



The Relationship Between Fear of Intimacy and Dating Application Usage as well as
Motivation to Use Dating Applications

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Abstract

The current study aimed to examine the relationship between fear of intimacy and dating app usage along with dating app motivations, while also exploring. Research has shown an increase in dating app usage, research has also shown a decrease in committed relationships and a delay in age of marriage. Due to the various available individuals on dating apps, individuals have reported finding it hard to commit due to the wide variety of individuals using dating applications. The present study aimed to investigate new findings in relation to fear of intimacy and dating app usage. The age range consisted of the minimum age being 18 and the maximum being 55, there was a total of 107 participants; 64 females, 40 males and 3 prefer not to say, who answered the Fear of Intimacy Scale. This research also consisted of 48 dating app users, who answered the Dating App Motivation Scale along with the Problematic Tinder Use Scale which was generalised to all dating apps. Findings from the Mann Whitney U test regarding both gender differences as well as differences in dating app usage, demonstrated no difference within these variables. Findings from Spearman's Rank Order correlation also failed to find a relationship between dating app motivations and fear of intimacy, this was also the same case for problematic tinder use and fear of intimacy. Lastly the multiple regression analysis found that the dating app motivations failed to predict scores on the Fear of Intimacy Scale. Implications for this study and future research are discussed.

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Introduction

The term intimacy is subject to interpretation, it can be associated with multiple relationships such as the familiarity between a mother and child through the process of receiving and providing physical and emotional care. A separate, more common use is when it is referred to as a sexual familiarity with another person, it is largely associated with having strong emotional connections such as love (Jamieson, 2007). This research study will mainly focus on the type of intimacy related to dating and sexual relationships. Theorists and research suggest that romantic relationships are a normative part of development (Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002), adolescence have reported being in romantic relationships from ages thirteen and up, where 25% reported having their first date by age thirteen, 75% by age fifteen and 100% by age eighteen years (Zimmer-Gembeck, 1998, 1999). Research has shown that the experience and knowledge gained in youthful relationships are important first steps to developing romantic relationships in adult hood, what we refer to as “puppy love” actually plays a big role in adult relationships (Collins, 2003). There is also research that shows the qualities in early friendships can imitate what they expect from future relationships, as well as the qualities they may look for in a partner, these friendships also teach them intimacy, nurturance and conflict resolution (Douvan et al., 1966; Furman & Wehner, 1997; Sullivan, 2013).

Relationships and Dating

Relationships usually tend to develop around the stages of puberty due to the fact that adolescence begin forming mixed gender friendship groups, which in turn gives them the opportunity to socialise with the opposite gender along with the opportunity to date them (Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Feiring, 1999). One of the main goals of life is to find intimacy, which is why most people spend a lot of time pursuing love, singles bars, church groups and

friend introductions were the most common ways of perusing intimate relationships (Vangelisti & Beck, 2007). Recently the traditional way of meeting partners through friends, family or workplace has been overtaken by dating applications (apps) as the most common way to meet romantic or even platonic partners (Shashkevich, 2019). The use of dating apps, such as Tinder, Grindr and Hinge, has allowed millions of people to be introduced to individuals they would have never crossed in their normal day to day lives. Dating app usage has increased because of how much we depend on the internet for daily life, around 4.9 billion people use the internet on a regular basis (Petrosyan, 2023). The 2011 American Time Use Survey found that men spend around 9.65% of their leisure time online, whereas women spend approximately 6.81% of their leisure time online (Cacioppo et al., 2013). Previous studies have shown a great increase in online usage, since males spend more time online, does this correlate to the amount of time they spend on dating apps? The increase in internet use has led to an increase in dating app use.

Rise of Dating App Usage

Today, most people say that dating has gotten more difficult (47%) and out of the 47%, 12% claim that technology is the cause of this and 21% blame the increased physical and scamming risk that come along with online dating (Brown, 2020b). Recently, the usage of online dating is becoming more normalised and made more accessible through mobile dating applications. It is estimated that the Tinder app has been downloaded around 100 million times globally and that around 10 million people use Tinder on a daily basis (Sevi et al., 2018). In 2014 The New York Times also found that on average Tinder users log onto the app 11 times a day while spending around 1.5 hours on Tinder (Neyt et al., 2019). Research in the US demonstrated that around 38% of single adults are searching for partners through online dating apps, while in Austria, Switzerland and Germany, around 30% of the population use online dating apps (Gatter & Hodikson, 2016). Research also found that more

than one-third of marriages in the US between 2005 and 2012 started online (Cacioppo et al., 2013). The increasingly trending use of dating apps is also highly displayed in same-sex couples, where around 70% have met their partner online (Ansari, 2015; Rosenfield & Thomas, 2012). Dating app usage has become a more socially acceptable way of meeting potential partners, whether it be for casual sex or long-term relationships (Hobbs et al., 2016). These studies explain the usage of dating apps and show how quickly it is increasing, allowing us to speculate about why people use dating apps.

Gender and Dating Apps

Theoretically, men are more likely than women to value physical appearance over non-physical cues when looking for a potential partner, favoring women with the idealized slender and toned body type, this may explain why women who use dating apps may be more vulnerable to appearance-based worries (Glasser et al., 2009). It was also found that women tend to use the apps more for socializing than casual sex compared to men (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017) and gay men tend to use it for accessing other gay males in the sense of locating them nearby and building a sense of community (Chan, 2017). In a separate study related to dating apps and gay males, they found that dating apps and their sense of immediacy promoted more casual hookups whereas the slow tempo dating formed a decent foundation for lasting relationships (Yeo & Fung, 2016). Researchers also found that 8 out of the 18 participants use tinder for relationship seeking, while 6 out of 18 use it for hookups, 5 out of the 6 were males (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). Other studies also found that men are more likely to use dating apps for casual sex more than women, as well as scoring higher in the ease of communication and thrill of excitement sections in the Tinder motivation scale (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016; Sumter et al., 2017). Overall, with both genders, the highest scores were those of either entertainment or self-esteem/validation. These studies demonstrate that dating apps are being used more for self-validation or entertainment rather

than their main, which is finding love or a committed romantic partner. another strong motivator for dating app usage is casual sex or what is known as “hook-up culture”. It is important to understand the reasons dating app users may not use dating apps to find a committed relationship.

