

Fear of COVID-19 on Social Media: The Mediating Roles of Online Social Support and Disclosure of Information in South Korea

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Abstract

To minimize the spread and fear of COVID-19, the South Korean government disclosed detailed location-based information about confirmed cases. Information regarding the confirmed cases was then maliciously distributed on social networking services (SNS). Few studies have investigated how the fear of COVID-19 and the disclosure of information in confirmed cases affect intention on online behavior, despite SNS being a space where people can express themselves with high social support. An online survey was conducted in South Korea. People who feared contracting COVID-19 had a negative perception of not only self-disclosure but also information disclosure by others. However, the perceived online social support could overcome the fear of infectious diseases and encourage active engagement to disclose information. The disclosure of information about confirmed cases impacted social support and self-disclosure intentions. This study contributes to the literature on information disclosure for public health purposes in the online environment during the fear of the epidemic. The world government and future social media platform companies should develop a specific process of information disclosure to manage the fear of public behavior.

Keywords: information disclosure, fear, self-disclosure, social networking service, social support

1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) impacted the use of media. The movement restrictions and social distancing campaigns increased the amount of time spent at home, thereby increasing the use of social media around the world (Ohme et al., 2020). The outbreak of infectious diseases alongside physical distancing has increased people's time spent living in online environments (Kaya, 2020). Through social media, a lot of information about COVID-19 has spread promptly (Tang et al., 2022). In particular, people have continued to use social media to obtain location-based information on COVID-19 confirmed cases to avoid contact with these people (Lin et al., 2020). The South Korean government disclosed in detail the movements of confirmed cases to minimize the spread of COVID-19, and these movements were shared through social media (Kim et al., 2021). The government tried to manage public safety by tracking the movement of confirmed cases, but this caused privacy concerns. In principle, location-based information is provided in an anonymized form, but it can sometimes be changed to a non-anonymous form because it can visualize the location and movement of confirmed cases, thereby instigating concerns over locational privacy (Frith & Saker, 2020).

Confirmed cases were sometimes found through location information and their personal information was then maliciously spread on SNS, creating social stigma and discrimination (Ziegele & Reinecke, 2017). Moreover, the public could infer their religion, political orientation, place of residence, and workplace from their information, making them feel more vulnerable. This social stigma phenomenon occurred because the public felt the need to blame confirmed cases to avoid fear of infectious diseases (Sotgiu & Dobler, 2020). The tendency to look at the reason for the disease in the patient's lifestyle can affect self-disclosure (Chapple et al., 2004). SNS has become a space where users can freely express themselves with high social support (Kwak et al., 2014). However, fear of COVID-19 and disclosure of other people's personal information seem to have affected the social support and the self-disclosures of SNS users. This study aimed to provide insight into social media use in the COVID-19 era by investigating how fear of contracting COVID-19 led to changes in social support, the attitude toward information disclosure of confirmed cases, and making personal disclosures on SNS.

1.1 Fear of COVID-19 and Social Support on SNS

Public media consumption has risen since the COVID-19 outbreak. Through social media, the public can acquire information, receive social support for decision-making, and cope with the risk of infectious diseases (Kaya, 2020). Since

2020, social media usage has increased rapidly, and sentiment analysis has revealed that fear is the most frequently mentioned emotional reaction (Medford et al., 2020). Fear is the most prevalent natural reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak and is a maladaptive avoidance response to a real threat (Mertens et al., 2020). COVID-19 has brought fear not only to individuals and families but also in many other countries. Social media plays a role in moving danger or fear into the social space through the process of communication within close networks regarding the evasion of risk (Stephens et al., 2020). The conceptual structure of social support is deeply related to the nature of social networks, as it is believed that social support is available in networks whenever individuals need it (Meng et al., 2017). Social support on SNS is highly related to poor psychological life. People tend to seek emotional support from social media when their need for social relations is not well met in offline situations (Shensa et al., 2020). COVID-19 forced offline relationships to be suppressed, and this situation could have led to a high level of social support on SNS. Furthermore, fear has potentially led to the use of SNS as a means of gaining emotional support and gratification online (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2019). SNS can also be used to avoid fearful situations or to find psychological reassurance, which can lead to high social support. Infectious diseases can cause health-relevant anxiety and subjective vulnerability, and these psychological factors threaten well-being (Duncan et al., 2009). Anxiety and depression can be related to the strength of social connection by relational orientation (Rude & Burnham, 1995). Based on adult attachment theory, anxiety is characterized by an over-activated attachment system that continuously pursues support and attention (Liu & Ma, 2019). Therefore, the anxiety attachment dimension will have a positive impact on the use of SNS which can build and maintain social relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1: Fear of COVID-19 is positively related to social support on SNS.

