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## Exploring the Motives of Online Dating Application Users

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### ABSTRACT

Online dating applications become popular among people looking for a romantic relationship. Tinder is one application that was initially an online dating platform. Due to its popularity, Tinder usage numbers have risen yearly in Indonesia. This exploratory study identifies the general overview of motivations for using Tinder and examines the differences from specific demographic data. We collected data from 390 Indonesian Tinder users. Participants were recruited and completed an online survey. This study employed descriptive statistics to analyze Tinder usage motives. There are four main motives for using Tinder: seeking a romantic partner, friendship, relieving boredom and fulfilling curiosity, and looking for a sexual partner. The result has shown that most user motives were related to social compensation, such as finding romantic partners or acquaintances. For most women users, femaler is a boredom reliever. On the contrary, for most men, the platform is a medium for finding romantic partners. More than half of the respondents were aged 23-28 years old. Around 59,50% of respondents do not use other online dating applications, with the duration of Tinder usage ranging from 15-60 minutes a day. Our result indicates that Tinder users have different motives that may affect their interaction with the application.

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## BACKGROUND

The Internet is a modern way to connect with people and build relationships. Since many people can access the internet easily through cell phones, many programmers make several applications to meet users' needs. Many smartphone users worldwide create and use business applications, games, and personal helpers (Mieczakowski et al., 2011). One of the most exciting applications is dating apps. Online dating is becoming popular among people looking for a possible romantic relationship. (Hinton & Stevens-Gill, 2016) since it first appeared around 1997, online dating has grown in many regions, and online meeting partners exploded along with the development of Web 2.0 technology (the second generation of the World Wide Web).

As humans have realized the importance of having a partner, they also recognize that finding the right partner is challenging, and getting help can sometimes be beneficial (Finkel et al., 2012). The most convenient way to find relationship opportunities is through online dating sites, whether web-based or mobile app-based. Finkel et al. (2012) also noted that in the last 15 – 25 years, most online dating sites have provided three primary services: access, communication, and compatibility with potential partners.

Tinder is one platform that was initially developed as an online dating platform. Since its initial launch in 2012 in the United States, most voted Tinder as the top dating app for meeting new people. Are already 196 countries using the Tinder application (Bachdar, 2018). In Indonesia, the Ogilvy company decided to expand Tinder. Based on their previous survey, Tinder's exposure is relatively high, but online dating for Asians is still interpreted in a negative light. Therefore, Tinder in Indonesia plans to break the stigma and change people's perceptions of Tinder as an application for finding romantic partners and as a social media for creating relationships (Bachdar, 2018). Sean Rad and Justin Madteen, who made Tinder, designed the mobile app as a deck of cards. Therefore, Tinder has a playful format that avoids the prejudices of online dating (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015).

As an illustration of its usage, first, Tinder users are asked to create an account like any other social media. Users can display profile photos and personal data such as name, age, or other biodata based on the usage motives. Then, each user will be asked to select the gender preference they want to match, their distance perimeter, and their age approximation (Crook, 2016). Tinder then uses this data to set up specific algorithms so that each user will connect with other users according to their preferences and settings. Match preferences lead users to meet other users, making Tinder unique from other online dating platforms. Tinder users can swipe through other users' profiles on their app's home screen. LeFebvre et al. (2014) mentioned that swiping left indicates that the user didn't like the profile that appears. Swiping right means they liked it, and swiping up means liking it (but this feature is only accessible to premium users). The users' match will appear on their home screen, but both must make the match. When they like each other, then users can start communicating with each other through the Tinder application. This conversation or chat feature cannot be

carried out if one user does not like the other. After that, a possible meeting is arranged, and both sides can develop a relationship.

Knapp & Vangelisti (2009) described the relationship development model as a double ladder for understanding patterns of interaction and behavior as partners build relationship escalation in face-to-face relationships. However, LeFebvre et al. (2014) conceptually proposes five sequential steps in the new era of relational development, starting from initiation, experimentation, intensification, integration, and bonding. As a first step, initiation involves considering stereotypes, environmental and situational expectations, assessment of attractiveness, and a decision to initiate communication. The experiment started right after the communication began. In Tinder usage, this step occurs during the chat between match settings. As the online platform generates a new pre-interaction process that contains passive information (biodata and pictures), Tinder users must also filter their information (Rui & Stefanone, 2013) and decide their preferences in the selection process before they start a new relationship by swiping right or left.