Rise of Hook Up Culture

Online dating has given hook up culture and casual dating a larger platform to occur as it has made dating more accessible. In a study conducted by Glenn and Marquardt (2001, as cited in Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), the majority of students described hook ups as “anything ‘ranging from kissing to having sex,’ and that it takes place outside the context of commitment” (p. 590). Over the years, the media has become more open about sexual behaviours, from it being displayed in songs, movies, advertisements and more (Bogle, 2007, 2008). Until the late 1960s, censorship restrictions that were put in place during the 1930s restricted images of erotic life in movies, particularly those that showed uncommitted sex (Garcia et al., 2012), this representation along with other reasons caused a sudden growth in hook up culture which has led to a decline in the traditional way of pursuing romantic connections. A separate reasoning for the rise of hook up culture could be due to the rise of feminism, the increase in college party culture, and the increasingly accessible availability of birth control (condoms and oral contraceptives), young adults had an even greater level of sexual liberation in the 1960s (Laumann et al., 1994; Stinson, 2010).

The rise of hook up culture has also been linked to changes in the traditional gender roles and the increasingly positive attitude towards sex outside of marriage (Pham, 2017). Along with the change in gender roles, the delay in age of first marriage could also explain the rise in hook up culture, by 2011, the age of first marriage had increased to around 28.7 for men and 26.5 for women (Manning et al., 2014). This delay in marriage, extremely committed relationships and other traditional milestones in adulthood have promoted

individuals, especially students to experiment with sexual relationships (Claxton & Van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Willoughby, 2012). Multiple recent studies have found that perceived benefits of hooking up for some people lie in limiting relational commitment to make time for sexual exploration and self-improvement (Allison & Risman, 2017). The lack of pressure regarding time, intense emotions and commitment while still having sexually and romantic intimacy adds to the appeal of hook up culture (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Kefalas et al., 2011).

While another study referring to dating apps as being the cause of liquefying lifelong relationships the researchers found that those that used dating apps as the new technology found it to be a better way to pursue and meet potential lovers (Hobbs et al., 2016). They suggested in their conclusion that this could increase the cultural influence on people and their desire to commit to long term monogamous relationships (Hobbs et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Chan (2017) found that trust towards people was indirectly related with the intention to seek casual sex, alongside this finding, they found that people who seek for sensation are more likely to use dating apps. These studies show how hookup culture has become more popular and how dating apps have affected hookup culture. These studies also indicated that casual hookups and a lack of trust were significant deterrents against using dating apps. According to the studies stated, people's perceptions of dating and intimate relationships have changed as a result of the increase in app usage and accessibility to dating apps. The purpose of the current study is to find out if people's levels of intimacy fear have changed as a result of using dating apps.

A separate study found that contrary to their hypothesis people with higher levels of trust are less likely to use dating apps, this supports my hypothesis that people who use dating apps may have higher levels of fear of intimacy (Kang & Hoffman, 2011). They reckoned that this was because people who didn't use dating apps would rather meet up in person

because they are less scared than dating app users (Kang & Hoffman, 2011). Dating app users generally do not meet face to face until several weeks or months, some even admitted to never meeting the person in an offline context which raised the question of what motivates people to use dating apps (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017).

Research on Dating App Motivation

Ranzini and Lutz (2016) published the first list of motivations for using Tinder, they adapted a scale created for Grindr that included six motives: hooking up/sex, friendship /creating a social network, finding a romantic partner, traveling, self-validation, and entertainment. Although casual sex is a prominent motivator, research shows that it is not the strongest motivator for dating app usage; Timmermans and De Caluwé (2017) conducted a qualitative study to understand the motivation for Tinder use, they found that people said they used tinder to expand their social network, to gain social approval, as a boost of confidence, for entertainment and to reduce boredom. A separate study found that 59% of participants admitted to using dating apps for boredom, 45% for casual sex and, 42% for casual dating (Garga et al., 2021). It was also found that the use of dating apps had changed a third of their sexual behaviour with a 70% increase in sexual activity (Garga et al., 2021). Due to the swiping tendencies of online dating, attractiveness is crucial due to it being the tool dating app users use to make their initial judgments. Due to this set up, self-validation is a popular motive for dating app users, which was demonstrated in a study by Ranzini and Lutz (2016) where they found that self-validation was the second most popular motivation for usage of online dating. Another study had similar results where self-esteem was the most prominent motive for Tinder usage (Orosz. et al., 2018).

Although many individuals benefit from the use of online dating apps, becoming overly dependent on them can cause negative outcomes for users, in comparison to other internet disorders, there is little quantity of research done on problematic online dating

(Coduto et al., 2019). Research on the problematic use of dating apps started with the problematic Tinder use scale, which was developed by Oroszet al. in 2016; this scale focuses on six characteristics of addiction: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Due to the visual aspect of online dating, users may feel pressured to look a certain way which can lead to negative outcomes such as body dissatisfaction or eating disorders (Portingale et al., 2022). This study aims to see if the need for self-validation in certain dating app users has any relations to their levels in fear of intimacy. Since fear of intimacy can be associated with fear of being rejected, along with several phobias and worries (Thelen et al., 2000).

Fear of Intimacy

Research implies that although dating apps are made to encourage individuals to meet up, multiple people tend to use these apps without the intention of meeting up (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016). This in turn leads to the hypothesis of this current study which is to explore whether dating app usage is related to fear of intimacy. The fear of intimacy is frequently accompanied by several phobias or worries, such as the fear of being rejected, the fear of being vulnerable, and the fear of being hurt or betrayed. These worries can take a variety of forms, including a reluctance to express oneself emotionally or a desire to push people away (Thelen et al., 2000). Contrary to findings from the 1980's, Arnett (2002) found that finding a committed romantic partner has become a low priority for most individuals. Finding a committed love relationship was found to be less significant for many American individuals, especially those under the age of 30, in a 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center (Brown 2020a). According to the study, having children or achieving other life goals like financial security were seen to be more significant. Finding a romantic partner was only evaluated as a "very important" life goal by 39% of persons under the age of 30, while 61% said it was either "somewhat important" or "not important at all." Adults in their 30s and 40s were also

shown to have less desire for romantic relationships than individuals in earlier generations (Brown, 2020a).