1.2 Social Support and Self-disclosure on SNS

People have both the private self, which is the inner world, and the public self, which is the external world that they show to others. The public self is well-known for self-disclosure (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Self-disclosure has become prevalent with widely accessible social network services. Self-disclosure on SNS refers to the act of openly expressing details and opinions on one's life or experiences (Varnali & Toker, 2015). However, the fear of contracting COVID-19 tends to reduce the rate of self-disclosure on SNS due to concerns about the social stigma. Social stigma refers to the loss of social credit or the acquisition of undesirable characteristics within a specific social frame, resulting in negative reactions from others (Goffman, 2009). Stigmatization during the COVID-19 can be understood as a way of protecting oneself: a social process employed to avoid contact with confirmed cases that could pose a threat to life (Bhanot et al., 2021). The fear of becoming a confirmed case places social pressure on those who want to maintain an amicable relationship. Being a confirmed case was recognized as putting others at risk of infection, which was accompanied by the fear of being socially stigmatized (Abdelhafiz & Alorabi, 2020). Therefore, self-disclosures on SNS during this period were arguably very sensitive material and led to more caution when posting online to avoid negative evaluation and backlash (Nabity-Grover et al., 2020). SNS users are becoming more reluctant to share personal information about themselves as a result of the information on COVID-19 confirmed cases spreading on SNS and exposing personal information in a society that examines the reason for the disease in the lives of individual patients.

SNS is regarded as an interactive channel for forming and maintaining relationships (Ellison et al., 2007). People can experience the process of maintaining human relationships through multi-way communication, which is a characteristic of online interaction. People make efforts to maintain relationships once they are formed (Dindia & Canary, 1993). According to social interdependence theory, individuals spontaneously engage in relationships for their own needs or rewards and are satisfied through the relationship formed (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). These individual efforts are formed as a desire to receive social support, leading to a tendency towards self-disclosure (Trepte et al., 2018). People might disclose information and become more active users of SNS as a result of their online social support although in fearful situations. The more online social support people receive in a relationship, the more they tend to disclose their opinions and experiences to maintain the relationship (Lin et al., 2020). Therefore, social support allows SNS users to freely share their experiences revealing their thoughts (Ko et al., 2013). Based on the findings from the literature review, this study hypothesizes the following:

H2: The fear of COVID-19 is negatively related to self-disclosure intentions on SNS.

H3: Social support on SNS is positively related to self-disclosure intention.

1.3 Scholarship Disclosure of Information about Confirmed Cases

There are two types of disclosure on SNS: self-disclosures and disclosures by others. There have been cases of indiscriminate disclosure of information about others online (Koochikamali et al., 2017). This type of disclosure makes people aware of the privacy concerns regarding information about others (Korzaan & Boswell, 2008). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the public to forget for a while about the danger of compromising people's privacy. Rather than sympathizing with the privacy concerns of others, the desire to acquire information about confirmed cases to prevent infectious diseases has become stronger (Kim et al., 2020). Moreover, when people are exposed to data about the

risk of infectious diseases such as the Zika Virus on SNS, cognitive involvement increases and the risk to the privacy of others becomes deprioritized (Jung et al., 2020). Therefore, the disclosure of the confirmed patient's information could be seen as information on infectious diseases rather than the perception of risk to other people's privacy. Fear of COVID-19 has caused economic, social, and physical uncertainty in people's lives (Chen et al., 2020). People are more likely to seek information when they perceive uncertainty in certain situations (Rosen & Knäuper, 2009). Furthermore, they are usually more motivated to protect their information than the privacy of other people (Debatin et al., 2009). Therefore, the fear of becoming a confirmed patient leads to a tendency to seek information to protect own health. This can also be explained by using the health belief model: Focusing on personal beliefs to maintain and protect one's health, perceived health threats or fears lead to health prevention or health-oriented behavior, such as seeking health-related information (Ahadzadeh et al., 2015). Based on the findings, this study hypothesizes the following

H4: The fear of COVID-19 is positively related to the disclosure of information about confirmed cases.

