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Elizabeth Kristi Poerwandari
Universitas Indonesia, elizabeth.kristi@ui.ac.id

Cintia Berliana
Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia, cintia.berliana@ui.ac.id

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Dating apps and risky sexual behaviors among young adults in large cities in Indonesia

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DOI: [10.7454/proust.v5i2.145](https://doi.org/10.7454/proust.v5i2.145)proust.ui.ac.idElizabeth Kristi Poerwandari¹ and Cintia Berliana^{1*}¹Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia

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Abstract

Online dating applications are frequently used by young adults across the globe. Research from several countries has found a strong link between the use of dating apps and risky sexual behavior. Risky sexual behaviors refer to sexual behaviors that may lead to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and/or unwanted pregnancies. This study aims to examine the use of smartphone dating applications by young adults in big cities in Indonesia to explore if users engage in risky sexual behavior with fellow users. To investigate this question, this study employed mixed methods including a survey and focused interviews. The survey succeeded in collecting data from 633 dating application users and the focused interviews were conducted with 6 participants. Interview participants were young adults who used dating apps and have had sexual relations with partners found through these apps. Research findings show results that are relatively similar to previous research. The results highlighted that dating app was used to find friends or partners and as a means of channeling sexual desire. On one hand, participants were aware of the consequences of the practice of unprotected sex with multiple partners. On the other hand, they expressed a preference for engaging in risky sexual behaviors rather than refraining from them, with various justified and rationalized reasons that they were quite safe. Moreover, this study also noted the instance of men committing sexual violations against women who were made vulnerable and become “trapped” as victims of a sexual offense.

Keywords

Indonesian youth, Dating application, Risky sexual behaviour, Sexual offending

Indonesia's digital media user base is dominated by millennials and members of Generation Z who are currently in the young adult age range and reside or work in urban areas (Kominfo, 2017). Supported by the rapid growth of the internet and the use of smartphones, the use of digital services is increasingly becoming a lifestyle that cannot be separated from the rest of daily life. Further, the internet is particularly easy to access via smartphones equipped with various platforms

and applications that support and facilitate the needs of its users.

According to Digital Indonesia (2020), 64% of Indonesia's population is connected to the internet. According to Kominfo (2017), internet users in Indonesia fall into the following ages based on a survey of 143.26 million internet users (more than half of the total population): 13–18 years old (16.68%), 19–34 years old (49.52%), 35–54 years old (29.55%), and over 54 years old (4.24%). Based on gender, male internet users outweigh female internet users slightly at 51.43% and 48.57% respectively. Kominfo (2017) also provides data that 72.41% of internet users in Indonesia are based in urban areas. Many of them use more than one device or phone number, so the number of social media accounts rec-

Corresponding Author:

Elizabeth Kristi Poerwandari

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia

Jl. Lingkar Kampus Raya, Kampus UI Depok 16424

Email: elizabeth.kristi@ui.ac.idORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6648-607X>

orded could be more than the number of individual users.

One application frequently used by young adults, in particular, most of whom are students or employees, is the online dating application (Wentland & Reissing, 2014). Compared with a more traditional dating context, smartphone dating apps provide a very fast and easy way to meet friends and potential partners. Within these apps, users are immediately presented with potential partners who are geographically close to their registered Global Positioning Systems (geolocations). The ease and speed of how these apps function is increased further by the fact that most people with access to this technology tend to carry their smartphones with them at all times. Therefore, users can easily access a large number of potential partners anytime and anywhere as long as they carry their phones. Lastly, unlike dating websites which may require a subscription fee, most smartphone dating apps are free to use (Hahn et al., 2017).

A report of a survey conducted by Zebua (2017) shows that in general most of Indonesia's digital consumers know about the existence of dating apps or dating websites. As reported by Arradian (2020), the popular dating applications in Indonesia are Tinder, Tantan, and OkCupid, among others. This was calculated using data from iOS and Google Play based on the number of purchases or downloads made by users on the app.

The presence of the internet and dating applications makes it easier for online sexual activity and casual sex to take place. Döring (2009) explains that online sexual activity (OSA) refers to sex-related content and activities that can be observed or participated in via the internet. OSA might refer to various activities, such as exchanging sexual information, seeking sexual entertainment, engaging in sexual experiences via text, discussing sexual kinks (non-normative sexual behaviors, desires, or preferences) within a kink community, selling or acquiring sexual products or content, to engaging in sex work. Therefore, the use of dating apps for sexual purposes qualifies as OSA.