Some millennials have admitted that the availability of dating apps is one of the reasons they have commitment phobia, they admitted to finding it hard to stick to one person (Paras, 2020). Contrarily, males, who gain the most from marriage, are said to have commitment phobia brought on by what Illouz refers to as a new "architecture of choice", which prevents them from making commitments (Van Hoff, 2020). This results from the real and imagined increase in sexual partners made possible by the internet and, more specifically, online dating, as traditional marriage markets are replaced by modern "sexual fields", where sexual attractiveness has emerged as the most important criterion in mate selection (Van Hoff, 2020). In a study that about dating apps and attachment styles they found that people with higher avoidance attachment style were less likely to use dating apps and have casual/committed sexual partners (Timmermans & Alexopoulos, 2020). Although they were less likely to use dating apps in general, they were more likely to use them when travelling, the reason for this could be that they are less likely to create meaningful and long-lasting relationships while travelling (Timmermans & Alexopoulos, 2020).

Current Study

The aim of this study is to investigate if use of dating apps is associated with high levels of intimacy fear. It also seeks to determine whether any of the motivations for dating app usage are related to fear of intimacy. Finding out if there are any differences in the levels of fear of intimacy in men and women is another goal.

Research Questions:

1. Is there a difference in fear of intimacy scores between dating app users and non-dating app users?
2. Is there a gender difference in scores on the Fear of Intimacy scale?

3. Is there a relationship between FIS scores and dating app motivations?
4. Will there be a relationship between Fear of Intimacy scores and Problematic Tinder Use scores?
5. Will high scores in the Casual Sex subscale predict high scores in Fear of Intimacy?
6. Will high scores on the Self-validation subscale predict high scores in Fear of Intimacy.

Additionally, the research investigates the following hypotheses:

1. There will be a difference in Fear of Intimacy scores in dating app users and non-dating app users.
2. There will be a gender difference in scores on the Fear of Intimacy scale
3. There will be a relationship between Fear of Intimacy scores and dating app motivations.
4. There will be a positive relationship between scores on the Fear of Intimacy scale (FIS) and on the Problematic Tinder Usage Scale (PTUS).
5. High scores on the Casual Sex motivation sub-scale will predict high scores on the Fear of Intimacy Scale.
6. High scores on the Self-validation motivation sub-scale will predict high scores on the Fear of Intimacy Scale.

Methodology

Participants

The research sample for this study was made up by 107 participants (males: $n = 40$; Females: $n = 64$; Prefer not to say $n = 3$). The mean for age was 22.39 with minimum being 18 and the maximum being 55. The minimum sample size for this study was calculated using the G*power calculator which came out as 89 (Faul et al., 2007). An opportunity-based snowball sampling strategy was used to collect participants. The following social media platforms were used to publish a brief overview of the study and as well as the survey link: Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram.

Measures

Demographics. A breakdown of the participant population was obtained using the age and gender information that participants provided. In order to compare the differences in fear of intimacy between users and non-users of dating apps, participants were also asked whether or not they had ever used dating apps.

Fear of Intimacy Scale. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS; Descutner & Thelen, 1991) which had a reliability score of (.89) focused on measuring the participants anxiety about close, dating relationships. The FIS is a self-report measure consisted of a 35 item scale which was presented on a 5- point scale scored between *not at all characteristic of me* (1) and *extremely characteristic of me* (5). Participants are asked to rate how likely they are to feel/do things on a scale of 1-5 such as “I have held back my feelings in previous relationships”. This scale is scored by adding the answers to all items, with the lowest possible score being 35 and the highest being 175, a higher score indicates higher levels in fear of intimacy. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale regarding this studies sample is .62.

Problematic Tinder Use Scale. The Problematic Tinder Use Scale (PTUS; Orosz et al, 2016) which had a composite reliability score of (.83) and a Cronbach’s alpha (α) of .64 -

.73, which is considered borderline good. This is also a self-report scale, high scores in this scale indicate high problematic tinder use. This 5-point scale focuses on how frequently the participants use tinder by focusing on 6 items asking questions like how often the person has thought about tinder, they answer these questions on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The scale evaluated key indicators of problematic Tinder use, which included; salience (Tinder use dominates thinking and behaviour), mood modification (Tinder use modifies/improves mood), tolerance (increasing amounts of Tinder use are required), withdrawal (occurrence of unpleasant feelings when Tinder use is discontinued), conflict (Tinder use compromises social relationships and other activities), and relapse (tendency for reversion to earlier patterns of Tinder use after abstinence or control). This scale is scored by adding the scores of the items then dividing by the number of items. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in the sample relating to this current study is .74.

Dating App Motivation Scale (*Tinder Motivation Scale*). The Dating App Motivation Scale (DAMS; Sumter & Vandenberg, 2018) was originally based of the Tinder Motivation Scale by Sumter et al., 2017, who then generalised it to all dating apps which turned it to the Dating App Motivation Scale. This scale originally consisted of 24 items which were divided into six sub-scales; love ($\alpha = .88$), casual sex ($\alpha = .87$), ease of communication ($\alpha = .89$), self-worth validation ($\alpha = .87$), thrill of excitement ($\alpha = .47$) and trendiness ($\alpha = .65$) (Sumter et al., 2017). This study used only 19 items and 4 sub-scales, leaving out thrill of excitement and trendiness as they were deemed unnecessary for this current study. Participants were asked to score statements on a scale of 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*) for example "I use a dating app to find a romantic relationship". This scale is scored by adding all scores in each separate subscale. The Cronbach's alpha for the variables in this study are as follows; Love ($\alpha = .85$), Sex ($\alpha = .85$), Ease of communication (communication) ($\alpha = .83$) and Self-validation ($\alpha = .89$).

