



Becoming a professional influencer on LinkedIn: Privacy calculus drivers of self-disclosure

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors that influence users' self-disclosure on LinkedIn through the lens of privacy calculus theory, considering perceived benefits, trust, and privacy concerns. A survey of 370 active users in Chile was conducted, and a structural model was assessed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The results show that self-disclosure is primarily driven by functional and symbolic benefits, particularly learning/information exchange and professional self-presentation. Trust in the platform positively affects the willingness to disclose and reduces privacy concerns. In contrast, trust in other members, privacy concerns, and benefits related to professional networking and career development did not have significant effects. These findings suggest that in Latin American professional contexts, self-disclosure is more aligned with visibility and positioning oriented strategies than with explicit job search intentions. This study offers theoretical implications by extending privacy calculus to professional networking platforms and practical implications for platform design and recruitment strategies that rely more on reputational signals than on active job-seeking behaviors.

Keywords: self-disclosure, privacy calculus, trust in platform, trust in members

INTRODUCTION

Professional social networks have assumed a central role in how individuals manage their digital identities, access job opportunities, and build professional relationships. In particular, LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network with 1.15 billion users as of 2024 (Tagembed, 2025), enables users to build a personal brand by strategically presenting their educational and employment credentials to attract the attention of recruiters and potential employers (Eitiveni et al., 2023). Beyond serving as a static résumé repository, LinkedIn has increasingly evolved into a creator-oriented platform where a very small minority of members who post content on a weekly basis generate a disproportionate share of the billions of impressions on the site, effectively behaving as niche professional influencers (Column, 2025). To foster this behavior, the platform has introduced features such as creator mode and streamlined tools for displaying digital badges

and professional certifications, which make it easier for users to showcase achievements, new skills, and reflective commentary on work and careers (Supergrow, 2025). This creator-driven turn reinforces the perception that an active digital presence can directly shape career trajectories by facilitating positioning and visibility in increasingly digitized labor markets. Against this backdrop, a pivotal behavior that enables visibility and opportunity on LinkedIn is self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure, understood as the voluntary act of sharing personal or professional information on digital platforms, has been widely studied in general-purpose social networks, where its relevance for identity construction, emotion regulation, and interpersonal interaction has been documented (Choi & Bazarova, 2015; Liu et al., 2013). However, in employment-oriented contexts such as LinkedIn, this practice has distinctive characteristics. In these environments, users disclose information to expand their networks, share knowledge, position themselves in the labor market, and construct a coherent professional identity (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Min & Kim, 2015). As the quantity and specificity of professional information shared on platforms like LinkedIn increase, —for example, work experience, certifications, or sectoral reflections—users' visibility to potential employers also rises and opportunities to connect with other professionals broaden (Caers & Castelyns, 2011; Kaun, 2014), while studies centered on assessing the actual benefits remain incipient (Davis et al., 2020). This behavior is shaped by cognitive and social factors, especially the perception of benefits and the associated risks. Privacy calculus theory (PCT) holds that the decision to share personal information online is based on a rational trade-off between expected benefits (such as self-presentation or professional learning) and perceived costs, particularly those related to privacy (Eitiveni et al., 2023). While perceived benefits can foster openness, concerns about surveillance, data misuse, and loss of control act as barriers (Hofstetter et al., 2017; Trepte et al., 2020). Moreover, self-disclosure serves strategic functions that are tied to building a professional reputation. Studies show that selectively sharing relevant information allows users to shape how their contacts perceive them, aligning their profiles with labor market expectations (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Sameen & Cornelius, 2013). This process involves not only content management but also emotional regulation of digital interactions in line with each platform's sociotechnical norms (Waterloo et al., 2018).

Within this benefit-risk evaluation, trust plays a central role because it directly shapes how users interpret the opportunities and potential risks of sharing information on professional platforms. Trust encompasses both perceptions of security in the technical infrastructure and the belief that other users will respect the implicit boundaries of the environment (Kim, 2018). Higher trust not only reduces perceived privacy risks but also strengthens the professional legitimacy of the setting and the willingness to share personal or sensitive content (Eitiveni et al., 2023). Likewise, platform affordances, such as privacy settings, visibility algorithms, and recommendation systems, influence disclosure decisions by altering users' sense of control and exposure (Yao et al., 2024). In interaction with individual motivations, these affordances can either amplify or inhibit openness, depending on their perception and use.

However, excessive or poorly regulated self-disclosure may have adverse consequences. The literature warns that sharing under a false sense of temporality or control can lead to lasting negative impressions, especially in professional contexts where digital reputation carries increasing weight (Hofstetter et al., 2017). In addition, the growing automation of hiring processes has increased the use of algorithms that process these disclosures without human mediation, potentially amplifying biases and shaping candidates' professional perceptions (Monteith & Glenn, 2016). Contextual factors, such as culture and geography, also shape levels and forms of self-disclosure; for instance, US users tend to report higher perceived benefits and trust in social platforms, whereas German users exhibit greater concerns about privacy and data control (Trepte et al., 2020).

Despite the growing interest in understanding disclosure behaviors in social networks, several gaps remain in the context of professional platforms. First, most empirical studies have examined self-disclosure on recreational or general-purpose social media, leaving limited evidence on professional self-disclosure and the mechanisms that drive it. Second, the literature has produced mixed findings regarding the influence of privacy concerns and interpersonal trust on disclosure behaviors, particularly in environments where visibility is tied to reputation and employability. Third, although perceived benefits are acknowledged as a central component of the privacy calculus, little is known about which specific benefits—such as self-presentation, learning and information exchange, networking, or career advancement—carry greater explanatory weight in professional settings. Finally, research focusing on Latin American users remains scarce, despite evidence

that cultural norms and risk perceptions shape disclosure patterns differently across countries. Addressing these gaps is essential for refining theoretical models of self-disclosure and understanding how professional identity is constructed and managed in digitized labor markets.

