



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dating Anxiety and Loneliness in Online Dating: The Moderating Effect of Gender

Martaria Rizky Rinaldi¹, Octla Fiera Sarah Azzahra², Jelang Hardika³

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Abstract

In the digital age, online dating applications have revolutionized the way young adults form romantic connections, providing both opportunities and challenges. Understanding the psychological impacts of these platforms is crucial. Young adults, while navigating romantic pursuits and various developmental challenges, are susceptible to feelings of loneliness. Dating anxiety is a significant factor that can exacerbate loneliness within this demographic. Moreover, gender differences may influence individuals' experiences in dating situations. This research aims to explore the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness among users of dating applications and to examine the role of gender as a moderating variable in this relationship. The study employs a quantitative correlational approach, incorporating demographic data and two scales: the Dating Anxiety Scale and the UCLA Loneliness Scale 3. The research participants consist of 250 early adults aged 20-34 who actively use online dating applications. Data analysis involves descriptive analysis and moderation analysis using the Jamovi software. The research findings indicate a significant direct relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, gender was found to have no significant impact on loneliness ($p > 0.05$), and the interaction between dating anxiety and gender was not significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests a uniform impact among both genders in the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness. The study highlights the complex dynamics influencing loneliness among online dating application users. The findings enhance theoretical understanding of how dating anxiety relates to loneliness. Practically, these insights can help developers create features that reduce anxiety and loneliness. Future research should identify other factors influencing these dynamics to further enrich theoretical and practical knowledge in this field

Keywords: dating anxiety, loneliness, online dating

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of online dating applications has significantly transformed the way individuals seek romantic relationships. These platforms have revolutionized the process of meeting new people, enabling young adults to discover potential partners based on their preferences and requirements (Hamilton, 2016). Online dating applications offer broader access, allowing individuals to explore connections beyond their existing social circles (Frazetto, 2009). This increased accessibility can enhance opportunities to find someone with similar values, interests, or life goals.

Furthermore, dating applications provide a space for

individuals to better understand themselves and determine what they are seeking in a relationship (Marston et al., 2020). The interaction process through these applications can also enhance communication and interpersonal skills (Ruben et al., 2021). While the positive benefits of dating applications are diverse, users need to be cautious and understand potential risks, such as the lack of authenticity in information or safety concerns during in-person meetings (Degen & Kleeberg-Niepage, 2023; Choi et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2018). Nevertheless, if used wisely, online dating applications can be an effective tool for building romantic relationships in the early stages of adulthood.

In the early adulthood phase, individuals face various developmental tasks (Scales et al., 2015). Early adults are building personal identities, exploring values, and understanding personal desires. Autonomy becomes a focus, and career stability and financial stability also take priority, with romantic relationships helping align career and personal life goals. Intimacy, both emotional and physical, is sought as part of developing the ability to form strong bonds with others. Exploring life partners becomes a crucial aspect, where individuals explore partner types to find compatibility and understand personal preferences.

^{1*)2,3} Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta

**) corresponding author*

Martaria Rizky Rinaldi

Email: martariarizky@mercubuana-yogya.ac.id

While seeking romantic relationships, they also strive to build economic and social independence, influencing how they invest in relationships and manage shared responsibilities. Understanding these developmental tasks, early adults can integrate the search for romantic relationships as a crucial part of their personal development journey.

In the midst of actively pursuing romantic relationships and addressing diverse developmental challenges, young adults frequently encounter the potential risk of experiencing loneliness (Achterbergh et al., 2020; Chiao et al., 2019). Challenges involving identity development, relationship exploration, and efforts to build independence can create situations where individuals feel alienated or lonely. Focus on careers, geographical changes, or high daily busyness can lead to emotional isolation (Wright & Silard, 2022). Uncertainty in romantic relationships or failure to meet personal expectations can also contribute to feelings of loneliness. Loneliness in early adulthood can have a significant impact on their psychological and emotional well-being (McKenna-Plumley et al., 2023). Feelings of alienation and loneliness can lead to stress, anxiety, and even depression (Mann et al., 2022). Social discomfort can affect mental health, disrupt concentration, and decrease motivation to achieve life goals (Luchetti et al., 2020; Smith & Pollak, 2022). Loneliness can also worsen sleep problems and cause an overall decrease in energy (Griffin et al., 2020).