Social identity theory states that people have a social identity based on a sense of belonging and act to maintain it (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Individuals receive social support in their groups and try to act more favorably within their groups to avoid becoming excluded from the groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Members of a group are motivated to protect their group identity and can take health prevention actions together (Guan & So, 2016). Thus, social support has an important influence on disease prevention and self-management behaviors. People take preventive and protective actions for their physical and mental health through supportive social relationships (Potts et al., 1992). Increased social support has a positive impact on disease self-management (Gallant, 2003). SNS-based interactions, which can provide feedback and support, influence people's preventive behaviors and tendencies to try and evade disease by obtaining relevant information (Bantum et al., 2014). Therefore, SNS social support might favorably consider disclosing confirmed case information to appease information-seeking behaviors.

H5: Social support on SNS is positively related to the disclosure of information on confirmed cases of COVID-19.

1.4 Disclosure of Information about Confirmed Cases and Self-disclosures on SNS

Social media use during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a means of sharing information and emotions to overcome the pandemic together and clearly allowed for activities such as self-disclosure (Kaya, 2020). The function of sharing various types of information on SNS promotes individual self-disclosure behaviors (Syn & Oh, 2015). An individual's desire to obtain information motivates people to have social relationships and can result in the disclosure of personal identity (Polites et al., 2018). Uncertain situations sometimes motivate people to refrain from information disclosure, but the more they receive and share information on SNS, the greater the power to overcome the fear of self-disclosure (Krasnova et al., 2012). Therefore, people who have a favorable attitude toward the disclosure of confirmed case information will be less critical of self-disclosures on SNS.

H6: The disclosure of information about confirmed cases is positively related to self-disclosure intentions on SNS.

2. Method

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study collected data by conducting a questionnaire through MarketLink, a professional research institute that serves all the processes of online surveys with skilled personnel. The online survey was conducted on the public aged 20 to 59 living in the capital area of South Korea (e.g., Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon). During the great spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted from September 1 to 4, 2020 when social distancing was strengthened that could interpret the experiences of the public in South Korea. Since this study needs to identify factors related to SNS use, respondents who did not use SNS were excluded from the survey. Completing the questionnaire took less than ten minutes. Excluding untrustworthy respondents, a total of 300 respondents were surveyed between 20 and 59 years old ($M = 40.01$, $SD = 10.69$). There were 151 males (50.3%) and 149 females (49.7%) (see Table 1). Most had a bachelor's degree (83.6%), some had a master's degree or higher (9.0%), and a few had only a school leaver's qualification (7.3%).

Table 1. Respondent frequencies

Variables	Description	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	151 (50.3)
	Female	149 (49.7)
Age	20-29	69 (23.0)
	30-39	73 (24.3)
	40-49	82 (27.3)
	50-59	76 (25.3)
Education	High school/Vocational	22 (7.3)
	Bachelor's degree	251 (83.6)
	Master's degree and above	27 (9.0)

2.2 Measures

The fear of COVID-19 (FOC) was defined by referring to indicators of fear and perceived vulnerability to infectious diseases in previous studies (Duncan et al., 2009; Ahorsu et al., 2020). Three items were measured as perceived physical risks of COVID-19 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.86$). Social support on SNS (SS) was defined as the degree of inner belief formed based on the perceived possibility of current support on SNS (Cohen et al., 1985; Lin et al., 2020). Twelve items were measured, including support for a sense of self-esteem, belonging and emotional support (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.95$). Disclosure of information by others was defined as an attitude toward disclosing information by someone who does not own the personal information (Koochikamali et al., 2017). Disclosure of information about confirmed cases (DIC) was measured according to four degrees of favorability toward the disclosure of confirmed case information on SNS (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$). Self-disclosure intentions on SNS (SD) were measured by the degree of intentional disclosure of personal information on SNS (Ledbetter et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2020) using three statements (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.85$). Every variable was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