LeFebvre (2017) conducted a survey with 395 respondents aged 18 to 34 who used Tinder in the US. The survey revealed that most dating app users choose Tinder because of its popularity in friendship circles and the media. Some re-

spondents also pointed to the application's appealing design and ease of use for seeking entertainment and expanding their networks. Meanwhile, an overview of data from Indonesia can be obtained from Kresna (2017), who reported on a poll of 512 Tinder users in Indonesia. In that poll, participants may choose more than one answer. Their motivations were varied and included the following: to find friends (74%), to fill spare time (50.29%), to expand networks (42.27%), to have fun (34.05%), to find potential life partners (31.70%), to find a business partner (25.64%), and simply to observe people (25.05%). Another research poll conducted via Twitter by CNNIndonesia.com (2019) shows that more dating app users use dating apps to find a sexual partner (43% of 343 respondents) than to find a potential life partner (28%).

It can be concluded, at least among young people, greatly facilitated by the internet and dating applications, engaging in sexual activity without emotional attachment or commitment is becoming quite common. Observations around the researchers' own environment, namely on young people and students, also show this. Dating applications are popularly used, and quite a number of users use them to find sexual partners without having to involve special emotional bonds.

Sexual relationships that do not involve commitment are often referred to as "casual sex" or "hookups." Lewis et al. (2012) define casual sex or hookups as physical closeness or intimacy with someone who is not a romantic partner, followed by various sexual activities up to sexual penetration. Those who engage in hook-up behavior usually do not expect further relationships afterward (Garcia et al., 2012). Stinson (2010) states that a hook-up relationship usually ends when one engaged party leaves and does not wish to continue contact.

This phenomenon raises new questions. On the one hand, dating apps are popular in Indonesia, and observations and research have revealed that many of their users are looking for sexual partners. On the other hand, however, there is still a strong view in Indonesia that sexual relations that occur outside of marriage are not in accordance with cultural norms and receive a negative stigma (Perestroika et al., 2021). Therefore, the real behaviors occurring in society do not always fall in line with the prevailing

norms. Further, despite the fact that dating apps make it easier for casual sexual encounters and dating to occur (Kasim & Rozi, 2019), the conflict between this phenomenon and Indonesian cultural norms makes it difficult to find accurate data to represent the number of people in Indonesia engaging in this type of behavior.

It is a further concern that several studies have found risky sexual behavior among dating app users. Research of Choi et al. (2016) conducted in Hong Kong for example, have found that dating app users were more likely to have unprotected sex with casual sexual partners (Choi et al., 2016) and were less likely to use condoms consistently. Tomaszewska and Schuster (2019) also found from their participants in Germany, that dating app users engaged more in risky sexual behaviors compared to non-users. The study by Sawyer et al. (2018) revealed the same evidence among young adults in the United States. The study of Garga et al. (2021) with young adult samples in Australia revealed that dating app users used the app to kill boredom (59.7%), to engage in casual sex (45.1%), and to engage in casual dating (42.8%). Around a third of them reported having changed their sexual behavior after app use. They acknowledged increasing the frequency of sexual activity (70.0%), having more sexual partners (57.1%) as well as experimenting more with sex (42.1%). They tended not to discuss issues of safe sex and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections with a sexual partner, and nor did they reveal their health status whether or not they were infected with sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms were only used consistently for 36.9% of dating app users. From the samples, 8.6% of them reported having infected STIs, and 2.8% had unintended pregnancies with partners from dating apps.

Research Questions and Aims

No research has been found to be conducted so far in Indonesia to examine the sexual behaviors of dating apps users. This study aims to obtain a descriptive picture of the sexual behavior of dating app users in Indonesia, including their risky sexual behavior. The topic is important given the context of Indonesian culture which still taboos sex outside of marriage. Perestroika et al. (2021) stated that religiously and culturally, sex before marriage is prohibited in Indone-

sia. This caused sexual education to be deemed unnecessary and dangerous which has led to a lack of readily available information about safe sex. While sexual behaviors have changed in Indonesia, due to the taboo views and the absence of adequate educational information, the changes in behavior have not been accompanied by adequate knowledge. Young people especially have not had the information they need to discern between safe and unsafe sexual behavior.

With the above background in mind, this research tries to answer the questions in regard to how do young adults in Indonesia use online dating applications to engage in sexual behavior, as well as how they make sense of or explain their sexual activity and risky sexual behavior.