In the context of romantic relationships, loneliness can trigger feelings of desperation or lead individuals to engage in unhealthy relationships merely to alleviate the emotional distress associated with loneliness (Ray, 2021). Consequently, this can have detrimental effects on relationship health and the overall psychological well-being of individuals (Currin et al., 2022).

Various factors can influence loneliness in young adults. Environmental changes, such as relocating, job transitions, or separation from previous social environments, can evoke feelings of alienation (Barjaková et al., 2023; Fardghassemi & Joffe, 2022). High levels of busyness, particularly in the pursuit of career development, may exacerbate feelings of loneliness due to a limited availability of time for social interactions (Wax et al., 2022; Wright & Silard, 2022). Insufficient social support, resulting from either a lack of friendship networks or the loss of close relationships, is identified as a crucial contributing factor. Additionally, emotions of being misunderstood or unloved, interpersonal conflicts, or discrepancies in values with the surrounding environment can contribute to the experience of loneliness (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2015; Mahon et al., 2006).

Online Interaction Theory offers insights into how interactions mediated by technology, such as those on dating apps, differ from face-to-face interactions. Walther's (1996) Hyperpersonal Model suggests that online communication can sometimes lead to more intense and intimate exchanges because individuals have greater control over their self-presentation. However, the lack of non-verbal cues can also lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications, potentially increasing anxiety and feelings of isolation (Walther, 2011). The anonymity and asynchronicity of online interactions can both alleviate and exacerbate social anxiety, depending on the individual's comfort with digital communication.

Dating anxiety emerges as an additional factor influencing loneliness in young adults (Adamczyk & Segrin, 2015). Individuals experiencing dating anxiety may harbor fears or lack confidence in romantic interactions, thereby impeding their ability to form satisfying relationships. The

fear of rejection or uncertainty within relationships can intensify and perpetuate feelings of loneliness (Arunrasameesopa & Wongpakaran, 2021). Moreover, societal pressure to find a life partner or meet expectations in the modern dating landscape can elevate stress and anxiety levels, subsequently exacerbating feelings of loneliness (Armeli et al., 2022).

Social Anxiety Theory provides a crucial lens through which to understand dating anxiety. According to this theory, social anxiety arises from the fear of negative evaluation by others (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). In the context of dating, this fear can manifest as dating anxiety, where individuals worry about rejection or judgment from potential partners. This anxiety can hinder the formation of satisfying romantic relationships and exacerbate feelings of loneliness (Leary, 2001). Individuals with high social anxiety may avoid social interactions, leading to fewer opportunities for meaningful connections and increased isolation.

Several previous studies have indicated that dating anxiety contributes to higher levels of loneliness among young individuals undergoing relationship exploration and identity formation (Swami et al., 2022). However, these studies tend to concentrate on the general impacts of dating anxiety and loneliness without explicitly considering the role of gender (Adamczyk & Segrin, 2015). Therefore, there exists a knowledge gap in the literature regarding how gender differences may moderate the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness.

Previous studies have also underscored the complexity of factors contributing to loneliness among users of online dating applications, including environmental changes, busyness levels, and lack of social support (Achterberg et al., 2020; Chiao et al., 2019). However, few delve into how dating anxiety, as an additional factor, may influence loneliness levels among users of online dating applications, and whether gender differences moderate this relationship.

By emphasizing the role of gender as a moderating variable in the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness among users of online dating applications, this study addresses this knowledge gap. It aims to provide deeper and more contextual insights into how the experiences of dating anxiety and loneliness vary by gender. Thus, the study not only confirms previous findings regarding the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness but also offers a richer understanding of how these factors interact with gender in the context of online dating applications. This contributes new insights to the existing literature and paves the way for further research on this topic.

This research aims to explore the role of gender as a moderator that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness, contributing significantly to our understanding of the complex interplay of psychological and social factors in a digital context.

The primary hypothesis of this study is that there is a significant direct relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness among users of online dating applications. Specifically, it is hypothesized that higher levels of dating anxiety will be associated with higher levels of loneliness among individuals using these applications.