3. Results

This study analyzed the correlation between all variables and found that they were correlated, except for the relationship between FOC and SD, which was statistically insignificant by a small amount ($p = 0.059$). The correlations among the overall data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Fear of COVID-19 (FOC)	1			
2. Social support on SNS (SS)	0.131*	1		
3. Disclosure of information (DIC)	-0.155**	0.185***	1	
4. Self-disclosure intentions (SD)	-0.109	0.421***	0.258**	1

Pearson’s R correlations are used. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

To verify the research hypotheses, this study used PROCESS macro Model 6 in SPSS 27 (Hayes, 2017). 5,000 bootstrap samples were used at a 95% confidence interval. In the research model, FOC was the independent variable; SS and DIC were mediating variables; and SD was the dependent variable. The unstandardized path coefficients are shown in Figure 1. FOC was positively associated with SS ($B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% $CI = 0.02-0.26$). Thus, H1 is supported. Moreover, FOC was negatively associated with SD ($B = -0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% $CI = -0.24- -0.04$) and SS was positively associated with SD ($B = 0.39$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% $CI = 0.29-0.49$). Thus, H2 and H3 are supported. However, FOC was negatively associated with DIC ($B = -0.19$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% $CI = -0.30- -0.07$). Thus, H4 was rejected. Finally, SS was positively associated with DIC ($B = 0.21$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% $CI = 0.10-0.32$), and DIC was positively associated with SD ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% $CI = 0.06-0.26$). Thus, H5 and H6 are supported.

Table 3. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects

	SD outcomes as criterion				
	B	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect of FOC on SD	-0.11	0.06	-1.89	-0.22	0.004
Total direct effect of FOC on SD	-0.14	0.05	-2.63	-0.24	-0.04
Indirect effect(s) of FOC on SD	B	Boot SE		Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Total indirect effect of FOC on SD	0.03	0.03		-0.03	0.09
Indirect effect 1: FOC → SS → SD	0.05	0.03	–	0.002	0.11
Indirect effect 2: FOC → DIC → SD	-0.03	0.01	–	-0.06	-0.01
Indirect effect 3: FOC → SS → DIC → SD	0.004	0.003	–	0.0001	0.01

In addition, this study tested the direct and mediation effects to investigate the causal relationships more deeply. Table 3 shows the total, direct, and indirect effects. In particular, the indirect effect of FOC on SD through SS was significant ($B = 0.05$, $Boot SE = 0.03$, 95% $Boot CI = 0.002-0.11$). The indirect effect of FOC on SD through DIC was significant ($B = -0.03$, $Boot SE = 0.01$, 95% $Boot CI = -0.06- -0.01$). The indirect effect of FOC on SD through SS and DIC was significant ($B = 0.004$, $Boot SE = 0.003$, 95% $Boot CI = 0.0001- 0.01$). Therefore, SS mediates the relationship between FOC and SD, and SS serially mediates the effect of FOC on SD through DIC. The total indirect effect of FOC on SD was $B = 0.03$, $Boot SE = 0.03$, and 95% $boot CI = -0.03- 0.09$ (see Figure 1).

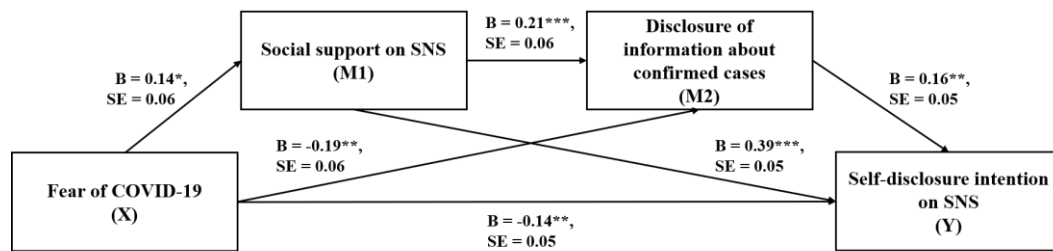


Figure 1. Research model results

4. Discussion

This study investigated the fear of COVID-19, social support on SNS, and information disclosure of confirmed patients through a mediating model as factors influencing SNS users' intentions to self-disclose. The fear mentioned in the use of SNS related to COVID-19 could lead to a high level of social support. This study proved that SNS relationships that serve to replace suppressed offline relationships can lead to social support on SNS as a result of a desire for relational orientation. The fear was found to have a negative effect on self-disclosures. As the movement path information of COVID-19 confirmed cases spread to SNS and personal information was exposed, the fear of becoming a confirmed patient increased (Abdelhafiz & Alorabi, 2020). The online community, which places responsibility on individuals for the cause of disease thereby creating a social stigma, has made SNS users reluctant to disclose themselves online (Saunders, 2014). This demonstrates that the online space has created social pressures on the public seeking to maintain friendly relationships with others, similar to the offline space. However, the more people receive social support on social media, the more they tend to disclose themselves to maintain their relationships (Lin et al., 2020). This study showed that perceived online social support can overcome the fear of infectious diseases and encourage active SNS users to disclose their information.