Young Adults and Sexuality

The stage of emerging or young adulthood is defined by the ages of 18 to 30 years (Arnett, Žukauskienė, & Sugimura, 2014). Development during this life stage has much in common with the previous (adolescent) stage, but there are several important features that make this period of youth different. Unlike adolescents, individuals in early adulthood have reached physical and sexual maturity. However, they remain different from adults in their thirties considering that most people in the early stages of young adulthood have not yet formed stable adult life structures with long-term commitments in love or work relationships.

Rauer et al. (2013) conducted their longitudinal study in the US. They found that the development of early romantic relationships in young adulthood begins with the formation of shallow, short-term romantic relationships. Indeed, early adulthood is a period of high instability because, among other factors, young people may experience a series of changes in love relationships before making decisions for the long term (Arnett, Žukauskienė & Sugimura, 2014). Individuals in the early stages of young adulthood also tend to have more sexual partners than those in older age groups (Papalia & Martorell, 2014). Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000) who conducted their study in the US found that dating with sexual intentions is very common among college students, with as many as 81% of students reporting at least one intentional sexual dating experience.

Since the advent of the dating app, young adults also tended to use online dating applications at a high rate (Fielder & Carey, 2010) because these apps have established popularity and are considered fast and easy to use (Smith, 2016). Internet access makes it easier for casual sex, a sexual encounter outside a committed relationship to occur (Papalia & Martorell, 2014; Kaspar et al., 2016). Rauer et al. (2013) found that the relationships engaged in by young adults were mostly classified as “friends with benefits” relationships (FWB) or “one night stands (ONS).” According to them, friends with benefits relationship is formed either with a stranger or with an established friend in an arrangement that involves mutual benefits for both participants (generally in the form of sex or money), but without deep emotional attachment. Sexual intercourse might occur once or several times depending on the agreement of each party. Meanwhile, a one-night stands relationship was understood as occurring when a participant had sex with someone who was completely unknown to them before the encounter, and with whom they did not continue any form of relationship subsequently. Wentland and Reissing (2014) add some specific forms of casual sex, including ‘booty call’ and ‘fuck buddies.’ ‘Booty call’ is a sexual encounter between two individuals who already know each other, one of whom will call or send a short message expressing the desire to have sex in the near future. Meanwhile, ‘fuck buddies’ refers to a sexual relationship between two people who know each other, meet, and engage in sexual activity regularly without the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Casual sex can serve as a way to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness by physically connecting and engaging in sexual activities with a partner (Diamond, 2014). According to multiple studies, several factors influence individual involvement in casual sexual intercourse, including frequency of past sexual dating, religiosity, exposure to eroticism, peer group sexual beliefs and behavior, nature of parental relationships, premarital standards, and level of intimacy with partners (Lyons et al., 2013; Nield et al., 2014; and Magnusson et al., 2019).

It can be concluded, that the presence of dating apps facilitates casual sex. At the same time, sexual behaviors or practices previously consid-

ered problems such as premarital or casual sex, are becoming more accepted. Even so, there still exists a cultural double standard that men are viewed as having more sexual freedom than women (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). A study conducted by Allison and Risman (2013) suggested that a double standard regarding sexuality was still prevalent among college students. Women were required to be better able to control themselves, not to engage in sex outside of marriage, and were judged as not good women if they are unable to take care of themselves. Also, it was found that men are holding more to a traditional double standard.

Safe and Risky Sexual Behavior

Tsai et al. (2019) defined risky sexual behaviors as sexual activities that may lead to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. These include engaging in sex with multiple partners, being sexually active from a younger age, do not use a condom, or inconsistent use of a condom (Chawla & Sarkar, 2019). Cigna (2019) adds oral or anal sex outside of long-term relationships with a single partner as well as exchanging sex for drugs or money as high risks activities.

Those who lack self-control are more likely to behave at risk. The study by Hahn et al. (2018) on networking app use and sexual risk behavior found that emerging adults who were not giving themselves enough time to know each other via app before meeting face-to-face with a dating partner tended more to report risky sexual behavior. There are some studies to refer to understand more about risky sexual behavior. HealthLinkBC (2018) explains that it may due to a lack of understanding of STIs and their transmission, so the individuals engaged in sex unprepared, with no understanding of how to use protective measures to prevent STIs, and without discussing safe sex practices with sexual partners. Some individuals who engage in risky sexual behavior might also use alcohol or drugs during sexual encounters. This may hinder clear judgment and increase the likelihood of unsafe sex.