In this context, the present study examines the determinants of self-disclosure on LinkedIn by explicitly testing the relationships proposed by the PCT. Specifically, we

- (1) developed and validated a structural model in which self-disclosure functions as the central outcome variable predicted by trust in the provider, trust in other members, privacy concern, and four distinct perceived benefit dimensions (self-presentation, learning and information exchange, networking, and career advancement);
- (2) evaluated the effect of trust in the provider and trust in members on privacy concern as a secondary endogenous construct;
- (3) empirically tested the direct and indirect paths of this model using survey data from active LinkedIn users in Chile;
- (4) provide practical recommendations for professionals, recruiters, and platform developers seeking to promote safe and effective disclosure practices that align with users' professional objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Privacy Calculus Theory

PCT provides a widely accepted analytical framework for understanding self-disclosure decisions in digital environments by conceptualizing them as a rational evaluation of expected benefits versus perceived risks, particularly those related to privacy (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Trepte et al., 2020). From this perspective, users weigh whether the opportunities afforded by self-presentation—such as career advancement, network building, or learning—justify the potential cost of losing control over their personal information (Eitiveni et al., 2023).

In the context of professional social networks such as LinkedIn, prior studies have identified specific benefits that motivate self-disclosure: the ability to build a professional reputation, exchange relevant information, manage a digital identity aligned with career goals, and facilitate contact with recruiters (Choi & Bazarova, 2015; Eitiveni et al., 2023). In parallel, perceived costs are associated with risks such as data misuse, exposure to privacy threats, unwanted surveillance, and loss of control over information (Trepte et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence shows that when perceived benefits outweigh privacy-related costs, users tend to disclose more information—even on platforms characterized by high professional visibility, such as LinkedIn (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Trepte et al., 2020). This balance is shaped by factors including trust in the platform provider, perceived control over shared data, and internalized social norms regarding what is appropriate to disclose (Choi & Bazarova, 2015; Trepte et al., 2020).

Overall, PCT articulates how perceived benefits, privacy concerns, and trust jointly influence disclosure, offering a robust lens for analyzing self-disclosure decisions on professional platforms, particularly in environments where the boundaries between personal and work domains are increasingly blurred and algorithmically mediated.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure refers to the voluntary act of sharing information about oneself with others for strategic purposes, including relationship development, impression management, or the pursuit of professional goals (Choi & Bazarova, 2015). In digital environments, such as professional social networks, this behavior has renewed relevance. According to Eitiveni et al. (2023), on platforms such as LinkedIn, self-disclosure enables users to construct a visible professional identity aligned with their career objectives. Disclosing credentials, experience, and accomplishments helps attract recruiters' attention and strengthen ties with strategic contacts (Caers & Castelyns, 2011).

Unlike general-purpose social networks, where self-disclosure may be predominantly interpersonal or emotional, in professional contexts it is oriented toward signaling competence, trustworthiness, and

professional positioning (Eitiveni et al., 2023). Users reveal information about their education, trajectory, skills, and personal values to stand out in a digitally mediated labor market in which self-presentation directly shapes access to opportunities (Caers & Castelyns, 2011; Sameen & Cornelius, 2013).

Theoretically, self-disclosure on professional networks can be examined through PCT, which posits that users rationally weigh expected benefits against perceived costs when divulging personal information (Choi & Bazarova, 2015; Min & Kim, 2015). On LinkedIn, this logic translates into an identity-management strategy aimed at improving professional visibility, facilitating networking, and projecting key competencies (Caers & Castelyns, 2011; Sameen & Cornelius, 2013). When the benefits are perceived outweigh the risks, such as unwanted exposure or loss of control over information, users are more willing to share personal data (Trepte et al., 2020). This balance is further shaped by perceived control and the platform's technological affordances, which influence perceptions of the security, persistence, and visibility of shared content (Yao et al., 2024).

Moreover, sharing relevant professional content contributes to establishing and maintaining long-term working relationships. Evidence indicates that the quantity and quality of information shared affect a profile's discoverability by potential employers or collaborators, with incomplete profiles being less visible and attractive (Caers & Castelyns, 2011; Eitiveni et al., 2023; Sameen & Cornelius, 2013). However, not all shared information is necessarily accurate; for example, a person's professional competence may be endorsed on LinkedIn by a close contact even if the competence is not actually possessed (Marin, 2021).

In this study, self-disclosure constitutes the focal outcome variable, representing the observable result of intertwined cognitive, social, and contextual motivations. Analyzing this behavior elucidates how users decide which aspects of their professional identity to share in digital settings and under which conditions they perceive such sharing to be beneficial or risky.

Privacy Concern

Privacy concern is defined as the extent to which individuals experience uncertainty, insecurity, or unease about the use, access, or distribution of their personal information in digital environments (Trepte et al., 2020). On platforms such as LinkedIn, this concern arises when users perceive that revealing personal data could entail negative consequences, including loss of control, exposure to judgment, discrimination, or misuse of information (Eitiveni et al., 2023).

From a privacy calculus perspective, privacy concerns function as a perceived cost weighed against the expected benefits of self-disclosure (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Min & Kim, 2015). When this concern is high, users tend to limit the amount, depth, or type of information they disclose as a preventive response to the risk of exposure (Trepte et al., 2020). Recent studies have shown that privacy concerns are shaped by factors such as the perceived likelihood of a privacy violation, the severity of potential harm, and the level of trust in other network members (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Trepte et al., 2020). These perceptions intensify protective behaviors, leading users to adopt restrictive settings, share less information, or engage more passively in social media.

There is also evidence that users with high levels of privacy concerns participate more cautiously on the platform, avoiding interactions that might increase their digital exposure (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Oghazi et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2012). Consequently, privacy concerns are a critical barrier to developing complete, visible profiles, thereby limiting professional networking opportunities and reducing social capital on networks such as LinkedIn (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). Based on this review, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Privacy concerns are negatively related to self-disclosure.