Furthermore, the study hypothesizes that gender will moderate the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness. Specifically, it is expected that gender differences will influence how dating anxiety affects loneliness, with the relationship potentially differing between male and female users of online dating applications.

METHODS

Research design

This research employs a quantitative correlational approach to examine the relationships among variables, particularly within the context of gender's role as a moderator in the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness.

Population and sampling

The participant criteria for this study were young adults who use dating applications. The sampling technique employed was convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects sample elements based on their availability and easy accessibility (Elfil & Negida, 2017).

Participant characteristics

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, rigorous bias control measures were implemented, including strict inclusion and exclusion criteria for participant selection. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must fall within the young adult age range of 20 to 34 years and actively use dating applications. This age range was chosen to focus the study on individuals in a developmental stage where romantic relationships are particularly salient. Additionally, limiting participation to active users of dating applications ensured that participants had relevant experience with online dating, enhancing the applicability of their responses to the study objectives.

Conversely, participants outside the specified age range or those who did not actively use dating applications were excluded from the study. Excluding individuals outside the specified age range maintained consistency with the study's focus on young adults, while excluding non-users of dating applications ensured that responses were pertinent to the research context. Furthermore, responses deemed inaccurate or incomplete based on predefined criteria during data cleaning were also excluded from the final analysis. This meticulous data cleaning process aimed to uphold data quality and integrity by removing any responses that could potentially introduce bias or compromise the validity of the research findings.

Based on the data collected from 250 participants, as described in Table 1, it is evident that the study sample is predominantly male, constituting 72.4% of the total participants (n = 181). The remaining 27.6% of the participants are female, totaling 69 individuals. The age distribution within the sample ranges from 20 to 34 years. The average age of the entire participants is 23.36 years (SD = 2.54). The age group with the highest representation is 22 years, accounting for 21.2% of the participants (n = 53). On the other hand, the 33 years age group has no representation in the sample (n = 0). The distribution across other age groups varies, with a noticeable decline in participant representation in older age categories.

Research instruments

The research instruments include demographic data, a dating anxiety scale, and a loneliness scale. Demographic data encompass basic information about research participants, such as age and gender. The dating anxiety scale measures individuals' feelings of nervousness, fear, and pressure experienced during interactions with the

opposite sex or potential partners in dating situations. The loneliness scale gauges the intensity of perceived loneliness.

The dating anxiety scale, developed by Glickman and La Greca (2004), has been adapted into Bahasa Indonesia using the back-translation method. The internal consistency of the scale is 0.946. The scale comprises 21 statements. Example statements from the dating anxiety scale include "I get worried when I think that dating will create a negative impression of myself" and "I'm afraid the person I'm dating will find faults in me." Responses are measured on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree.

The loneliness scale utilizes the UCLA Loneliness scale developed by Russell (1996). The scale has been translated into Bahasa Indonesia through back-translation and has undergone reliability testing. The internal consistency of the scale is 0.887. Originally containing 20 items, one item was eliminated during translation and testing, resulting in a total of 19 questions for this study. Example statements from the loneliness scale include "How often do you feel alone?" and "How often do you feel distant from anyone?". Responses are measured on a four-alternative scale: never, rarely, sometimes, and always.

Table 1.
Demographic Data (N = 250)

Demographic variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	181	72.4
Female	69	27.6
Age		
20	12	4.8
21	45	18
22	53	21.2
23	52	20.8
24	28	11.2
25	20	8
26	12	4.8
27	7	2.8
28	9	3.6
29	3	1.2
30	2	0.8
31	4	1.6
32	2	0.8
33	0	0
34	1	0.4

Data collection procedures and research ethics

An online survey form was created using a reputable online survey platform. The form included scales to measure dating anxiety, loneliness, and demographic information. Before the widespread distribution of the survey, it underwent a pilot testing phase. A small, representative group of respondents from the target population participated in the pilot test. The primary aim of this phase was to assess the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the survey questions. Feedback from pilot test participants was collected and used to refine the survey instrument.

Various social media platforms frequented by users of online dating applications were identified. Distribution strategies were tailored to match the characteristics and preferences of the target population to maximize engagement and participation rates.

Participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the research objectives, data collection procedures, and their privacy rights. Before participating in the survey, participants were required to provide explicit consent. The consent process was transparent, ensuring that participants understood the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses.

Continuous promotional efforts were made via social media channels to maximize participation rates and broaden the reach of the survey. Engaging content and targeted messaging were utilized to encourage active participation from the target population.

Data analysis

Data analysis involved descriptive analysis, assumption testing, and moderation analysis using the Jamovi statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and dispersion, were computed to summarize the characteristics of the study sample and the variables of interest. This provided a clear overview of the demographic profile of the participants and the distribution of scores on the dating anxiety and loneliness scales. Before proceeding with inferential analysis, assumption testing was conducted to ensure that the data met the necessary assumptions for the chosen statistical tests. Moderation analysis was conducted with

the medmod module. Moderation analysis helps assess whether the strength or direction of the relationships between the tested variables is influenced by a third variable, in this case, gender (The jamovi project, 2024). Additional analysis was conducted using independent sample t-tests to examine gender differences in dating anxiety and loneliness. This analysis allowed for a comparison of mean scores between male and female participants on the dating anxiety and loneliness scales, elucidating any significant differences between genders in these variables.

RESULTS

Based on the descriptive analysis of 250 participants outlined in Table 2, loneliness shows a mean (M) score of 44.6, with a standard deviation (SD) of 8.21, and a range from 24.0 to 63.0. This indicates a moderate level of loneliness with a stable distribution across the sample, supported by a median of 44.0. In contrast, dating anxiety has a mean score of 61.4, an SD of 17.77, and a range from 21.0 to 102.0, indicating a higher average level and greater variability. The median score of 63.0 reflects this variability. The wider range and higher SD for dating anxiety suggest diverse levels of anxiety among participants (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Descriptive Analysis Result

	N	Missing	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Loneliness	250	0	44.6	44.0	8.21	24.0	63.0
Dating anxiety	250	0	61.4	63.0	17.77	21.0	102.0

The assumption testing results indicate that the data is normally distributed, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.336. Additionally, there is no occurrence of multicollinearity among the predictor variables, as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is 1.04 ($VIF < 10$), and the Tolerance is 0.964 ($p > 0.01$). These findings suggest that the data meets the assumption of normal distribution, and there is no significant multicollinearity among the predictor variables, thereby supporting the validity of the assumptions for further statistical analyses.

The results of the moderation analysis regarding the impact of gender on the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness are presented in Table 3. The moderation analysis revealed a significant direct effect of

dating anxiety on loneliness, indicating that higher levels of dating anxiety are associated with increased feelings of loneliness. However, gender did not have a significant direct effect on loneliness, suggesting that both male and female users of dating apps experience similar levels of loneliness.

Interestingly, the interaction between dating anxiety and gender was not found to be significant. This implies that the impact of dating anxiety on loneliness does not differ significantly between males and females. In other words, regardless of gender, individuals experiencing higher levels of dating anxiety are more likely to report feelings of loneliness.

Table 3.
Moderation Estimates

	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		Z	p
			Lower	Upper		
Dating anxiety	0.19556	0.0266	0.143	0.248	7.350	<.001
Gender	1.32746	1.0539	-0.738	3.393	1.260	0.208
Dating anxiety * Gender	0.00828	0.0590	-0.107	0.124	0.140	0.889

Additional analysis using independent samples t-test reveals a significant difference in gender concerning dating anxiety ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant difference in gender is observed regarding loneliness ($p > 0.05$). This implies that, according to the t-test results, there is a gender-based distinction in the levels of dating anxiety, but no such distinction is found in the levels of loneliness.

Based on the group descriptives presented in Table 4, females exhibit higher mean dating anxiety scores ($M = 66.8$, $SD = 17.77$) compared to males ($M = 59.3$, $SD = 17.37$), with respective medians of 71.0 and 61.0. The range of

scores for dating anxiety is wider for females (21.0 to 95.0) than for males (21.0 to 102.0). Conversely, there is minimal difference in loneliness scores between females ($M = 44.7$, $SD = 7.93$) and males ($M = 44.6$, $SD = 8.33$), with similar medians (45.0 for females and 44.0 for males). The range of loneliness scores is slightly narrower for males (24.0 to 62.0) compared to females (27.0 to 63.0). Overall, these findings suggest that females tend to report higher levels of dating anxiety on average, while differences in loneliness between genders are minimal.