Design

The research design being used in this study is a quantitative, cross-sectional research design due to all information being collected through an online survey and at one point in time. The Mann Whitney U Test was used to test the first and second hypothesis, which examined gender differences as well as differences between dating app users and non-dating app users. The second test conducted was the Spearman's Rank Order correlation, which was used to test the third and fourth hypothesis. This test examined the relationship between fear of intimacy scores and dating app motivations, along with examining the relationship between FIS scores and PTUS scores. The last test conducted was a standard multiple regression which was used to test hypothesis five and six. This test contained three predictor variables (PV); sex, love and self-validation sub-scales in DAMS and one criterion variable (CV) which were FIS scores.

Procedure

The participants were found through social media, where an anonymous online questionnaire was shared via Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok, with an attached poster (see Appendix G). Participants were directed to the participant information sheet after clicking the link, which contains all the information about this particular study, including a brief overview of its goals and objectives and an estimation of how long participation would take (15 minutes) (see Appendix A). Participants were also made aware that taking part in the study was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent at any time without any consequences. The only restriction was that once findings were submitted, they would no longer be traceable, making withdrawal after this point impossible. The end of the participant information sheet entailed my contact details as well as those of my supervisor.

The following page included the participant consent form, it detailed the eligibility requirements, which included being over 18, and asked participants to check a box if they

were willing to participate (see Appendix B). This led them to the first questionnaire, the Fear of Intimacy Scale which included 35 questions which was used to assess levels in fear of intimacy (see Appendix D). In completing this questionnaire participant were then asked if they had ever used a dating app, those that answered “No” were brought to the debriefing page whereas those who answered “Yes” were brought to the next questionnaire which was the Problematic Use of Tinder Scale (see Appendix E). In this scale participants were questioned on how often they use Tinder/ other dating apps, this section included 6 items.

The final survey that participants completed asked them to rate the factors that influence their usage of dating apps. This scale, known as the Dating App Motivation Scale, which has 19 items (see Appendix F). Participants were then directed to the debriefing section after completing the questionnaire, which contained the contact information for my supervisor, myself and Samaritans as well as Accord in case any emotional stress was experienced or they had any queries (see Appendix C).

Ethical considerations

Although there is little risk associated with this study, participants will have the option to stop at any time if they experience any kind of distress. After submitting their form, if they experience distress, they will have the choice of emailing either me or my supervisor, and we will point them in the direction of Samaritans, or they can go directly to Samaritans. Some individuals could become conscious of their problematic use of dating apps. Some people may become aware of their issues with commitment and the difficulties they have in their committed relationships. This will be covered in the debriefing sheet, and participants who experience this kind of distress will be encouraged to visit the Accord website so they can talk to others about their relationship issues. The debriefing sheet will include all of this as an attachment. If they have privacy concerns, they will be reminded that everything is anonymous and that nothing they provide is connected to them.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was performed for two categorical variables; Gender and dating app usage which are presented in Table 1. The sample consisted of 40 males (37.4%) and 64 females (59.8%). Table 1 also displays that there are 48 people who use dating apps (44.9%) and 59 who do not use dating apps (55.1%).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for categorical variables (n = 107)

Variable	Frequency	Valid %
Gender		
Male	40	59.8
Female	64	37.4
Prefer not to say	3	2.8
Dating App Status		
Yes	48	44.9
No	59	55.1

Table 2 consisted of the means (M) and standard deviation (SD) along with the range for all continuous variables. Participants had a mean age of 22.39, ranging from ages 18 to 55. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that there were no violations in normality. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov indicated that the scores in FIS (.025), PTUS (.001), sex motivation (0.10) and ease of communication (.038) were not normally distributed, while the scores in love motivation (.200) and self-validation motivation (.200) were normally distributed. In order to indicate outliers, the box-plot was used and found that five responses within the FIS appeared as outliers. After checking these scores it was found that they did not

affect the results. The appropriate non-parametric tests will be done due to the violation of assumptions.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> [95% CI]	<i>SD</i>	Range
Total Fear of Intimacy	107	111.76[109.54, 113.97]	11.54	79
Total Problematic Tinder Use	48	1.97[1.75, 2.18]	.73	2.83
Total Love Motivation	48	15.94[14.3, 17.58]	5.64	20
Total Sex Motivation.	48	9.04[7.64, 10.44]	4.82	16
Total Communication Motivation	48	11.65[10.08, 13.21]	5.4	18
Total Self-validation Motivation	48	15.96[14.24, 17.68]	5.93	20

Inferential Statistics

Preliminary hypothesis were done to ensure no violations in linearity, normality and homoscedasticity, due to these assumptions being violated, the appropriate non-parametric test will be carried out. A Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare scores in fear of intimacy dating app users and non-dating app users. There was no significant difference between FIS scores in dating app users ($Md = 111.5$, $M = 112.27$, $n = 48$) and non-dating app users ($Md = 113$, $M = 111.35$, $n = 59$), $U = 1442.5$, $z = .17$, $p = .868$. The null hypothesis has not been rejected.

A separate Mann Whitney U Test was conducted to compare scores in fear of intimacy between males ($Md = 110$, $M = 111.3$, $n = 40$) and females ($Md = 113$, $M = 112.63$, $n = 64$), $U = 1164.5$, $z = -.773$, $p = .440$. In order to ensure the findings were accurate, those who chose “prefer not to say” were excluded. The null hypothesis has failed to be rejected,

and the relationship is not statistically significant. This indicates that there are no gender differences in fear of intimacy scores.

The third research question aimed to find out if there was relationship between FIS scores and all dating app motivations. This was done using a Spearman's Rank Order due to the violations in normality, homoscedasticity and linearity by all scales apart from the love and self-validation motives scales. The Spearman's Rank correlation displayed that there was a moderate positive relationship between Love and communication subscales ($r = .39, n = 48, p < .01$), this indicates that high scores in the love subscale are associated with high scores in the Communication subscale. Results also indicate that high scores in self-validation are associated with high scores in the communication subscale ($r = .49, n = 48, p < .001$), this indicates a moderate relationship. The last significant relationship was that of the love and self-validation subscales ($r = .36, n = 48, p < .05$), which also indicates a moderate relationship. The results indicated that the other variables had no correlation, as shown in Table 3.