One other explanation is that individuals search for sexual sensation, and will take risks to pursue the fulfillment of their sexual needs (Mashegoane et al., 2002). They might be willing to engage in various dangerous sexual activities,

such as not using condoms or frequently changing partners. In accord with the finding, there was research conducted by Katz and Schneider (2013) to examine the attitudes about sex and love of college students who hooked up. Among its findings is that individuals who participated in casual sex regardless of whether it is men or women have more permissive sexual attitudes. They also show a more superficial, or game-play love attitude.

An important thing is the findings of Lewis et al. (2007). They examined the perceptions of risky sexual behavior of US college students participants. Lewin et al. (2007) suspected that people tended to see other people engaging in riskier sexual acts even though their sexual behavior may be the same. Their data confirmed this, which indicated that there was indeed a tendency for individuals to be less aware of their own risky behavior.

Research from Fauk et al. (2018) on men who had sex with female sex workers in Indonesia also confirmed the above finding. The majority of participants did not use condoms (43.0%) and the rest showed inconsistent behavior regarding condom use (38.0%). The reason was that they perceived low risks of getting infected. Even those who know they were likely to be infected, were not disciplined to use it. Another reason was that using a condom is considered to reduce sexual pleasure. So even though the individuals know the risks, they are lazy to be disciplined in using condoms. Astuti et al. (2021) examined health-risk behavior among Indonesian students using a multi-stage cluster random sampling from the 2016 National Narcotics Survey, with a sample including 31,439 students. She also confirmed the tendency of individuals to underestimate the consequences of their behavior. And the risky behaviors tended to be learned from the immediate environment such as family and peers.

A different perspective was presented by Schuster et al. (2013), who explained that risky sexual behavior might link to depression. Depressed individuals might engage in hedonic acts as a way to alleviate negative states and feelings. Moreover, those having sex in an attempt to alleviate depression tended to engage in risky sexual behavior.

In regard to gender, Hlongwa et al. (2020) found that women who were able to talk about

condoms with their partners were more likely to use condoms. More mature and experienced women seem to have more chances to use a condom than younger and inexperienced women. Women who were victims of partner violence did report less on using condoms. The conclusion is that exposure to partner violence, imbalance power in relationships, and no opportunity to discuss condoms and protection can be considered as indicators of women being exposed to risky sexual behavior.

Methods

This research is part of an umbrella study on Online Sexual Activity and is a mixed-methods study that combines surveys and focused interviews (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). The study employs a convergent parallel mixed-method design in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected more or less simultaneously. The two data sets were then described and analyzed, and the results are combined to present a more complete understanding (Creswell, 2014). The survey and focused interviews were conducted at the same time in April - June 2020.

Materials and Measures

The survey was conducted online, proliferated via a survey link spread by researchers through social media, including platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Whisper, and online messaging applications such as WhatsApp, LINE, and Kakao Talk. Considering that the topic of our research is sensitive and taboo in Indonesia, the research team included a trigger warning in the survey invitation which read, "In this survey, there are questions that are quite sensitive about sexual activity and questions about pornography. If you feel uncomfortable about it then you have the option not to participate."

The aim of the focused interviews is to gather more in-depth information and insight through the skillful application of qualitative questions (Stewart & Cash, 2014). When the research was carried out, the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing. In this context, some interviews were still conducted face to face offline, while some were conducted online via video calls or regular telephone calls. The focused interview format was semi-structured and involved a list of specific

questions and required prompts. The questions posed were open-ended, with the hope that the participants will feel comfortable and can tell openly about their experiences.

Participants

Some dating app users may be teenagers or minors; however, for ethical reasons, as this study addresses sexual behavior, survey participants had to be at least 18 years old to 30 years old and be internet users living or residing (studying, working, boarding) in large cities in Indonesia. The interview participants were divided into two categories. In the first category (A), the researcher did not know whether the participant had ever had sex with a partner from a dating app prior to conducting the interview, while in the second category (B), the participant was known by the researcher to have had sex with a partner from a dating app before the interview was conducted. This distinction was made because some dating app users set limits for themselves regarding the extent of intimate sexual behaviors they will engage in with people they meet through dating apps. Therefore, the distinction was made to examine if there would be differences in sexual behavior between the two categories.