Trust in the Provider: LinkedIn

Trust in the service provider, in this case, LinkedIn, refers to users' belief that the platform has appropriate structures, safeguards, and technical conditions to protect their personal information and enable safe, transparent use (Eitiveni et al., 2023). Following McKnight et al. (2002), this form of institutional trust rests on the perception that structural mechanisms underpin reliable system behavior, including privacy policies, regulations, and robust technological standards. Such trust plays a key role in digital environments because it reduces the perceived risk associated with handling personal data and facilitates behaviors such as self-disclosure (van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023). Notably, LinkedIn suffered a breach in 2014, in which 117

million email-password pairs were sold on the dark market (Jain et al., 2021), prompting the company to intensify its security efforts and rebuild user trust.

Eitiveni et al. (2023) argue that trust in LinkedIn strengthens when users perceive that they retain a degree of control over shared information, for example through privacy settings that determine who can access their data. This perceived control fosters a sense of safety and lowers uncertainty about online exposure. Consequently, users feel more comfortable sharing professional or personal content, as they believe they maintain autonomy and protection against potential misuse.

A growing body of work shows that institutional trust in digital platforms is shaped not only by corporate reputation but also by technical mechanisms that allow users to manage their privacy. Acquisti et al. (2015) contend that when people perceive that they can control the flow of their information, their willingness to trust the technological environment increases, thereby reducing barriers to sharing personal data. Similarly, Jozani et al. (2020) find that perceived control over privacy functionalities in social networks decreases privacy concerns and increases platform trust.

This link between perceived control, trust, and self-disclosure has also been observed in professional contexts. Eitiveni et al. (2023) highlight that perceiving LinkedIn's privacy configurations as clear and effective encourages more open and strategic communication. Likewise, Mutimukwe et al. (2020) concluded that institutional guarantees, such as transparent privacy policies and accessible settings, elevate perceptions of provider integrity and reinforce the willingness to engage actively on the platform. Similarly, Chang et al. (2017) report that higher privacy concerns are associated with lower willingness to disclose information on LinkedIn.

In summary, trust in LinkedIn should not be understood as a static judgment but as the outcome of a dynamic interplay among technical features, psychological perceptions, and social expectations. As users perceive the platform to be secure, ethical, and controllable, their disposition to reveal personal information in pursuit of professional goals increases. Based on this evidence, we propose the following:

H2. Trust in the LinkedIn provider will be positively related to self-disclosure.

H3. Trust in the LinkedIn provider will be negatively related to privacy concern.

Trust in LinkedIn Members

Interpersonal trust on digital platforms, such as LinkedIn, refers to the expectation that other users will handle the personal information shared responsibly. This form of trust operates as a relational leap of faith in environments where one cannot directly control others' behavior, thereby becoming a key resource for reducing uncertainty in online social interactions (Joinson & Paine, 2007; Krasnova et al., 2010). Eitiveni et al. (2023) note that trust in LinkedIn members affects self-disclosure indirectly, primarily through its influence on privacy concern. When users believe that others will not misuse the information provided, perceived risk declines, which, in turn, lowers concern and encourages a willingness to share personal information on the platform. Risk perceptions may also decrease when influential actors, such as company CEOs, actively engage in social networks (van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023). This mechanism aligns with the notion of "assumed trust," whereby individuals project benevolent intentions onto peers and downplay the possibility of misuse (Krasnova et al., 2010).

This trust can also be anchored in perceived similarities and familiarity with other members. Users who recognize shared traits or comparable trajectories tend to exhibit a greater propensity to trust, reinforcing a sense of belonging and strengthening weak ties, which facilitates the exchange of professional information (Krasnova et al., 2010). In this sense, interpersonal trust can act as a social lubricant that supports professional networking, even if it does not necessarily translate directly into greater self-disclosure, particularly in cultural contexts where reserve and modesty are prevalent (Eitiveni et al., 2023).

From a privacy calculus perspective, interpersonal trust reduces the perceived psychological costs associated with disclosure, easing the tension between risks and benefits (Min & Kim, 2015). If individuals anticipate that others will act with integrity, the balance shifts toward self-disclosure, although this relationship may be conditioned by cultural norms, prior platform experience, and levels of digital literacy (Trepte et al., 2020).

In summary, trust in LinkedIn members can be considered an indirect antecedent of self-disclosure behavior. Its effect is expressed primarily through a reduction in privacy concerns, functioning more as a contextual facilitator than as a direct determinant of disclosure.

H4. Trust in LinkedIn members will be positively related to self-disclosure.

H5. Trust in LinkedIn members will be negatively related to privacy concerns.

Perceived Benefits

From a privacy calculus perspective, perceived benefits constitute a central motivational factor driving users' willingness to share personal or professional information on digital platforms (van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023). This approach posits that individuals rationally weigh potential benefits against associated risks before deciding to self-disclose, considering elements such as expected utility, reputation, learning, and access to new opportunities (Dinev & Hart, 2006; Eitiveni et al., 2023). In professional social networks such as LinkedIn, the literature identifies at least four dimensions shaping these perceived benefits:

- (1) self-presentation,
- (2) learning and information exchange,
- (3) professional networking, and
- (4) career advancement.

Although complementary, these dimensions reflect distinct motivations that may differentially influence self-disclosure behavior (Florenthal, 2015; Grissa, 2017; Krasnova et al., 2010). We detail them below.

Self-Presentation

This dimension refers to the strategic management of shared information to shape how others perceive the user (Eitiveni et al., 2023). LinkedIn affords fine-grained control over visible profile attributes, facilitating the intentional construction of a coherent and attractive, professional identity. Prior research has identified this capacity as a strong incentive for self-disclosure, particularly among users seeking to make their personal brand more visible and credible (Grissa, 2017; Krasnova et al., 2010).

Learning and Information Exchange

LinkedIn promotes the circulation of specialized content, thematic discussions, and interaction with experts, generating opportunities for collaborative learning (Eitiveni et al., 2023). This dimension becomes salient when users share information with the expectation of receiving valuable knowledge or recognition within their professional communities (Florenthal, 2015; Grissa, 2017).