To determine if there was a positive relationship between FIS scores and PTUS scored, a Spearman's Rank Order correlation coefficient was performed for both variables. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that there were no violations in the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity, these analyses found violations in normality as outlined in the descriptive statistics which is why a Spearman's Rank was performed. After conducting the Spearman's Rank test it was found that there was no correlation between the two variables ($r = .04, n = 48, p > .05$). Results indicate that the two variables have no relationship. (see Table 3).

Table 3

Correlation between Fear of Intimacy and Dating App Motivations

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Fear of Intimacy	-					
2. Love Motivation		.02	-			
3. Sex Motivation		.02	-.17	-		
4. Communication Motivation		.07	.39**	.09	-	
5. Self-validation Motivation		.27	.36**	-.04	.49***	-
6. Problematic Tinder use		.04	.24	.14	.13	.11
-						

Note. Statistical significance: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

A standard multiple regression was conducted to understand how well fear of intimacy could be predicted by the three DAMS sub-scales ; Casual Sex, Self-validation and Love. A direct method was utilized for data analysis because there were no a priori hypotheses to specify the sequence of entry of the predictor variables. Preliminary analyses were done ensure that there were no violations in normality, linearity and homoscedasticity, although there were violations as described in descriptive statistics, the standard multiple regression was still carried out due to there not being a non-parametric option for this analyses. Multicollinearity assumptions were checked using Spearman's correlation and the coefficients table, there were no violations in either of these sections. All three predictor variables in the model explained 9.2% of variance in fear of intimacy ($F(3, 44) = 1.49, p = .23$). Results indicate that all three variables do not predict levels in fear of intimacy, therefor the null hypothesis has not been rejected, see Table 5.

Table 5,

Multiple regression model predicting Fear of Intimacy

Variable	R ²	B	SE	β	t	p	CI 95% (B)
Model	.092					< .001	
Love		-.036	.369	-.016	-.098	.922	-.779/.707
Sex		.015	.396	.006	.039	.969	-.784/.814
Self-validation		.676	.343	.310	1.974	.055	-.014/1.367

Note. R² = R-squared; B = unstandardized beta value; SE = standard errors of B; CI 95% (B)

= 95% confidence interval for B; β = standardized beta value; N = 48; t = t value; p =

significance; Statistical significance: ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to look at the connection between using dating apps and fear of intimacy. By asking participants about their use of dating apps and their reasons for using them, this study aimed to determine whether the rise in dating app culture has an impact on their willingness to want a relationship. All hypothesis tested relationships between motivations, dating app usage and fear of intimacy. According to this current study's findings, the sample was made up of 64 women (59.8%) and 40 men (37.4%), as well as 48 users of dating apps (44.9%) and 59 non-users (55.1%).

The first and second hypotheses sought to determine whether there were any differences in the levels of fear of intimacy between men and women, as well as between those who use and do not use dating apps. The results indicated that contrary to the hypothesis, there was no significant differences in FIS scores between dating app users and non-dating app users. There was also no gender difference in FIS scores. Therefore both null hypothesis had failed to be rejected. Paras (2020) explained that millennials admitted to finding commitment hard due to the availability of dating apps. Contrary to the findings of this study, a separate research explained that men with avoidant attachment styles are more likely to use dating apps along with women with the anxious attachment style (Alvarez, 2022), this finding would suggest that dating app users would score lower on fear of intimacy scale than non-users. Regarding gender differences, these results differ from that of Van Hoff (2020) where they found that males are said to have commitment phobia due to the increase in sexual partners provided by the internet and online dating. The results in this study aligns with that of a study investigating intimacy imagery, they found that college men and women had no significant differences in fear of intimacy (McAdams et al., 1988), this result has been consistent among several research findings (Benton et al., 1983; Weiner et al, 1983).

The third hypothesis examined the relationship between FIS scores and dating app motivations, while the fourth hypothesis examined the relationship between FIS scores and PTUS scores. Findings from examining the link between FIS scores and dating app motivation likewise pointed to non-significant associations, suggesting that the incentives for using dating apps have little to do with fear of intimacy levels. Although there was no significant relationship between dating app motivations and fear of intimacy scores, the results indicated, relationships amongst the dating app motivations. Interestingly findings showed that those with high Love subscale scores also had high scores on the Ease of Communication subscale and the Self-validation subscale. They also showed that people with high Self-validation subscale scores also had high Ease of Communication subscale scores.

Regarding the fourth hypothesis, previous research has found that excessive Dating app usage has been linked to anxiety, depression and decreased life satisfaction (Her & Timmermans, 2020; Obarska et al., 2020). Constant dating app usage could be linked to sexual infidelity as 40% of dating app users generally tend to continue to use dating apps while in a serious committed relationship (Alexopoulos et al., 2020). A separate study found that people with higher levels of trust are less likely to use dating apps (Kong & Hoffman, 2011), contrary to these studies the results in this current study indicate that the relationship between FIS scores and PTUS scores were neither negative nor positive, which demonstrates no significant relationship. The findings concluded that this hypothesis was also rejected.