Procedures

The questions posed in the survey investigated the following: (a) the purpose or reason for the individual to use a dating application; (b) whether the individual ever searched for a sexual partner through a dating app on smartphones; (c) which dating applications were used and how they were used to find sexual partners; (d) whether the individual had met directly (face-to-face) with anyone they had initially met through a dating application; (e) whether a relationship had been established after meeting face-to-face with a person from a dating application; (f) whether the individual has had sexual relations (kissing, making out, groping sensitive body parts, vaginal sex, oral sex, anal sex, etc.) with a partner met through a dating application; and (g) whether the individual engaged in risky sexual behavior, with a person met from a dating app. The survey also asked (h) the participants' positive or negative

assessments of the impact of using dating apps.

The interview guides for categories A and B consisted of roughly the same questions. The only difference was that for category A, several questions were skipped if the participant had never had sexual relations with a partner from a dating application. The interview questions investigated the following: (a) How was the experience of the participants in using the dating app, from meeting online to meeting offline and having sexual relations with people they met through the dating app? ; (b) how do participants understand and differentiate between safe sexual behavior and risky sexual behavior? and (c) How do participants assess the positive and negative impacts of dating app usage and sexual behavior with partners met on these apps? There were 6 participants in the interview in total, 3 from category A and 3 from category B. However, it was found from the interview that all the six interview participants (from both categories) had had sexual relations with partners they met on dating apps.

Results

Description of Participants and Their Sexual Behaviors

The survey involved 1,650 participants from various large cities in Indonesia, including Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Denpasar, Medan, Makassar, and others. There were participants who were more than 30 years old, and after cleaning, the total number of participants whose data can be processed was 1430 participants. Of those, there were 1086 female participants (75.94%), 340 male participants (23.78%), and four individuals identified as non-binary/transgender (0.28%). Survey participants aged 18 to 22 years old made up the largest proportion of the total participants (698 individuals, 48.81%), with those aged 23 to 27 years totaling 501 participants (35.03%), and those aged 28 to 30 years were 231 individuals (representing 16.15%). They were mostly students (672 participants, 47%), while the rest were employees (443 participants, 31%) or engaged in other activities (315 people, 22%).

Of the total survey respondents, 633 people (44.27%) stated that they have used or were currently using a dating application on a

smartphone. Of those, 471 were women (74.41%), 158 were men (24.96%), and the remaining 4 people (0.63%) were non-binary or transgender (0.63%). Meanwhile, the focused interview participants were students at public or private universities living in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Bogor, aged between 20 and 23 years. There were 6 interview participants in total, 4 men and 2 women.

From the data obtained through the survey, the main reason for participants' use of dating applications was to make friends (498 people, or 78.67%). Participants can choose more than one option, and other reasons given included finding a romantic partner (336 participants, or 53.08%), looking for sexual partners (FWB, ONS, etc.) (from 180 participants, or 28.44%), and looking for a potential serious long-term partner (92 people, 14.53%).

From participants looking for a sexual partner, they admitted to looking for a partner who was willing to have sex, pleasant to chat with, and open-minded. By being open-minded, they meant that the partner was open when spoken to about various issues including sex. When considering partners for sexual relations, both men and women also emphasized attributes related to sexual and physical attractiveness. This was consistent with the findings of other studies which emphasize that short-term sex partners are chosen primarily based on external physical characteristics (Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher & Gate, 2000).

The survey reveals that 280 people (44.2%) of the 633 dating app users in the survey stated that they had sex with people they met on dating apps. Since those who claimed to be looking for a sexual partner were 28.44%, it can be concluded that those who were not specifically looking for a sexual partner, may eventually also engage in sexual relations with people they met on dating apps.

Those who have had sex with the people they met on the dating app were 198 women, 78 men, and 2 non-binary/transgender people. While first impressions suggested that more women engaged in sex with partners from dating apps than men, the percentage of men who have had sex with partners from dating apps in this study was still more. This is so since when examining the percentage by gender, those who had sex with a partner from dating apps were 42.04% of

all women who used dating apps (198 of 471 women) and 49.37% of men who reported using dating apps (78 out of 158 men).

The survey data shows that very few participants continued to use dating applications during periods of having romantic or serious partners. The majority reported that when they had partners, they would uninstall the dating app. This is in line with the findings of LeFebvre (2017) which state that Tinder users will typically uninstall the application when they are in a romantic relationship. When the relationship does not continue, or when they feel lonely, the participants will re-install the dating application.

Meanwhile, of the six focused interview participants explained that their main reason for using dating apps was to find friends who could be invited to have sex. All also admitted to having had sexual relations with people they met on dating apps. According to the interviewees, the sexual activities they engaged in with partners from dating apps were rooted in efforts to make friends, amuse themselves, unwind, expand their social networks, satisfy sexual desires, or fulfill sexual fantasies.