Table 4.
Group Descriptives Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Missing	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Dating anxiety	Female	69	0	66.8	71.0	17.77	21.0	95.0
	Male	181	0	59.3	61.0	17.37	21.0	102.0
Loneliness	Female	69	0	44.7	45.0	7.93	27.0	63.0
	Male	181	0	44.6	44.0	8.33	24.0	62.0

The analysis results indicate a significant difference between genders in terms of dating anxiety levels, with females tending to have higher dating anxiety scores compared to males. Additionally, the range of dating anxiety scores is wider for females than for males.

However, there is no significant difference in loneliness scores between females and males, although there is a slight difference in the range of loneliness scores. This suggests that while differences in dating anxiety can be observed between genders, disparities in loneliness levels are less apparent.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research indicate a significant direct influence between the level of dating anxiety and loneliness in dating app users. This suggests that users of dating apps experiencing dating anxiety also concurrently experience high levels of loneliness. The findings align with previous research emphasizing the psychological impact of dating anxiety (Hakim, 2019). Previous studies have similarly highlighted that experiencing anxiety in dating situations can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, particularly among young adults undergoing identity formation and relationship exploration stages (Hakim, 2019).

Dating anxiety can pose obstacles in social interactions, particularly within romantic contexts (Kashdan et al., 2007). Individuals who feel anxious when faced with dating situations may encounter difficulties engaging in conversations or establishing emotional connections. This, in turn, can limit their ability to form relationships, subsequently increasing feelings of loneliness (Swami et al., 2022). Furthermore, dating anxiety is often associated with negative self-perception or low self-confidence (Swami et al., 2022). Those feeling uneasy or concerned about their evaluation by potential partners may develop a less positive self-view, reinforcing feelings of loneliness (Pop et al., 2022).

Moreover, dating anxiety can create challenges in forming and sustaining relationships (Chorney & Morris, 2008). Individuals worrying about external judgments or

feeling incapable of meeting relationship expectations may struggle with openness and deep connection building. Consequently, this difficulty can lead to emotional isolation and heightened loneliness (Matthews et al., 2016). Dating anxiety can initiate a cycle of anxiety and avoidance (Rizvi et al., 2021). Individuals experiencing anxiety may tend to avoid dating situations or reduce participation in social activities, resulting in social isolation and increased loneliness (Kirwan et al., 2023).

Moreover, dating anxiety often intersects with issues of self-perception and confidence. Individuals grappling with social anxiety may harbor doubts about their attractiveness, likability, or worthiness of love and belonging (Golde et al., 2023). These negative self-perceptions reinforce feelings of loneliness by undermining individuals' confidence in their ability to form meaningful connections and maintain fulfilling relationships (Pop et al., 2022).

Additionally, the cycle of anxiety and avoidance perpetuates feelings of loneliness in dating app users. When faced with anxiety-provoking dating situations, individuals may resort to avoidance behaviors, such as withdrawing from social interactions or avoiding dating altogether, to cope with their discomfort. However, these avoidance strategies only serve to reinforce feelings of loneliness and social isolation, as individuals miss out on opportunities for connection and support (Oren-Yagoda et al., 2022).

The finding that gender does not moderate the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness suggests that the impact of dating anxiety on loneliness is consistent across genders. In other words, regardless of gender, individuals who experience dating anxiety are equally likely to experience loneliness. This finding is significant because it indicates that the psychological processes linking dating anxiety to loneliness operate similarly for both men and women.

One interpretation of this finding is that the underlying mechanisms driving the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness may be universal and not influenced by gender-specific factors. For example, individuals experiencing dating anxiety, regardless of gender, may struggle with forming and maintaining meaningful

connections, leading to feelings of loneliness. This interpretation aligns with research suggesting that dating anxiety can hinder social interactions and relationship formation, thereby contributing to loneliness (Hakim, 2019; Kashdan et al., 2007).