This study hypothesized that, as fear grew, it would lead to the search for health-related information perceiving information about confirmed cases as a form of prevention rather than a risk to other people's privacy. However, as the COVID-19 spread continued, negative opinions on the disclosure of confirmed patient information increased, and the disclosure of personal information of confirmed cases was stopped. If some of the public became a confirmed patient, they may have been afraid of personal information disclosure due to the notification of their movements (Brough & Martin, 2021). Therefore, the higher the fear of becoming a confirmed case, the stronger their aversion to the public disclosure of information. The disclosure of personal information is accompanied by psychological and social pain, along with physical pain (Sturgeon & Zautra, 2016). This study demonstrated that people may see the protection of other people's information as a defense mechanism against social stigmas, and also feel bad about the risk of compromising the privacy of others. Another finding of this study is that social support on SNS has a positive impact on the disclosure of information about confirmed cases. A high level of social support had a positive effect on the prevention of information-seeking behavior as a self-management as is consistent with previous studies (Gallant, 2003; Bantum et al., 2014). Social support is a form of communication that affects cognitive or behavioral states (Albrecht & Adelman, 1984). This study defined those in favor of disclosing confirmed case movements as people whose purpose was to seek and share health information. Health information-sharing behaviors result in more selfless acts than perceived benefits, so these can be classed as comprising supportive communication wherein people try to help others or build amicable social relationships (Liu et al., 2019). Finally, the disclosure of information about confirmed cases is positively related to self-disclosure intentions on SNS. The more helpful the information that is spread, the greater the willingness of individuals to self-disclose on SNS (Krasnova et al., 2012). Through these results, this study found that SNS acts as a means to aid recovery from infectious diseases and encourages people to share information about themselves and strengthen their social relationships.

5. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on self-disclosure and information disclosure of others on SNS in the context of computer-mediated communication. In particular, this study found that people with a fear of becoming a confirmed case had a negative perception not only of self-disclosure but also of information disclosure by other people. These results support the theory of protection motivation. People's motivation to protect information can lead to behaviors that recognize and cope with the sources of information (Burns et al., 2021). Since people are social actors, it was difficult for confirmed cases to avoid the social stigma during the epidemic (Doyle & Molix, 2014). Thus, people who have indirectly experienced this social stigma are reluctant to express themselves (Steward et al., 2008). It is possible to adopt a protective motivation behavior to avoid the threat of a stigma by simply not perceiving the disclosure of confirmed case information as information about others (Jiao & Bungay, 2019). The mediating effect of social support on SNS has had a positive effect on SNS self-disclosures. According to the uses and gratification theory, people use SNS to maintain relationships or to escape reality (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2019). Social distancing caused by

COVID-19 and the desire to evade infection may have had a positive effect on SNS use. In addition, this study found that fear inadvertently activated an attachment system for which people began to pursue online social support based on the theory of adult attachment. Social support, which was previously shared in face-to-face relationships, has now moved to SNS to compensate for the lack of contact imposed by living (Lewandowski et al., 2011). Therefore, this study suggests that people should pay attention to helping and supporting each other and sharing a common purpose by placing social responsibility for the health crisis within the community. The data collected from this study enhances an understanding of social interdependence and shows that individuals spontaneously engage in relationships for personal benefits and that social support, a product of individual efforts, leads to self-disclosure. Moreover, this study found that people adopt preventive and protective attitudes toward their social groups due to a sense of belonging that leads to social identity. Therefore, it is possible to explain through the integration of social identity theory and protection motivation theory that the pandemic threat motivates individuals to want to protect their group.