The Preference for Sex Without Emotional Commitment

The interview participants stated that finding sexual partners through dating apps was very practical and easy since there were many choices of potential partners and because these connections did not have to involve potentially troublesome emotional bonds. They also explained that the relationships carried out by participants were mostly categorized as 'friend-with-benefits' (FWB) or 'one-night stand' (ONS) relationships. According to the participants, they preferred FWB relationships, either with strangers or with someone they knew well, involving a commitment with mutual benefits but without deep emotional attachment. In these relationship structures, sexual intercourse might occur once or several times depending on the agreement of each party. Some participants also expressed engaging in ONS relationships in which they had sex with someone who was completely unknown to them before and without any continuation of the relationship after. Some interview excerpts follow:

Oh if you are looking for a companion in dating apps, young people say it's friends with benefits, nothing more than that, not for serious dating.

I've got FWB from this dating app and even got a one-night stand.

In contrast to the survey findings where the majority of participants admitted to temporarily uninstalling dating applications when they had a romantic partner, the interview participants all claimed to still use dating apps to find sexual partners even when they were involved with a romantic or a serious partner. One participant explained that he changed sexual partners to avoid the growth of emotional bonds: *Actually, I don't want to have too deep a bond [with a sexual partner from a dating app], so that's why I change sexual partners. The problem is that I have a girlfriend, right? I do not want my Tinder relationship to disturb my dating relationship either because I still love my girlfriend.*

Risky Sexual Behavior and the Anticipation of Consequences

Of the 280 people who had sex with their partners from dating apps, we examined their gender-based behaviors. There were 61.54% of men who claimed to always use condoms, while those who never used condoms were 7.7%. A percentage of 15.71% of men admitted that their partners always used female contraception, and 74.29% reported never used contraception. The rest varies between those who used contraception or condoms more often or rarely used those.

Meanwhile, data from women – who actually face more risks – are more concerning. Only 18.54% of them admitted to always using contraception, compared to 60.93% who never used it. There were 38.99% who admitted that their partners always used condoms, and 15.09% whose partners never used condoms. The rest varies between those who use contraception or condoms more often or rarely.

In addition to the possibility of exposure to sexually transmitted infections, women also face the risk of becoming pregnant. It is concerning that the data above shows that there were still many women who for various reasons did not use contraception. It should be noted that there were 12.58% of women who admitted that they did not use protection at all, either contraception or condoms. From the focused interviews, none

of the 6 participants (female and male) reported using protection when having sexual intercourse with a partner from a dating application.

According to the interview participants, they were sure that they engaged in safe sex when they were involved in one of the followings: using lubricants during penetration, not changing sexual partners, having sex using a condom, and knowing the partners' background. They believed that when having sex with someone whose background is already known, there is no need to use a condom. According to them, unsafe sex is when we were not using condoms, changing partners, engaging in extreme sex, or ejaculating inside the vagina. Still, the survey and interview data suggested that the participants often changed sexual partners, and as stated, not many used condoms.

From the interviews, none of the participants used a condom when having sex with a partner from a dating application, and the answers they provided were inconsistent. The responses revealed that the participants believed their behaviors to be safe (ex. having sex with someone already known) when they were in fact risky. On the one hand, they felt they had practiced safe sex (even without protection), while on the other hand, they were aware of the consequences of having sex with no protection. They were aware of the risks of contracting STIs as well as the risk of becoming pregnant; however, the participants still preferred to have risky sexual intercourse by not using condoms, and frequently changed partners. Participants tended to perceive the consequences of risky sexual activity casually or were reluctant to think about them seriously. There were also interview participants who expressed preferences for extreme sex. For example, one female participant admitted enjoying sexual partners who treated her harshly and expressed disliking the use of condoms.

When viewed from the perspective of gender, there were differences regarding the anticipation of consequences of risky sexual behavior. Female participants were concerned about the possibility of having an unwanted pregnancy, becoming victims of sexual crimes, such as rape, or having their partners take video recordings or pictures of sexual encounters without their awareness or consent. Male participants thought more about the possibility of social sanctions, namely the risk of negative social stigma.