Additionally, the lack of gender moderation suggests that societal or cultural norms surrounding gender roles may not significantly influence how dating anxiety translates into loneliness in dating app users. Traditionally, gender roles may have dictated different expectations and behaviors in dating and relationship contexts, potentially impacting how men and women experience and cope with loneliness. However, in the context of online dating applications and evolving social norms, these traditional differences may be less pronounced, resulting in a more uniform experience of loneliness across genders (Stängle et al., 2022).

The research results indicate no gender influence on the level of loneliness. This suggests that both male and female users have an equal likelihood of experiencing loneliness, aligning with previous research asserting no gender differences in loneliness (Bagaskara et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Additionally, changes in the social roles of men and women in modern society can influence how individuals of both genders perceive and cope with loneliness, potentially reducing differences in loneliness experiences (Bonsaksen et al., 2023). Hence, both men and women have an equal potential to experience similar levels of loneliness when using dating apps.

The findings from this research suggest that understanding loneliness in dating app contexts requires consideration of factors beyond gender that may contribute to loneliness levels, such as the intensity of social interactions, relationship satisfaction, or app usage patterns (Hall et al., 2022; Ibarra et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021).

Based on the findings of this research, the interaction between dating anxiety and gender does not affect loneliness. Although dating anxiety individually influences loneliness levels, the interaction with gender does not provide additional significant explanations. This may indicate that, in this case, the influence of dating anxiety on loneliness levels is not critically dependent on an individual's gender.

The insignificance of interaction results may also suggest that other factors outside dating anxiety and gender may be more dominant in influencing loneliness levels. Variables such as social support, interpersonal relationship quality, or other psychological factors may have a greater contribution to loneliness levels in this sample.

This research reveals a significant difference between genders in the level of dating anxiety, with females exhibiting higher levels of anxiety than males. This finding can be explained by various psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing how females and males experience the dating world (Heyman et al., 2009; Moran et al., 2023).

Psychologically, this gender difference may be related to differences in risk perception and social expectations between females and males (Гуриева et al., 2022; Cislighi & Heise, 2019; Fernández et al., 2023). Females often face greater social pressure regarding norms and expectations in the dating context, including expectations related to physical appearance, behavior, or meeting certain standards. This additional psychological pressure can lead to higher levels of anxiety (Bahrami & Yousefi, 2011).

Social and cultural factors can also play a significant role in gender differences. Gender norms and social

expectations related to gender roles in romantic relationships can contribute to higher levels of dating anxiety among females (Cheema & Malik, 2021). For example, gender stereotypes about the active role of males in initiating dates or stricter norms related to female physical appearance can create additional uncertainty and anxiety for individuals (Maina et al., 2020).

The findings contribute new knowledge to the existing literature by highlighting that, while dating anxiety is a significant predictor of loneliness, this relationship does not differ by gender. This challenges previous assumptions that gender-specific socialization processes might lead to differences in how men and women experience loneliness related to dating anxiety. Instead, our findings suggest that interventions aimed at addressing dating anxiety and loneliness can be universally applied across genders, potentially simplifying the development of supportive measures and resources within dating apps.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample bias dominated by male participants with a proportion of 72.4% out of a total of 250 participants may limit the generalization of these findings to a broader population. The lack of gender variation may affect results, considering differences in dating and loneliness experiences that may arise between males and females. Additionally, this study is limited to a specific age range (20–34 years), so the findings may not be applicable to a wider age group.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by diversifying the sample to include a more balanced gender proportion and a wider age range. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how dating anxiety and loneliness are experienced across different demographics. Additionally, future studies could explore other potential moderating or mediating factors, such as social support, dating styles, or relationship satisfaction, which might influence the relationship between dating anxiety, gender, and loneliness. By expanding the scope of variables and populations, further research can contribute more holistically to understanding the complexity of relationship dynamics in the context of dating apps.

The findings of this research have relevant implications for both academic understanding and practical development in the context of dating app usage. First, the significant relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness emphasizes the importance of understanding individual psychological aspects in the context of online social interaction. Dating app developers may consider providing specific features or support to help users cope with dating anxiety and feel more comfortable in building relationships.

Furthermore, results indicating gender differences in the level of dating anxiety, with females tending to experience higher levels of anxiety, offer insights to dating app organizers to consider the specific needs and preferences of each gender. This may include providing resources or guidelines that can help female users manage their dating anxiety more effectively.