The last two hypothesis examined two predictor variables from the DAMS; the Casual Sex and Self-validation subscales, against one criterion variable; Fear of Intimacy scores. Both hypothesis predicted that high scores in each PV would generate high scores in the FIS. Results indicated that both predictors were non-significant, therefore the null hypothesis has failed to be rejected. The growth of hook-up culture has been linked to a delay in age of

marriage (Manning et al., 2014), it has also led to a delay in committed relationships along with other milestones in adult hood, these delays have in turn promoted individuals to experiment more with sexual relationships (Claxton & Van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Willoughby, 2012). Dating applications have made it easier to engage in casual hook-ups, this was referred to as the cause in liquifying relationships in a study that suggested that this could affect individuals desire to commit to long term monogamous relationships (Hobbs et al., 2016). Some people may use casual hook-ups as a method to avoid the emotional risks and vulnerability that come with developing close relationships. Those who dread intimacy or being emotionally connected to another person may indulge in casual hook-ups as a way to get physical gratification without having to deal with the emotional commitment that comes with a committed relationship (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Kefalas et al., 2011). These findings allow the assumption that high scores in the Casual Sex subscale would also score high in the FIS, contrary to this assumption results demonstrated no significant relationship between the two, therefor the hypothesis is rejected.

The relationship between self-validation and fear of intimacy has not been specifically studied, but it is conceivable that those who struggle with one may also struggle with the other. This can be the case because people who fear intimacy might have trouble embracing and admitting their feelings and needs, which can make it difficult for them to self-validate. Similar to this, those who have trouble self-validating may find it difficult to establish deep relationships because they lack interpersonal validation, which breeds a fear of intimacy. Although there is not much research relating the two together self-validation is seen to be associated with excessive tinder use, as those who need validation may seek for it on an online platform, which in turn can lead to body dissatisfaction and eating disorder (Portingale et al., 2022).

Limitations

This current study displays multiple limitations such as the sampling method, an opportunity-based snowball sampling technique was used in this study, participants were chosen for the study based on recommendations from existing participants. Participants who are more interested in the study's subject may be more inclined to recommend others, which could result in a biased sample, this a limitation due to the results being ungeneralizable to other populations. A second limitation was the use of self-report measures, which are subject to desirability and recall bias, participants may have answered in a way they deemed socially acceptable rather than how they actually felt. A separate limitation is the cross-sectional design, because the study was cross-sectional in nature, all the data was gathered at once, which makes it challenging to establish causality.

Given the small sample size and potential for cultural bias, it is difficult to extrapolate the results from this study to other, more diverse communities. The small number of dating app users is another sample size issue. This could be attributed to cultural variations, in which case the results could not be consistent with all cultural standards. For instance, using dating apps may not be considered socially or culturally normal in other countries. A lack of diversity in the demographics in terms of race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity may have prevented findings from being generalizable to other populations. Since the majority of the scales were measured against degrees of fear of intimacy, the low reliability scores in the FIS in this study ($\alpha = .62$) had an impact on all results. Last but not least, there has not been much research on this subject, thus that in and of itself is a limitation.

Future research

There are numerous elements that future research could examine in order to improve their findings since the results in the current study lacks significance. Future research should think about boosting the sample size because doing so could improve the study's statistical power and, thus, likely uncover meaningful connections. Future studies could examine cultural differences in the demographics as well. It may be interesting to compare the demographics of users of dating apps and those who fear closeness. To determine which statistical analysis is best suited to answer the study questions, other studies may consider employing them. Future studies may also examine the use of a different, more modern, updated scale to gauge the fear of closeness. It would also be interesting for future research to investigate gender differences in dating app motivations, as it will allow individuals to understand what their “potential partner” may be looking for.

Conclusion

This study is among the first to link the use of dating apps and dating app motivations to fear of intimacy. The results for each hypothesis show that there is no overall association between any of the variables. However there were significant relationships between the following; Self-validation, Love, and Communication subscales of the DAMS, even if the results were not significant in the way they were predicted. If they intend to build on their existing studies on self-validation and the use of dating apps, this might be useful to future research. In the realm of psychological study, the use of dating apps is a subject that is expanding. The reasons why people who use dating apps don't often interact in person may be the subject of future study. Other implications may have included information on the use of dating apps and how it relates to intimacy anxiety, if relevance had been established. This

realization might inspire people to change the way dating apps function and come up with ways to make them better so that people use them appropriately.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. The Department of Psychology in National College of Ireland practices the protection of human participants. This form will provide you with all relevant information that relates to your participation in this research study. If you have any questions about the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor using the provided emails.

What is the study about?

I am a final year Psychology student at National College of Ireland. As part of my degree, I must carry out an independent research project. The overall aim of this study is to examine the relationship between fear of intimacy and the use/motivation to use dating apps. This project is being supervised by Dr Conor Nolan.

Who can take part?

Anyone over the age of 18 is permitted to take part in this study.

What will taking part in the study involve?

This study consists of a questionnaire in which you are expected to answer questions that relate to your previous/current/future relationships with romantic partners. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Do I have to take part?

This study is voluntary and if you do not wish to take part you may decline this invitation with no consequences. If you begin to feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions you will have the opportunity to discontinue this study by exiting the browser. Once you have

submitted your questionnaire you will not be able to withdraw your data because the questionnaire is anonymous and individual responses cannot be identified.

What are the possible risk and benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits of partaking in this study. However, you may learn new information about yourself and the relationships you may have. There is a small risk that some of the questions involved in this study may cause distress, if you experience this you will have the option to discontinue your participation with no consequences and be directed to relevant support services that are at the end of the debriefing sheet.

Will taking part be confidential and what will happen to my data?

Responses to the questionnaire will be fully anonymised and stored securely in a password protected/encrypted file on the researcher's computer. Data will be retained and managed in accordance with the NCI data retention policy. Note that anonymised data may be archived on an online data repository, and may be used for secondary data analysis.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be presented in my final dissertation, which will be submitted to National College of Ireland, the project may be presented at conferences and/or submitted to an academic journal for publication.

Who should you contact for further information?

Researcher – Temi Adejumobi x20354383@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor - Dr Conor Nolan conor.nolan@ncirl.ie

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

In agreeing to participate in this research I understand the following:

- The method proposed for this research project has been approved in principle by the Departmental Ethics Committee, which means that the Committee does not have concerns about the procedure itself as detailed by the student. It is, however, the above-named student's responsibility to adhere to ethical guidelines in their dealings with participants and the collection and handling of data.
- If I have any concerns about participation, I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage by exiting my browser.
- I understand that once my participation has ended, that I cannot withdraw my data as it will be fully anonymised.
- I understand that this study is to investigate the relations between fear of intimacy and usage/motivation for dating apps.
- All data from the study will be treated confidentially. The data from all participants will be compiled, analysed, and submitted in a report to the Psychology Department in the School of Business.
- I understand that my data will be retained and managed in accordance with the NCI data retention policy, and that my anonymised data may be archived on an online data repository and may be used for secondary data analysis. No participants data will be identifiable at any point.
- At the conclusion of my participation, any questions or concerns I have will be fully addressed.