Developing Professional Network

Digital visibility increases the likelihood of forming ties with relevant others, such as employers, mentors, and collaborators (Eitiveni et al., 2023). Strategically sharing professional information helps activate latent ties and expand social capital, which in turn reinforces the motivation for self-disclosure (Krasnova et al., 2010).

Career Advancement

Users perceive that maintaining a complete and up-to-date profile improves their position in recruitment processes, rendering self-disclosure an instrumental practice for accessing new job opportunities. The literature suggests that this perception has intensified with increasing digitalization of labor markets (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Florenthal, 2015). Given the multidimensional nature of perceived benefits, this study models them as independent first-order constructs to examine their differentiated influence on professional self-disclosure on LinkedIn. This approach enables the identification of the most salient incentives guiding users' decisions in employment-oriented digital contexts. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H6a. Self-presentation has a positive influence on self-disclosure.

H6b. Learning and information exchange positively influence self-disclosure.

H6c. Developing professional network positively influences self-disclosure.

H6d. Career advancement positively influences self-disclosure.

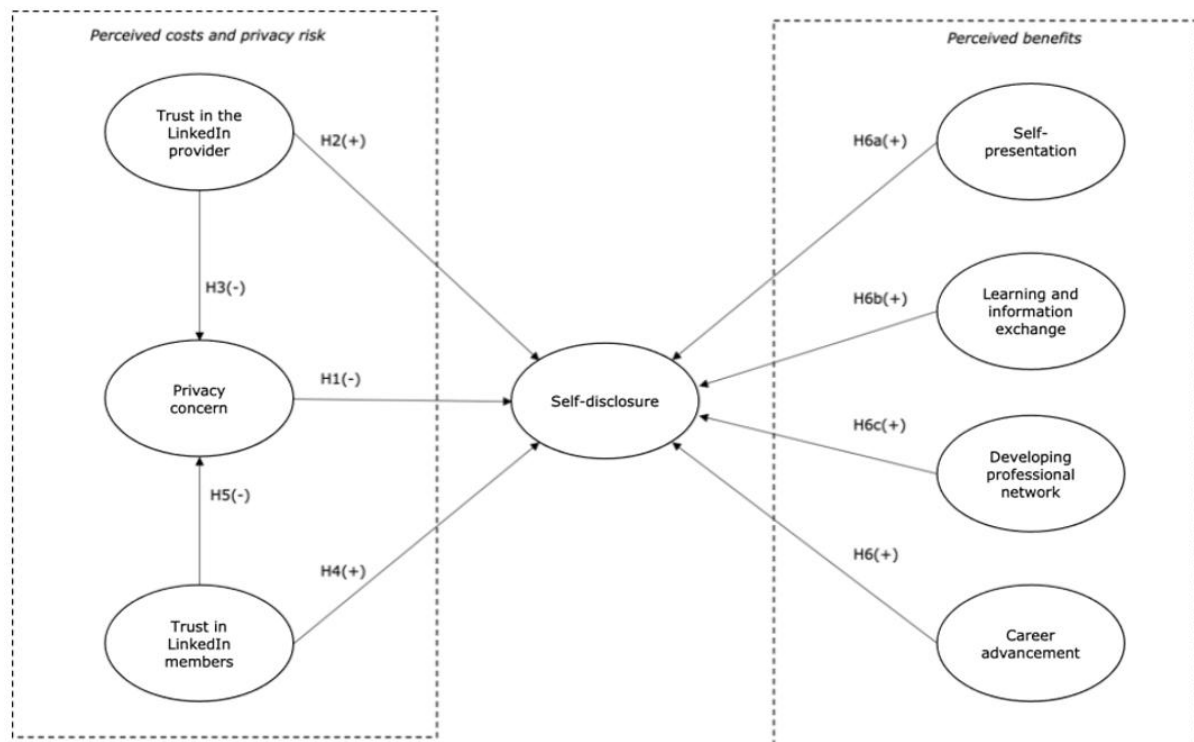


Figure 1. Proposed model (created by the authors)

As shown in [Figure 1](#), this model positions self-disclosure as the focal outcome on LinkedIn. Two trust-related variables (trust in the provider and trust in LinkedIn members), privacy concern, and four perceived benefit dimensions—self-presentation, learning and information exchange, developing a professional network, and career advancement—were specified as direct predictors. In addition, both forms of trust are hypothesized to affect privacy concern, capturing their role in shaping the perceived risks associated with sharing professional information on the platform.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design using a questionnaire administered by professional interviewers between September and November 2024. Data were collected in Chile, specifically in major regional capitals located in the northern, central, and southern zones of the country. The target population comprised adults (18+) with an active LinkedIn account, defined as having accessed the platform at least once in the previous month. Individuals without an account or without recent activity were excluded. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was used, given the ease of access to the population of interest and the study's objectives. Data were collected through face-to-face surveys administered by professional interviewers. A pretest with 30 users was conducted to semantically validate the instrument, and the final sample comprised 370 participants.

Regarding sociodemographic distribution, 50.6% identified as men and 49.4% as women. Most participants (54.7%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by those aged 18-29 years (24.7%). In terms of education, the most frequent levels were bachelor's degree (36.5%), postgraduate diploma/certificate (21.8%), and secondary education (11.2%). The fields of study most represented were engineering (34.1%), business (23.5%), and humanities (17.1%). Regarding the occupational sector, respondents primarily worked in mining (22.4%) and services (18.2%). The majority of respondents reported 5-10 years of professional experience (64.1%). With respect to LinkedIn use, 25.3% reported logging in once per week and 20.6% reported logging in daily. The main motivations were job search (32.4%) and interest in professional topics (36.5%). Behaviorally, 79.4% reported searching for jobs via LinkedIn, 66.5% had applied for a job through the platform, and 22.0% reported obtaining a job through this channel.