Oh, yeah, I'm afraid he will spread it to other people, or even I am afraid that he without us knowing makes our sex tape, like recording the activity without me knowing it, recording in silence. I'm afraid, that's really scary. (female)

One, it could be that I miscalculated or misjudged and then contracted an infectious disease. Two, she can get pregnant. Three, social sanctions. Like when people find out that I will be labeled bad, and yes, you are sure to have sinned. (male)

Yes, people will think that you usually have sex with girls. Yes, even if it's true, sometimes it's just not good to hear it. [Another consequence is] as happened to me before, like I got syphilis, or got a girl pregnant. If someone is pregnant, I'll just leave her, I'll un-match her. But if I get syphilis God forbid. (male)

Risk of Sexual Assault

In the study, it was deemed a serious concern that two of the four male interview participants had and/or intended to commit sexual offenses against female partners. These interviewees lightly stated that they had deliberately gotten their female partners drunk to the point of losing consciousness in order to force sexual relations. After the offense, the female partner was left alone and unmatched on the dating app.

So at first, I matched with this girl, then I met her at night so that I could get her drunk, and it worked and it didn't take long for me to book a cheap hotel hahaha I executed it at the hotel. Because in a drunken state the girl was helpless. The next day I left her at the hotel, then I unmatched her on Tinder. (male)

[If the partner refuses] that's fine, just keep acting nice. After pretending to look good, just ask her to eat, treat her nice. In the end, as long as I got a partner from Tinder, who initially didn't want [to have sex], she usually ended up being trapped. Like it or not, she has to serve my need, she's helpless because usually, I get them drunk first, I then take them to the hotel, then I can do whatever I want to do there. Usually, they wake up when they're in the middle of I'm using them. Yes, I just told them to enjoy it. (male)

There was also a male participant who reported that if his sexual partner became pregnant, he would simply disappear or insist the partner to abort. This describes an attitude of

carelessness and irresponsibility on the part of men, which adds to the overall risk factors for women using dating applications.

Discussion

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing an overview of the sexual behaviors of young adult internet users who use dating apps in Indonesian cities. With convenience sampling, it is not representative of the general population, yet it still contributes to providing information about the general public's tendencies, especially young adults in the use of dating applications and in their sexual behavior.

The findings are in line with Hobbs et al. (2017) who explained that the widespread use of dating applications to find sexual partners is based on the participants' desire to fulfill their needs without having to get into a troublesome romantic relationship. In accord with LeFebvre (2017), the majority of the participants of the survey uninstall the application when they were in a romantic relationship. When the relationship did not continue, or when they felt lonely, users would re-install the dating application. However, interview participants in this study stated that they still used dating apps even when they had a romantic partner.

Reflection on the research findings raises new questions for future research. One question is, do the participants represent a general picture of dating application users, or do they represent a specific group displaying more open and active sexual behavior than other dating app users? We are aware that with the self-report method, especially in regard to sexual activity, there is a possibility of social desirability bias and volunteer bias in the data collected. Sexuality is a very complex and value-laden issue, and those refusing to participate in studies like these might have different characteristics than those willing to participate (Hyde & DeLamater, 2016). Individuals willing to participate in sexuality research tend to be more liberal with open and positive attitudes about sex. Therefore, they are usually also more active and experienced sexually (Dunne et al., 1997; Strassberg & Lowe, 1995; Wiederman, 1999; Brener et al., 2003; Bouchard et al., 2019; Dawson et al., 2019).

When examining the percentage of those

involved in sex with a partner from dating apps, the percentage of men was still more than women. However, the number of women who engaged in casual sex was quite large. One question may arise, why was there a significant number of women engaged in casual sex, while society still judged it very bad, meaning that casual sex carries a much greater risk for women? It seems that some previous research can provide some explanation. Armstrong and Reissing (2016) tried to explore relationship type and sexual motivations of women. For women self-defined as heterosexual, or with bisexual/same-sex attraction, one of the findings is that casual sex was motivated by physical urge, regardless of gender and sexual orientation. Further explanation can be contemplated from a literature review conducted by Wongsomboon et al. (2021). They focused on pleasure and insecurity motives. Results showed that greater pleasure motives related to higher sexual assertiveness, which further led to higher satisfaction in casual sex. Meanwhile, greater insecurity is related to lower assertiveness, which decreased sexual satisfaction in casual sex. But that does not mean that the women were able to resist the urge of their partner to have sex.