- ☐ Please tick this box if you have read, and agree with all of the above information.
- ☐ Please tick this box to indicate that you are providing informed consent to participate in this study.

Appendix C

Debriefing form

Thank you for participating in this study that was aimed to explore the relationship between fear of intimacy and use/motivations for dating apps.

In the event that this research study has cause you any psychological discomfort by your participation or If you have any enquiries regarding this study, please do not hesitate to get in contact with the researcher, Temi Adejumobi or supervisor Dr Conor Nolan who will then redirect you to the appropriate counsellor through the outlined emails:

x20354383@student.ncirl.ie

conor.nolan@ncirl.ie

you can also contact the Samaritans directly through this phone number and email;

116123

jo@samaritans.ie

you can also contact Accord through their website or phone number;

01 5053112

<https://www.accord.ie/>

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix D

Fear of Intimacy Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
characteristic	characteristic	characteristic	characteristic	characteristic
of me.	of me	of me	of me	of me

Part A Instructions: Imagine you are in a *close, dating relationship*. Respond to the following statements as you would if you were in that close relationship. Rate how characteristic each statement is of you on a scale of 1 to 5 as described below, and put your responses on the answer sheet.

Note. In each statement "O" refers to the person who would be in the close relationship with you.

1. I would feel uncomfortable telling O about things in the past that I have felt ashamed of.
2. I would feel uneasy talking with O about something that has hurt me deeply.
3. I would feel comfortable expressing my true feelings to O.
4. If O were upset I would sometimes be afraid of showing that I care.
5. I might be afraid to confide my innermost feelings to O.
6. I would feel at ease telling O that I care about him/her.
7. I would have a feeling of complete togetherness with O.
8. I would be comfortable discussing significant problems with O.
9. A part of me would be afraid to make a long-term commitment to O.
10. I would feel comfortable telling my experiences, even sad ones, to O.

11. I would probably feel nervous showing O strong feelings of affection.
12. I would find it difficult being open with O about my personal thoughts.
13. I would feel uneasy with O depending on me for emotional support.
14. I would not be afraid to share with O what I dislike about myself.
15. I would be afraid to take the risk of being hurt in order to establish a closer relationship with O.
16. I would feel comfortable keeping very personal information to myself.
17. I would not be nervous about being spontaneous with O.
18. I would feel comfortable telling O things that I do not tell other people.
19. I would feel comfortable trusting O with my deepest thoughts and feelings.
20. I would sometimes feel uneasy if O told me about very personal matters.
21. I would be comfortable revealing to O what I feel are my shortcomings and handicaps.
22. I would be comfortable with having a close emotional tie between us
23. I would be afraid of sharing my private thoughts with O.
24. I would be afraid that I might not always feel close to O.
25. I would be comfortable telling O what my needs are.
26. I would be afraid that O would be more invested in the relationship than I would be.
27. I would feel comfortable about having open and honest communication with O.
28. I would sometimes feel uncomfortable listening to O's personal problems.
29. I would feel at ease to completely be myself around O.
30. I would feel relaxed being together and talking about our personal goals.

Part B Instructions: Respond to the following statements as they apply to your *past relationships*. Rate how characteristic each statement is of you on a scale of 1 to 5 as described in the instructions for Part A.

- 31. I have shied away from opportunities to be close to someone.
- 32. I have held back my feelings in previous relationships.
- 33. There are people who think that I am afraid to get close to them.
- 34. There are people who think that I am not an easy person to get to know.
- 35. I have done things in previous relationships to keep me from developing closeness.

Key: add all scores of items.

Appendix E

Problematic Tinder Use Scale

Answer each of the 6 questions by selecting one response alternative (ranging from “never” to “always”) that best describes you.

During the last year, how often have you...

1 - Never 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Often 5 - Always

1. Thought about Tinder?
2. Spent much more time on Tinder than initially intended?
3. Become restless or troubled if you have been prohibited from Tinder use?
4. Deprioritized other hobbies and leisure activities because of you Tinder use?
5. Used Tinder in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression?
6. Tried to cut down on Tinder use without success?

Key: Add the scores of the items then divide by the number of the items.

Appendix F

Dating App Motivation Scale (Tinder motivation scale)

1- Strongly disagree

2- Slightly disagree

3- Neutral

4- Slightly agree

5- Strongly agree

I use or used Tinder to

Love

To contact potential romantic partner

To find a romantic relationship

To find a steady relationship

To find someone to be with

It is an easy way to meet someone

Casual Sex

To talk about sex

To have an one-night stand

To find someone to have sex with

To exchange sexy pictures

Ease of Communication

Online less shy than offline

Online easier to open up

Easier to communication online.