6. Practical Implications

For the government, this study provides practical implications of how the public's fear of COVID-19 affects the online environment. The self-disclosure attitudes of the public were identified by examining opinions on preventive behaviors in terms of personal information disclosure. Fear can be mitigated by online support and the government should solve the emotional difficulties of the public through relational communication orientation to achieve psychological stability (Jaeger et al., 2007). Therefore, what is more important than providing information, is trying to help the public overcome the pandemic together through social connectedness in everyday life. The Korean government has taken action to secure the safety of the public by disclosing location-based personal information of confirmed cases (Park et al., 2020). As a preventive system to manage the global pandemic, the government revealed the movement of confirmed cases of COVID-19. The government stipulated that the personal information of the confirmed cases should be disclosed. Controversy has arisen over privacy infringement from the perspective of personal information protection law (Ko et al., 2017). This invasion of privacy by others has led to conflicting opinions regarding government policies. The government must decide what should be prioritized about information disclosure for all stakeholders: the public interest or the protection of the privacy of the individual (Bansal & Axelton, 2024). This study examined the process by which physical risks provoke social risks and lead to online infringement of privacy. In the case of sensitive secondary use of personal information, it is necessary to develop detailed personal information protection methods to handle the security, destruction, and disclosure of private information (Pencarrick Hertzman et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to find efficient privacy policies and regulations for consumers about their privacy practices for possible future outbreaks of infectious diseases without infringing privacy rights from a national perspective.

From the perspective of business, outbreaks of infectious diseases have increased the consumption of social media. SNS plays a role in influencing people to communicate, share information, and comfort each other to be able to cope with the infectious diseases (Stephens et al., 2020). SNS affects the actual information-sharing environment of users by helping them maintain relationships (Cheon et al., 2015). SNS is the main channel for disseminating information during a global epidemic, whether through self-disclosure or the disclosure of others (Yoo et al., 2016). Specifically, recognizing the detrimental effects of privacy issues and self-disclosures might cause anxiety and decrease the use of SNS (Zhou & Li, 2014). SNS intervention, where users can provide feedback and support to each other, is a very important tool in a pandemic situation (Li et al., 2022). The results of this study provide SNS managers with a way to monitor and optimize SNS use for disease management by examining and evaluating peoples' online behaviors. SNS managers can encourage users to create campaigns to overcome difficulties together and create strong ties rather than a fear-inducing environment so that they can continue to use SNS proactively (Van Noort et al., 2012). In the context of the government, psychosocial intervention should be developed to support confirmed cases of various infectious diseases and to promote a higher quality of life (Van Zyl et al., 2020). Since the social stigma of confirmed cases may not easily disappear, active online intervention in interpersonal, social, and organizational aspects seems essential (Overholt et al., 2018). Therapeutic governance should be considered for cases in which personal information is indiscriminately abused and social vulnerabilities occur (Pupavac, 2001).

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study used a cross-sectional design due to time and cost limitations. This study conducted a survey regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, depending on the number of confirmed cases or the severity of the pandemic globally, fluctuated psychological experiences were observed in subsequent studies (Matthes et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2023). Furthermore, since COVID-19 is now considered to be the past, people can behave empirically differently in post-pandemic situations than they did four years ago in pre-pandemic (Jamshaid et al., 2023). Thus, this study proposes the use of a longitudinal design to better validate our research mediation model. Second, the attitude toward disclosing confirmed case information raises the need to conduct research in various countries. People with a stronger propensity toward collectivism are less likely to worry about privacy invasion and more likely to see the social benefits of sharing

location-based information (Li et al., 2022). Therefore, social and cultural differences according to nationality during the pandemic may result in different attitudes toward disclosing other people's information and intentions to self-disclose on SNS (Chan & Cheng, 2016). Third, this study only examined online social support as a variable in the COVID-19 situation. If people interact socially online and have strong ties, they may feel that social support extends from online to offline spaces (Trepte et al., 2012). Future studies need to take offline social support into account. The difference in the degree of offline and online support may have other results for self-disclosure (Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020).

8. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of fear of COVID-19 on the SNS users' self-disclosure intentions. The fear of COVID-19 was negatively associated with self-disclosure and information disclosure by others. Additionally, social support and self-disclosure intentions on SNS are impacted by the disclosure of information about confirmed cases. The world government and future social media platform companies should develop the process of information disclosure to operate services during the pandemic.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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