Measurement Scales

All variables were measured using items adapted from previously validated scales and linguistically adjusted to LinkedIn's professional context. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree"). Self-disclosure was captured using three items from Krasnova and Veltri (2010), reflecting users' willingness to share information on their profiles (e.g., maintaining a comprehensive profile that includes relevant professional and limited personal details). Privacy concerns were measured using three items adapted from Zhao et al. (2012), addressing perceived risks of information misuse on LinkedIn (e.g., worrying that disclosed profile data could be abused or cause unexpected problems). Trust in the provider (LinkedIn) was assessed using three items from Krasnova and Veltri (2010), focusing on perceptions of responsibility, security, and data protection by the platform (e.g., believing that LinkedIn will protect personal information and not use it for unauthorized purposes). Trust in network members was measured using three items from Krasnova and Veltri (2010), capturing beliefs about other users' integrity and reliability (e.g., expecting that other LinkedIn users will not misuse information obtained from one's profile or posts). Self-presentation was measured using three items adapted from Krasnova et al. (2010), reflecting the use of LinkedIn to project a favorable professional image (e.g., using the platform to showcase one's best professional qualities). Learning and information exchange were captured using three items derived from Grissa (2017), focusing on sharing, seeking, and discussing work-related information (e.g., participating in LinkedIn groups to exchange experiences with other professionals). Career advancement was measured using three items based on Grissa (2017) and Florenthal (2015), assessing the use of LinkedIn for professional development and job opportunities (e.g., using the platform to search for jobs or enhance career prospects). Professional networking was measured using three items adapted from Krasnova and Veltri (2010), referring to building and maintaining work-related ties (e.g., using LinkedIn to initiate and sustain relationships with other professionals).

Statistical Tools

Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), a technique suitable for models with multiple latent constructs, complex relationships, and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2016). This approach enables the simultaneous assessment of measurement quality and structural relationships and is widely used in studies of behavior on digital platforms. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated by verifying internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha [CA], rho_A [pA], and composite reliability [pc]), convergent validity (indicator loadings ≥ 0.70 and average variance extracted [AVE] ≥ 0.50), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) (values < 0.90). Second, the structural model was estimated, examining path coefficients, explained variance (R^2), and overall model fit using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Model estimation and significance testing were conducted using bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples in SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Measurement Model Evaluation

We evaluated the measurement model to ensure the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs included in the PLS-SEM structural model. Internal consistency was examined using CA, Dijkstra-Henseler's pA, and pc. As shown in [Table 1](#), all constructs exceeded the recommended 0.70 threshold for these indices, indicating adequate internal consistency (Hair et al., 2022). Convergent validity was assessed based on standardized indicator loadings and AVE. All item loadings were above the 0.70 cutoff, and all AVE values surpassed the 0.50 threshold, confirming that each set of indicators appropriately represented its latent construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1 further shows that several constructs exhibit particularly strong psychometric properties. For instance, privacy concern attained a CA of 0.894, a pc of 0.934, and an AVE of 0.825, while trust in LinkedIn members achieved CA = 0.930, pc = 0.955, and AVE = 0.877. Self-presentation also performed very well, with CA = 0.884, pA = 0.884, pc = 0.928, and AVE = 0.811.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity of constructs

Construct	Item	FL	CA	pA	pc	AVE
Privacy concern	I am concerned that a person can find private information about me on LinkedIn.	0.920				
	I am concerned that the information I provide on LinkedIn would be abused by other parties.	0.931	0.894	0.906	0.934	0.825
	I am concerned that the information I disclose on LinkedIn would cause unexpected problems.	0.827				
Trust in the LinkedIn provider	In my opinion, LinkedIn is responsible for the data that has been provided by users.	0.833				
	I feel that LinkedIn can protect the privacy of my personal information.	0.723	0.729	0.778	0.843	0.643
	I trust LinkedIn will not use my information for any other purpose.	0.873				
Trust in LinkedIn members	I am sure other LinkedIn users would not misuse the information they get from my LinkedIn profile or posts.	0.934				
	I do not doubt that LinkedIn users will not use information about me in the wrong way.	0.952	0.930	0.933	0.955	0.877
	Generally, I believe LinkedIn users can be trusted.	0.924				
Self-disclosure	I have a comprehensive profile on LinkedIn.	0.823				
	Professional and personal information about me found on LinkedIn would make it easier for others to understand me.	0.819	0.758	0.761	0.860	0.643
	I find time to keep my professional information on LinkedIn up-to-date.	0.818				
Self-presentation	LinkedIn allows me to make good impression professionally.	0.897				
	LinkedIn allows me to represent myself professionally.	0.915	0.884	0.884	0.928	0.811
	LinkedIn helps me to show my best side to others in a professional manner.	0.891				
Learning and exchange information	I share and seek information from other LinkedIn users.	0.845				
	I discuss and exchange work experiences with other LinkedIn users.	0.887	0.814	0.839	0.888	0.725
	I join or participate in groups related to my needs.	0.821				
Developing professional network	LinkedIn really helps me in building relationships with professional workers.	0.907				
	It is very easy to keep professional relationships using LinkedIn.	0.929	0.873	0.896	0.922	0.797
	LinkedIn is useful for developing business and personal relationships.	0.840				
Career advancement	I believe LinkedIn can help me to get a job.	0.841				
	I feel that LinkedIn is a social media for finding jobs.	0.736	0.800	0.718	0.798	0.592
	LinkedIn is useful for my career advancement.	0.957				

Note. FL: Factor loadings & All factor loadings are standardized and statistically significant ($p < .001$)