The findings from this research suggest that understanding loneliness in dating app contexts requires consideration of factors beyond gender that may contribute to loneliness levels, such as the intensity of social interactions, relationship satisfaction, or app usage patterns (Hall et al., 2022; Ibarra et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). This comprehensive perspective can guide the development of dating app features and support mechanisms to address the psychological needs of users more effectively.

Moreover, the finding that the interaction between dating anxiety and gender does not affect the level of loneliness indicates the complexity of the factors involved in the experience of loneliness. Further research can delve deeper into understanding additional variables that may mediate or moderate this relationship.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals a significant and direct impact of dating anxiety on loneliness among users of dating apps. It also finds no observed gender influence on loneliness levels, and gender does not act as a moderating factor in the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness. This implies that both male and female users of dating apps exhibit comparable responses to loneliness.

The study confirms a strong direct relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness. This underscores the importance of addressing psychological factors like anxiety to reduce loneliness among dating app users. The research shows no significant difference in loneliness levels between male and female users, indicating that both genders are equally susceptible to loneliness when experiencing dating anxiety. This challenges previous assumptions that gender might moderate the relationship between anxiety and loneliness in dating contexts.

The finding that gender does not moderate the relationship between dating anxiety and loneliness suggests that interventions targeting dating anxiety could be applied universally, without the need for gender-specific modifications.

Limitations include challenges in generalizing findings due to uneven gender distribution and a focus on the 20 to 34 age group. The connection between dating anxiety and loneliness emphasizes the need for addressing individual psychological aspects in online social interactions. Developers can implement features supporting users in managing dating anxiety. Notably, despite variations in dating anxiety, there is no significant difference in loneliness levels between male and female users, emphasizing the importance of designing apps that foster overall emotional well-being. The finding that the interplay between dating anxiety and gender does not impact loneliness highlights the complex nature of factors influencing the experience, necessitating a holistic approach in managing dating applications.

Suggestions for future research involve broadening the diversity of the sample by including a more equitable distribution of gender and a wider age range. This expansion aims to increase the applicability of findings to the entire population of dating app users.

Additionally, the practical implications of this research suggest that developers of dating apps can enhance user satisfaction by considering individual psychological factors, particularly in addressing dating anxiety. The incorporation of features or support systems to assist users in managing dating anxiety can help establish a more supportive environment within dating app platforms. Furthermore, recognizing gender variations in dating anxiety can serve as a basis for app organizers to create a more inclusive and tailored experience to meet the specific needs of each gender. Despite the absence of a significant difference in loneliness levels between male and female users, it remains essential to design apps that prioritize overall emotional well-being.

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About the Authors

Martaria Rizky Rinaldi- is a lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Mercu Buana University Yogyakarta since 2017. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Diponegoro University in 2013, and subsequently pursued a Master's degree in Professional Psychology with a major in Clinical Psychology at Gadjah Mada University from 2014 to 2017. Currently, Martaria is pursuing a Doctoral degree in Psychology at UGM since 2022. In addition to her dedication as an educator, Martaria actively practices psychology in various private psychology bureaus and university settings. She also manages psychological services through the @progresifpsikologi platform. As a versatile professional, Martaria frequently serves as a resource person for various training sessions, including mental health, motivation, personal and career development, as well as parenting seminars.

Octla Fiera Sarah Azzahra- is a graduate of psychology with a bachelor's degree from the Psychology Program, Faculty of Psychology at Mercu Buana University, Yogyakarta. Her main interests lie in the fields of clinical and social psychology, along with active engagement in research activities within these areas. Octla has gained valuable experience throughout her academic journey and has contributed to various research endeavors related to clinical and social psychology. Her dedication to understanding and addressing psychological issues makes her an enthusiastic professional committed to continuous learning and growth within the field of psychology.

Jelang Hardika- is a psychologist and lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang and earned a Master's degree in Professional Psychology with a focus on clinical psychology from Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya. In addition to his teaching responsibilities,

Jelang is actively engaged as a speaker for seminars and training sessions, and he is also an author of popular books. His published works include "Yang Merasa Marah" and "Tenang saja, ini hanya Dunia"

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