One of the studies conducted by Orosz et al. (2018) regarding the personality, motivation, and background needs of problematic Tinder users concluded that there were four motivational factors for using Tinder. First, sexual motives lead to potential sexual encounters in both the long and short term. The second motivation is love, showing the user's intention to get a romantic partner. Increased self-esteem is the third motivation, and the final motive is boredom. Other studies seem to reveal similar findings about the motivations for using mobile dating apps, including love (Bryant & Sheldon, 2017; Sumter et al., 2017), courtship and relationships (Bryant & Sheldon, 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2016), ease of communication and entertainment (Ranzini & Lutz, 2016; Sumter et al., 2017).

Previous research conducted by Couch & Liamputtong (2008) also found several reasons why people use dating sites, including to fulfill pleasure, to seek a sex partner, to find a soul mate, to relieve boredom, for relaxation purposes, and as an easy way to meet people. Similarly, (Bryant & Sheldon, 2017) found three main reasons behind online dating, including pleasure motives, finding a relationship, and casual hookups. Despite the nature of the app as an online dating app, many Tinder users have different motivations behind their behavior when accessing Tinder. It also can be concluded that the most common reason for using dating apps is to meet others (Chin et al., 2019). Arifin et al. (2020) tried to categorize motives that are suitable for Indonesian users: (1) seeking a romantic partner, (2) friendship, (3) relieving boredom and fulfilling curiosity, and (4) looking for a sexual partner. Due to limited information about Tinder users in Indonesia, we explore a descriptive approach to fill this gap. Therefore, this study aims to identify the general overview of motivations for using Tinder and examine the differences from specific demographic profiles.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a preliminary study of research on self-presentation of Tinder users. We conduct convenience sampling with the criteria of actively engaging Tinder users (having an active profile and relatively accessing the app daily with a minimum of 5 minutes). Information about participating recruits was distributed through researchers' social media. Participants were not compensated but could enter the raffle to win 25 e-vouchers worth Rp 25.000, -. The data was collected online using Survey Monkey platforms. On the initial page of the questionnaire, an explanation (informed consent) was given regarding participation in the study, and respondents were allowed to stop filling it out at any time.

This study asked participants to fill in demographic data such as gender, age, last education, and relationship status. The categorization motives for using Tinder refers to the research findings of Arifin et al. (2020) regarding the motivation for using the online dating application Tinder. Participants are only allowed to choose one main motive. In

addition, participants were asked to provide information about the duration of using Tinder each day (in minutes). The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three hundred ninety active Tinder users were involved in this study, comprising 252 women (64.60%) and 138 men (35.40%). Though prior research found that more men used online dating than females, some research showed no differences in the proportion of male and female users (Ranzini & Lutz, 2016; Sumter et al., 2017). The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 36 years old. The average age of female participants was 24.3 years (SD=3.41) and 25.2 years for males (SD=3.44). We categorize four motives for using Tinder based on Arifin et al. (2020): seeking a romantic partner, friendship (or not intended to be a romantic partner), relieving boredom and fulfilling curiosity, and looking for a sexual partner. The distribution results of female and male participants based on the categorization motives are as follows:

Table 1. Motives Categorization

Motives	Female	Male	Total
Seeking romantic partner	51	49	100 (25,64%)
Friendship (or not intended to be romantic partner)	54	24	78 (20,00%)
Relieve boredom and fulfill curiosity	107	45	152 (38,97%)
Looking for a sexual partner	40	20	60 (15,38%)

Even though Tinder is an application aimed at finding dating partners online, 38.97% of participants stated that the motive was to satisfy boredom and satisfy y. This seems to counter the anecdotal notion about Tinder being a casual "hookup app" (Stein, 2013). Davis (2018) also found that boredom relief and entertainment are crucial components that must be considered regarding the motivations behind using online dating services. However, Ward (2016) noticed that people claim enjoyment and amusement as motivations for Tinder use to avoid stigmatization.

Interestingly, this study shows differences between women's and men's motivation using Tinder. For most women, Tinder is a boredom reliever, but for most men, Tinder is a medium for finding romantic partners. This finding was also observed in one research conducted by Clemens et al. (2015), who stated that women were more likely to use online dating services for social interaction than for finding

romantic partners. Consistent results about these motivations are time-indifferent since 1995 (Abramova et al., 2016). However, the Chi-square test found no significant difference in the motives for using Tinder between women and men ( $\chi^2=11.2$ ,  $p>0.01$ ). These findings were similar to Gatter & Hodkinson (2016). Moreover, people's motivation to start using online dating was social (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). Hence, this study also showed that most users' motives were related to social compensation and having romantic partners or acquaintances.