Table 2. Discriminant validity – Fornell-Larcker criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Career advancement	0.770							
2. Learning and exchange information	0.429	0.851						
3. Self-presentation	0.455	0.301	0.901					
4. Self-disclosure	0.190	0.390	0.388	0.820				
5. Trust in LinkedIn members	0.320	0.083	0.266	0.099	0.937			
6. Trust in the LinkedIn provider	0.244	0.146	0.381	0.290	0.645	0.802		
7. Developing professional network	0.647	0.546	0.469	0.225	0.336	0.318	0.893	
8. Privacy concern	0.016	0.093	-0.138	-0.119	-0.237	-0.285	0.009	0.908

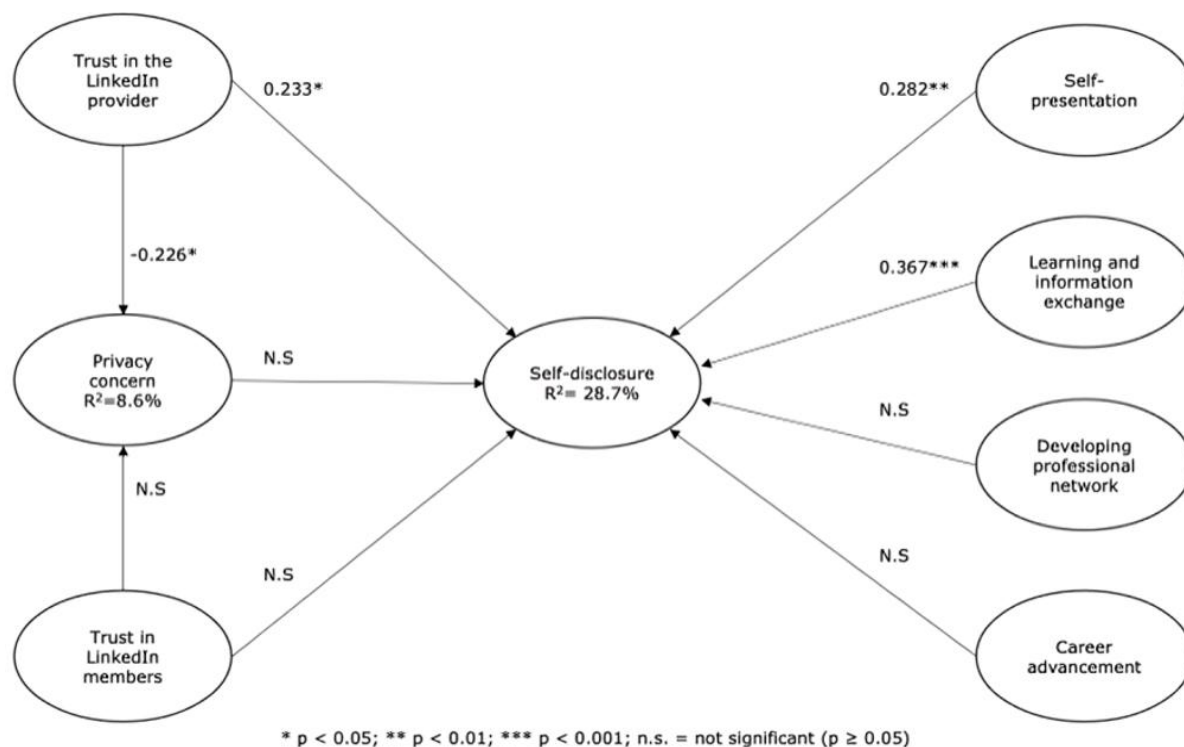
Note. Diagonal elements represent the square root of the AVE for each construct

Regarding perceived benefits, learning and information exchange (CA = 0.814; pc = 0.888; AVE = 0.725), developing a professional network (CA = 0.873; pc = 0.922; AVE = 0.797), and career advancement (CA = 0.800; pc = 0.798; AVE = 0.592) all display satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Finally, self-disclosure (CA = 0.758; pc = 0.860; AVE = 0.643) and trust in the LinkedIn provider (CA = 0.729; pc = 0.843; AVE = 0.643) also met conventional reliability benchmarks, supporting the adequacy of the overall measurement model.

For discriminant validity, we applied the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2016; Voorhees et al., 2016). As shown in [Table 2](#), the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal elements) was greater than its correlation with any other construct, indicating that each latent variable shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs in the model. For example, the square roots of AVE for privacy concern (0.908), trust in LinkedIn members (0.937), and developing a

Table 3. Discriminant validity – HTMT ratio

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Learning and exchange information	0.474						
3. Self-presentation	0.582	0.333					
4. Self-disclosure	0.177	0.480	0.465				
5. Trust in LinkedIn members	0.302	0.103	0.294	0.113			
6. Trust in the LinkedIn provider	0.239	0.187	0.461	0.379	0.784		
7. Developing professional network	0.735	0.642	0.537	0.267	0.375	0.380	
1. Privacy concern	0.090	0.144	0.152	0.145	0.254	0.325	0.039

**Figure 2.** Structural model results (PLS-SEM) (created by the authors)

professional network (0.893) all exceeded their respective inter-construct correlations, supporting adequate discriminant validity under the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Additionally, the HTMT values reported in [Table 3](#) are below the conservative 0.90 threshold, providing additional evidence of discriminant validity. The highest HTMT values were observed between conceptually related benefit dimensions, such as developing a professional network and career advancement (HTMT = 0.735), and between trust in the LinkedIn provider and trust in LinkedIn members (HTMT = 0.784); however, all remained within acceptable limits. These results indicate that although some constructs are moderately correlated, as expected given their theoretical proximity, they retain sufficient empirical distinctiveness.

Taken together, the evidence for internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity supports the psychometric quality of the measurement model and justifies proceeding to the assessment of the structural model.

Structural Model Evaluation

After validating the measurement model, we evaluated the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. We analyzed path coefficients (β), R^2 values for endogenous variables, and overall model fit using the SRMR. The model yielded an SRMR of 0.065, below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good global fit (Henseler et al., 2016). Regarding the R^2 , the independent variables accounted for 28.7% of the variance in self-disclosure ($R^2 = 0.287$) and 8.6% of the variance in privacy concern ($R^2 = 0.086$), suggesting a moderate explanatory capacity for the focal outcome and a relatively modest explanation of privacy-related perceptions ([Figure 2](#)).