According to Katz and Schneider (2015), for women sex with a partner from a dating app might not necessarily indicate a strong interest or desire for sex. There were many factors such as learned gender roles, lack of knowledge of sexual consent, as well as fulfillment of other psychological needs by being willing to have sex. Katz and Schneider (2015) studied sexual compliance in undergraduate students in the US. Of the participants, a third admitted that they had sex with a casual partner, even though they didn't really want to. Women, in particular, were more compliant with sexual intercourse, including giving oral sex to a casual partner, than men. It was also found that although women reported lower desire and pleasure in sex with casual partners, it did not affect their sexual compliance.

Shearer et al. (2005) examined the link between gender role attitudes and risky sexual behavior and found out that more traditional attitudes in regard to gender roles were associated with more risky sexual beliefs. Those endorsing unequal positions between women and men tend to hold the belief that using a condom is

unnatural and will reduce pleasure. Those who were engaged in risky sexual behavior might also experience violence before, or traumatic early sexual experiences. Smith et al. (2020) in their study about risk factors for risky sexual conduct in adolescents found that experiencing a physical attack in a previous life experience linked to a greater risk of risky sexual behavior. A systematic review of research on childhood sexual violence in Indonesia has in its finding that early childhood trauma has its associated with being revictimized in later life (Rumble et al., 2018). Perhaps the above finding can also explain why women, although more disadvantaged by casual and risky sex, still engaged in these behaviors.

Rosenthal and Levy (2010) revealed some bases of gendered power. Force points to forms of violence such as abuse, assault, or threat. Resource control refers to the less access of women to programs and policies such as health care or employment. Social obligations refer to gendered responsibilities, in which women have more obligations to take care of others. All of the previous factors relate closely to the last gendered power which is consensual ideologies. It refers to gender roles and ideologies that are agreed upon by society, in which women are in lower positions compared to men. Gendered power explains external factors, which are eventually internalized by women in their beliefs and behavior.

A finding that is quite worrying is the instance of a sexual offense against women or vulnerable groups. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Murphy (2018) who found that sexual violence reports had increased significantly in association with the use of mobile dating apps. The possibility of sexual crimes should be anticipated and taken seriously by dating app developers. For example, an app developer can add a review marker so that perpetrators of sexual assault or fraud can be tagged by other users who have been in contact with them. This could act as a source of consideration for fellow users when considering contact with a new partner. However, a mechanism like this would need to be developed and applied carefully so as not to create new problems, such as users arbitrarily giving negative ratings to other users without evidence or justification.

For future improvements, attention is need-

ed to programs of intervention and policy. Szkody et al. (2018) found out that adolescents who have positive parent-child relationships tended to initiate sex later, and were more willing to use a condom. Otherwise, those with negative parent-child relationship quality were more prone to risky sexual behavior. Meanwhile, Smith et al. (2020) have shown that multi-dimensional programs and policies addressing violence in young adolescents contributed to reducing early sexual debut and risky sexual behavior.

Many further questions cannot be answered through this research and will require further research that is more extensive (quantitative surveys) and in-depth (qualitative interviews). The world is changing, and young people are the ones facing most of the challenges associated with that change. Dating apps have changed human behavior and how we interact with other humans, particularly in sexual contexts. There are many conceptual, ethical, empirical, and strategic issues to study further in the field of psychology, mental health, relationships, and sexuality as they relate to the issue of dating app technology and human sexual behavior. This study can provide one further step in that movement toward greater understanding.

Conclusion

The survey conducted for this study involved a total of 1,430 participants, more than 75% of whom were women. Although not representative of the general population, the data can provide an indication of the large number of young adult internet users in large Indonesian cities who used mobile phone dating apps. Of the total number of internet users who participated in the study, around 44% also used dating apps on smartphones. Of that number, 44.2% of dating app users (or almost 20% of internet users) have had sex with people they met through dating apps. First impressions suggested that more women engaged in sex with partners from dating apps, yet the percentage of men who have had sex with partners met through dating apps in this study was still more.

The participants who reported having sex with partners from dating applications tended to prefer sex with no emotional commitment to free oneself from hassles and responsibilities,

and a significant number of them engaged in risky sexual behaviors. Women and vulnerable groups have a greater vulnerability to sexual offenses which can have an impact on further problems.

The findings of this study can provide important input for policies and programs. Changes in relationship patterns due to internet-mediated life are unavoidable. What can be done is to minimize its negative impact on vulnerability to violence, social problems, and mental health problems among young people and society in general. One important thing is to be able to provide comprehensive education on sexuality. It takes hard work from all parties so that policymakers dare to take an attitude that does not always follow the biased and moralistic way of thinking of the general public.

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