure practices in digital learning environments to remain safe, proportionate, and supportive of healthy pedagogical interactions.

Overall, the implications of this study indicate that the integration of self-reflection, digital communication ethics, and balanced self-disclosure practices based on ethical guidelines are important foundations for the development of a humanistic digital learning ecosystem that is oriented towards the psychological well-being of students. The application of these strategies not only strengthens authentic

pedagogical relationships but also creates a learning space that is safe, inclusive, and supportive of emotional and cognitive development. Thus, educators need to design learning experiences that encourage mindfulness, interpersonal warmth, and responsible communication, while learners need to be facilitated to develop self and social sensitivity in the process of self-disclosure. This collaborative effort is expected to shape a digital learning paradigm that is more adaptive to the dynamics of human relationships, relevant to the challenges of the 21st century, and in line with educational goals that prioritize well-being and holistic growth.

4. CONCLUSION

Self-disclosure and mindfulness are two mutually reinforcing elements in shaping the quality of digital learning that is humanistic, reflective, and oriented towards the psychological well-being of students. Various literature findings show that self-disclosure, both from educators and learners, plays a role in strengthening social presence, improving the quality of interpersonal relationships, and creating a learning atmosphere that supports emotional and cognitive engagement. When self-disclosure takes place in a safe, ethical, and responsive context, learning interactions become more authentic and constructive.

Conversely, mindfulness has been shown to provide an emotional and cognitive foundation that enables self-disclosure to occur adaptively. Mindful learning encourages full attention, deep reflection, and social awareness, which are prerequisites for healthy, balanced, and meaningful self-disclosure. The integration of these two concepts results in a digital learning ecosystem that is not only academically effective but also supports personal development, interpersonal connectedness, and psychological well-being.

Overall, the results of this study indicate the need for pedagogical designs that combine self-reflection practices, digital communication ethics, and responsible self-disclosure guidelines. This approach enables educators and learners to build more mindful, warm, and collaborative interactions, while addressing the challenges of learning in the digital age. By integrating these strategies, online learning can be transformed into an inclusive, supportive space that fosters holistic development in line with the demands of 21st-century education.

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