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results

H	Path	β	t-value	97.5%CI	p-value	Result
H1	Privacy concern $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	-0.076	0.996	[-0.216,0.084]	0.319	Not supported
H2	Trust in the LinkedIn provider $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	0.233	2.332	[0.030,0.423]	0.020	Supported
H3	Trust in the LinkedIn provider $\rightarrow$ privacy concern.	-0.226	2.255	[-0.423,-0.030]	0.024	Supported
H4	Trust in LinkedIn members $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	-0.124	1.405	[-0.296,0.049]	0.160	Not supported
H5	Trust in LinkedIn members $\rightarrow$ privacy concern.	-0.091	0.923	[-0.283,0.104]	0.356	Not supported
H6a	Self-presentation $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	0.282	3.078	[0.113,0.470]	0.002	Supported
H6b	Learning and information exchange $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	0.367	3.974	[0.172,0.534]	0.000	Supported
H6c	Developing professional network $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	-0.116	1.099	[-0.307,0.104]	0.272	Not supported
H6d	Career advancement $\rightarrow$ self-disclosure.	-0.037	0.296	[-0.287,0.201]	0.767	Not supported

Note. H: Hypothesis

As summarized in **Table 4**, four of the hypothesized paths were statistically significant. First, trust in the LinkedIn provider exerted a positive effect on self-disclosure ($\beta = 0.233$, $t = 2.332$, 97.5% confidence interval [CI] [0.030, 0.423], $p = 0.020$) and a negative effect on privacy concern ($\beta = -0.226$, $t = 2.255$, 97.5% CI [-0.423, -0.030], $p = 0.024$). This pattern indicates that when users perceive the platform as responsible and protective of their data, they are more inclined to share information and report lower levels of concern about potential misuse.

In addition, the two perceived benefit dimensions showed positive and significant effects on self-disclosure. Learning and information exchange produced the largest coefficient in the model ($\beta = 0.367$, $t = 3.974$, 97.5% CI [0.172, 0.534], $p < 0.001$), followed by self-presentation ($\beta = 0.282$, $t = 3.078$, 97.5% CI [0.113, 0.470], $p = 0.002$). These results suggest that users tend to disclose information on LinkedIn primarily when they perceive functional benefits linked to knowledge sharing and the construction of a favorable professional image.

In contrast, five relationships were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Neither privacy concern nor trust in LinkedIn members had a meaningful effect on self-disclosure (H1: $\beta = -0.076$, $p = 0.319$; H4: $\beta = -0.124$, $p = 0.160$), and trust in LinkedIn members did not significantly predict privacy concern (H5: $\beta = -0.091$, $p = 0.356$). Similarly, the perceived benefit dimensions of developing a professional network and career advancement were not significantly related to self-disclosure (H6c: $\beta = -0.116$, $p = 0.272$; H6d: $\beta = -0.037$, $p = 0.767$).

Overall, the empirical results partially support the proposed model, highlighting the enabling role of platform trust and specific functional benefits—particularly learning, information exchange, and professional self-presentation—in shaping users' willingness to disclose personal information on the platform.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine the determinants of self-disclosure on LinkedIn by applying PCT to a professional social network context. Specifically, we evaluated the role of two forms of trust (in the provider and in other members), privacy concern, and four perceived benefit dimensions (self-presentation, learning and information exchange, networking, and career advancement) in users' willingness to disclose information. Overall, the findings partially support the proposed model and provide a nuanced view of how professional self-disclosure operates in Latin America.

First, the results are broadly consistent with the core logic of PCT (Dinev & Hart, 2006; Krasnova et al., 2010; van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023). In this sense, users appear to weigh perceived benefits and risks when deciding whether to reveal personal and professional information on LinkedIn. The strongest predictors of self-disclosure were learning and information exchange and self-presentation, which underscores that users disclose primarily when they perceive clear functional and symbolic gains from participating on the platform. This pattern aligns with prior work highlighting self-presentation as central to personal branding and professional positioning on LinkedIn (Krasnova et al., 2010), as well as evidence that knowledge exchange is associated with active participation in professional communities, reciprocity, and increased visibility (Florenthal, 2015; Grissa, 2017). Recent studies such as Eitiveni et al. (2023) similarly show that these benefits can outweigh concerns in contexts where users see tangible returns in reputation, learning, and connections.

Second, the dual effect of trust in the provider (positively related to self-disclosure and negatively related to privacy concern) confirms the enabling role of institutional trust in digital professional environments. When users perceive LinkedIn as responsible for their data and capable of protecting their privacy, they report lower perceived risks and become more willing to share information. This finding is consistent with Min and Kim (2015), Eitiveni et al. (2023), and van der Schyff and Flowerday (2023), who have argued that trust in the platform's governance and technical infrastructure functions as a buffer against perceived privacy threats. In our model, institutional trust not only reduces concern but also directly fosters self-disclosure, reinforcing the idea that perceptions of security, transparency, and control are central to how users navigate professional platforms.

These findings can also be interpreted in light of LinkedIn's platform mechanisms. Self-disclosure on professional social networks is not only the result of individual benefit-risk evaluations but also of platform-mediated visibility. Recent work conceptualizes platforms and algorithms as visibility agents that shape how content, persons, and identities become visible to others, and introduces the notion of reflected algorithmic visibility to explain how users infer how platforms "see" them through algorithmic feedback such as recommendations, targeted content, and interaction metrics (Barta & Andalibi, 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant for LinkedIn, where users construct professional selves within platform-specific norms of authenticity, self-promotion, and reputation management (Weiss & Glück, 2024). LinkedIn's engineering documentation also indicates that feed visibility is shaped by a two-stage ranking architecture that combines network-based and out-of-network candidate generation with passive and active engagement signals, including clicks, dwell time, comments, and reshares (Zhang et al., 2024). In parallel, LinkedIn's privacy documentation emphasizes users' choices regarding profile information and data collection, use, and sharing (LinkedIn, 2025). Therefore, the significant effects of self-presentation and learning/information exchange may reflect not only privacy-calculus evaluations but also users' adaptation to a platform environment where professional visibility, knowledge sharing, and reputational signaling are algorithmically and institutionally mediated.