It helps me to find friendships

Online connections understand me better

Self-Worth Validation

To improve my self-esteem

To feel better about myself

To feel attractive

To feel less alone

To get compliments about my appearance

Thrill of Excitement

Because it is exciting

For the kick of it

Trendiness

It is new

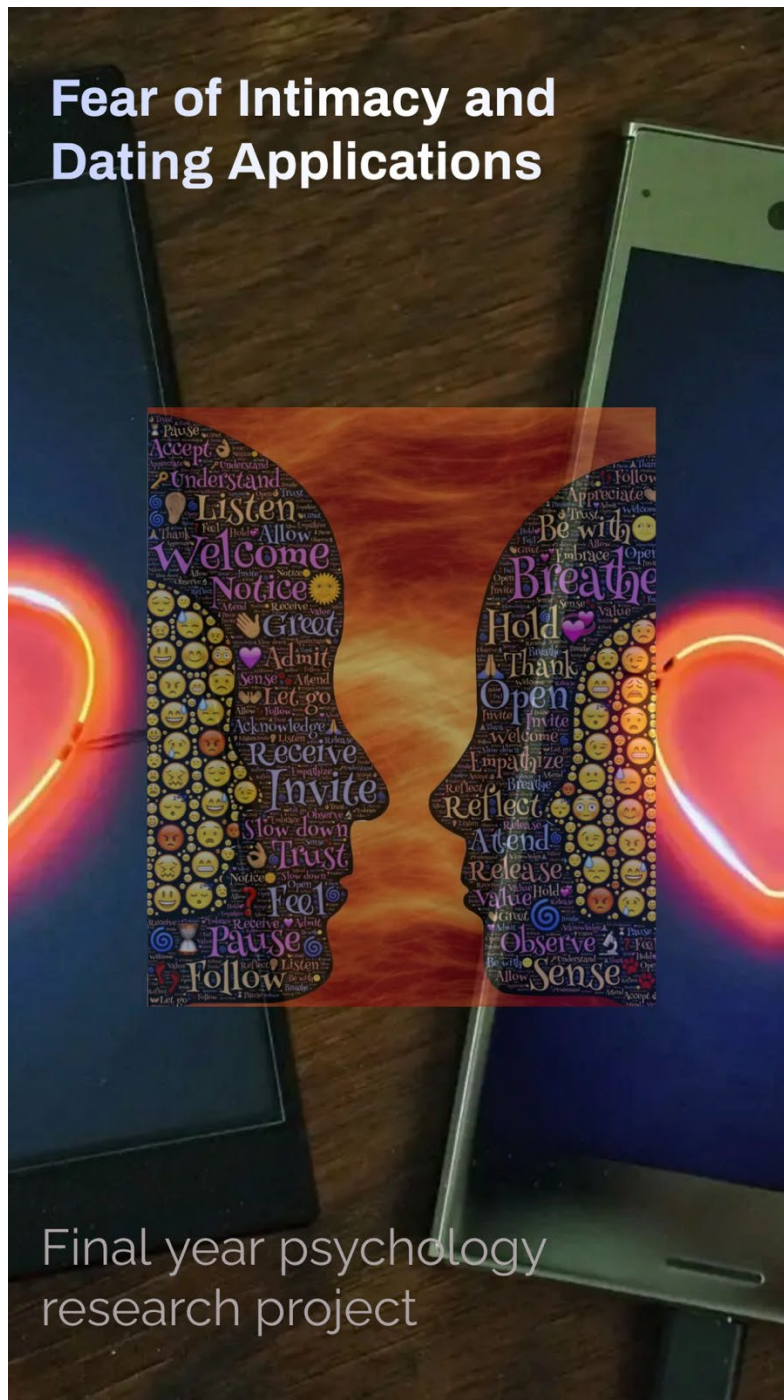
Everyone uses Tinder

It is cool

Key: add scores within each subscale.

Appendix G

Poster



Appendix H

Evidence of data and SPSS output (full data file available upon request)

Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
38 HISS	Numeric	4	0	35. I have ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
39 DATINGAPPSTATUS	Numeric	3	0	Do you/have ... (0, Yes)...	None	None	3	Right	Ordinal	Input
40 PTUS1	Numeric	2	0	1. Thought...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
41 PTUS2	Numeric	2	0	2. Spent m...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
42 PTUS3	Numeric	2	0	3. Become ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
43 PTUS4	Numeric	2	0	4. Depriori...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
44 PTUS5	Numeric	2	0	5. Used Ti...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
45 PTUS6	Numeric	2	0	6. Tried to...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
46 LOVE1	Numeric	2	0	1. To conta...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
47 LOVE2	Numeric	2	0	2. To find a...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
48 LOVE3	Numeric	2	0	3. To find a...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
49 LOVE4	Numeric	2	0	4. To find s...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
50 LOVE5	Numeric	2	0	5. It is an e...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
51 SEX1	Numeric	2	0	6. To talk a...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
52 SEX2	Numeric	2	0	7. To have ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
53 SEX3	Numeric	2	0	8. To find s...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
54 SEX4	Numeric	2	0	9. To excha...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
55 EOC1	Numeric	2	0	10. Online l...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
56 EOC2	Numeric	2	0	11. Online ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
57 EOC3	Numeric	2	0	12. Easier t...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
58 EOC4	Numeric	2	0	13. It helps...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
59 EOC5	Numeric	2	0	14. Online ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
60 SWV1	Numeric	2	0	15. To imp...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
61 SWV2	Numeric	2	0	16. To feel ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
62 SWV3	Numeric	2	0	17. To feel ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
63 SWV4	Numeric	2	0	18. To feel ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
64 SWV5	Numeric	2	0	19. To get ...	None	None	11	Right	Ordinal	Input
65 total_FIS	Numeric	8	2		None	None	11	Right	Scale	Input
66 total_PTUS	Numeric	8	2		None	None	12	Right	Scale	Input

Data View Variable View

Quant_Social Media Use and Body Image.pdf

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready

Unicode:ON Classic

SPSS Statistics File Edit View Data Transform Insert Format Analyze Graphs Utilities Extensions Window Help Mon 13 Mar 16:21

FYPOutput.spv [Document4] - IBM SPSS Statistics Viewer

Frequencies

Statistics

		What gender do you identify as?	Do you/have you ever used a dating app?
N	Valid	107	107
	Missing	0	0

Frequency Table

What gender do you identify as?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female (including trans)	64	59.8	59.8	59.8
	male (including trans)	40	37.4	37.4	97.2
	prefer not to say	3	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total		107	100.0	100.0	

Do you/have you ever used a dating app?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	44.9	44.9	44.9
	No	59	55.1	55.1	100.0
Total		107	100.0	100.0	

Frequencies

Statistics

What is your age (in years)?

N	Valid	107
	Missing	0
Mean		22.39
Minimum		18
Maximum		55

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready Unicode:ON Classic