This study focused on the early adulthood age as it was found to be the highest rank of Tinder users. Levinson (1986) developed an adult developmental stage. Therefore, the respondents were categorized into four age groups: early adult transitions (17-22), entering the adult world (23-28), thirties transition (29-33), and settling down (34-39).

Table 2. Age group (years)

Motives categorization	17-22	23-28	29-33	34-39
Seeking romantic partner	17	63	19	1
Friendship (or not intended to be romantic partner)	32	39	6	1
Relieve boredom and fulfill curiosity	60	78	10	4
Looking for a sexual partner	19	31	9	1
Seeking romantic partner	17	63	19	1
Total	128 (32,80%)	211 (54,1%)	44 (11,30%)	17 (1,80%)

From Table 2, more than 50% of respondents were in the initial stage of early adulthood. Such domains in self-

development, emotional development, marriage and family life, social relationships, and professional life should be



maintained at this stage. However, such individuals during this stage are also expected to accomplish tasks assigned to them, especially to establish a committed romantic relationship in their emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In Indonesia, this task is closely related to the perception of marriage at a young age. According to the research conducted by the Center for Women's Studies UIN Jakarta in 2000, women's ideal age to be married is around 19,9, and men are 23,4 years old (Grijns et al., 2018). This may explain why most Tinder users are approximately 17 to 28 years old, although their motives were mostly personal (to relieve boredom and satisfy curiosity).

Furthermore, some authors also concluded that the age subgroup with the highest usage of dating apps is between 24 and 30 (LeFebvre et al., 2014; Ranzini & Lutz, 2016). This study found that 231 respondents were not in any relationship state. Prior studies also showed the condition of being single is a predictor of using online dating applications (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). However, it is also interesting to know that around 40% of respondents were in a relationship state, either in a romantic relationship or married. From a literature review conducted by Castro & Barrada (2020), a study about online dating users typically aims to assess infidelity; hence, the usage of online dating is not limited to singles.

**Table 3. User Relationship Status During Apps Usage**

Motives Categorization	<15 mins	15-60 mins	60-90 mins	>90 mins
Seeking romantic partner	47	51	1	1
Friendship (or not intended to be romantic partner)	33	39	1	5
Relieve boredom and fulfill curiosity	63	79	3	7
Looking for a sexual partner	27	29	0	4
Total	170 (43,60%)	198 (50,80%)	5 (1,30%)	17 (4,4%)

Additional analysis found that the average duration of using Tinder is around 15 to 60 minutes. It is shown by the dynamic interaction within the apps, which consists of swiping the profiles and chatting with matches. Regarding the motives, people who access Tinder to relieve boredom and fulfill curiosity spend around 15-60 minutes a day. In

contrast with the research conducted by Chin et al. (2019), they found that Tinder users opened the app 11 times a day and invested up to 90 minutes daily. Furthermore, around 59,50% of respondents indicated not using other online dating applications concerning Tinder's wide use. Hence, the opportunity to fulfill user motives is higher.

**Table 4. Other Apps and Premium Features Usage**

Motives	Yes	No
Using different online dating apps	158 (40,50%)	232 (59,50%)
Subscribe to Tinder's preTinder'stures	27 (6,90%)	363 (93,10%)

This application also offers paid (premium) features to enhance its users' success finding partners (Paramitha et al., 2021). However, this study showed that most users were not maximizing the features in Tinder. David & Cambre (2016) found a possible explanation from their research: Tinder is perceived as a game and swipe logic. Therefore, users would reconsider if they had to subscribe to its Premium feature. Even more, most of them have the motive just to relieve boredom and fulfill their curiosity.

This research is still limited to Tinder online dating users. So, it is not sure that the same motivations also apply to other online dating. In addition, this research provides an answer choice system in the form of a single transferable vote so that there is a proportional representation of the four answer choices for motives for using Tinder. Moreover, this study does not identify the respondents' background further, so it does not explain why these motives emerged.

## CONCLUSION

This study provided an overview of Tinder users' motives in Indonesia and their demographic conditions. Most users found Tinder interesting and accessed the app to relieve their boredom and fulfill their curiosity. Moreover,

due to various motives, Tinder users were not always single and open to a new romantic relationship, leading to offline encounters. Users should be cautious and aware of other user tendencies in swiping for matches. This research highlights opportunities for early adulthood to develop new relationships in new ways, even if not to fulfill the need for romantic relationships. The psychological dynamics in online dating, especially in user developmental stages or various relationship statuses, can be addressed in further research.

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