Third, the non-significant relationship between privacy concern and self-disclosure contributes to ongoing debates around the so-called "privacy paradox". Although theory posits that higher concern should reduce the willingness to disclose, our results show that concern does not exert a statistically significant effect on self-disclosure. This pattern is similar to the findings of Eitiveni et al. (2023) in Indonesia, where users recognize privacy risks but continue to disclose information because they prioritize perceived benefits. In our Chilean sample, this paradox suggests that, under certain conditions, concern may be acknowledged at a cognitive level but downplayed in concrete behavior when users perceive strong functional and reputational returns or when disclosure is seen as a necessary condition for professional visibility (Krasnova et al., 2010; van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023).

Fourth, the absence of significant effects for trust in LinkedIn members, both on self-disclosure and privacy concern, invites a refinement of how interpersonal trust is conceptualized in professional networks. While it was expected that trust in other users would mitigate concern and encourage disclosure, our results suggest that users' decisions are more strongly anchored in institutional trust (toward the platform) than in interpersonal trust (toward other members). One possible explanation is that, in this context, users assume a baseline level of reputational risk inherent to professional visibility and therefore place more weight on platform-level safeguards than on expectations regarding individual behavior.

Finally, the non-significant effects of networking and career advancement on self-disclosure indicate that LinkedIn may not be experienced primarily as a direct job-search channel by the respondents, but rather as a space for symbolic positioning and reputation management. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Chang et al. (2017) and Eitiveni et al. (2023), who note that, in certain cultural and age cohorts, career advancement motives do not always translate into greater disclosure, especially when users prioritize horizontal learning relationships over hierarchical ties with employers. In our case, the results suggest that self-disclosure is driven less by explicit employability goals and more by the desire to construct a coherent professional identity, gain visibility, and participate in knowledge-sharing.

Implications

This study offers several contributions to the literature on professional social networks, self-disclosure, and privacy management in digital environments. At the theoretical level, it extends the application of PCT to LinkedIn, showing that in employment-oriented environments, perceived benefits, particularly self-presentation and learning/information exchange, carry greater explanatory weight for self-disclosure than privacy-related risks. This nuance complements the traditional applications of the theory, which have focused predominantly on recreational or general-purpose social networks (Eitiveni et al., 2023; Min & Kim, 2015).

A second contribution lies in the contextual perspective derived from a sample of Chilean LinkedIn users. The lack of significant effects of interpersonal trust and privacy concern on self-disclosure contrasts with some findings reported in the United States, Germany, and South Korea, and underscores the importance of cultural norms, risk perceptions, and labor market structures in shaping professional digital behavior. This pattern suggests that future theoretical models should incorporate contextual variables, such as national culture, regulatory environments, and local employment dynamics, when generalizing findings across countries.

Third, this study challenges the conventional assumption that career development is the main driver of LinkedIn use and self-disclosure. Although LinkedIn is widely perceived as an employability tool, our results indicate that self-disclosure is not directly associated with explicit intentions to obtain or change a job. Instead, symbolic benefits such as professional visibility, reputational positioning, knowledge exchange, and belonging to communities of practice appear to be more decisive factors. This opens new avenues for theorizing self-disclosure as a strategic practice of identity work and status signaling, rather than solely as an instrumental response to job-search motives.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer guidance to platform designers, recruiters, and organizations. The dual role of platform trust, simultaneously facilitating self-disclosure and reducing privacy concerns, highlights the need to strengthen security policies, transparency in data use, and mechanisms that enhance users' perceived control over their information. Given that self-presentation and learning emerge as the primary drivers of disclosure, marketing, talent, and communication teams should promote features that support professional visibility and knowledge circulation, such as collaborative content spaces, digital badges for expertise, and active thematic communities. Finally, because self-disclosure is not directly tied to explicit career-advancement motives, recruiters should interpret LinkedIn profiles less as signals of active job searches and more as expressions of professional identity, digital reputation, networking engagement, and continuous learning, enabling a more holistic assessment of candidates' potential.

CONCLUSION

This study had several limitations. First, the sample was restricted to LinkedIn users residing in Chile, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other geographic and sociocultural contexts. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference and does not capture behavior changes over time. Third, the exclusive use of self-reported measures may introduce social desirability bias or discrepancies between stated intentions and actual behaviors. Finally, the model focuses on four perceived benefits associated with self-disclosure, whereas the literature points to additional relevant benefits that were not examined in this study.

Based on these limitations, we propose five avenues for future research. First, cross-country or cross-cultural studies could explore how contextual factors shape the relative weight of benefits, trust, and privacy concern in professional self-disclosure. Second, longitudinal or experimental designs would help assess how users respond to changes in privacy policies, platform affordances, or labor market conditions. Third, future models could incorporate additional explanatory variables, such as perceived control over information, privacy awareness, perceived usefulness, or personality traits, to enrich the explanatory power of privacy calculus-based frameworks. Fourth, it would be valuable to examine other benefits linked to self-disclosure, such as social interaction (Hossain, 2019) and enjoyment (Cheung et al., 2015). Fifth, the relatively low R^2 for privacy concern (0.086) indicates the need to include constructs such as perceived severity, privacy knowledge, and perceived control over information, which have already shown relevance in prior research (Wang et al., 2016; Zlatolas et al., 2015).

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AI statement: During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Paperpal solely to improve the English language, grammar, readability, and writing style of the manuscript. The tool was not used to generate research ideas, conduct analyses, interpret results, or develop the scientific content of the study. All revisions suggested by the tool were carefully reviewed by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the published work.

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