

Loneliness, Interpersonal Trust and Affiliation Needs in Early Adulthood Users of The Bumble App

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine the relationship between loneliness, interpersonal trust, and the need for affiliation among early adults using the Bumble dating application. **Method:** Employing a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from users through standardized psychological scales measuring loneliness, interpersonal trust, and affiliation needs. **Results:** The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between loneliness and affiliation needs, suggesting that individuals experiencing higher levels of loneliness are more driven to establish social connections. Interpersonal trust was also found to be positively related to affiliation needs, although the strength of this relationship was weaker compared to loneliness. **Novelty:** This study offers a contemporary perspective by contextualizing the psychological dynamics of loneliness and trust within the digital environment of online dating, specifically the Bumble app. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on digital-era social behavior and highlight the need for targeted interventions to enhance psychological well-being through the facilitation of meaningful online social interactions.

INTRODUCTION

In this era, technological advancements greatly facilitate flexible communication for humans. One of those technologies is the smartphone, which has software commonly referred to as applications. These applications can be used for daily needs; various applications can be utilized, such as for online transportation needs, social media needs, online shopping needs, or for seeking news information. In fact, some even use it for online dating [1]. According to Granciano, online dating is one of the applications designed to facilitate online dating. Online dating applications have benefits, including a wider range of friendships, saving time, costs, and energy, more flexible communication, filling free time, and lastly, developing language skills [2]. According to Businessofapps.com, 323.9 million people globally used online dating apps in 2021. Compared to the previous year, there were only 293.7 million users, an increase of 10.3%.

One of the most frequently used online dating apps is Bumble, which was first launched in December 2014 by Whitney Wolfe Herd. Based on the official Bumble website, the reason Whitney Wolfe Herd created this app was after realizing that many women were still waiting for men to initiate contact with them on online dating apps. Wolfe wanted to make it easier for women to initiate contact without feeling intimidated

and to stop waiting for men to do it first. Bumble was developed to empower women and eliminate the stereotype that men must initiate contact with women. Wifitalents-com states that Bumble users in 2020 numbered 2.4 million, and 83% of Bumble users were looking for something "serious," which indicates that the majority of the app's user base is seeking committed and meaningful relationships rather than casual or long-term interactions [3]. Based on the research journal by Sharin and Iman, the average user of the Bumble app is 18-25 years old. This indicates that the Bumble app is popular among young adults [4]. Sari and Kusuma describe those who use online dating applications as an activity of communication conducted through computers or computer-mediated communication, carried out intentionally and with the goal of meeting new people and finding partners [5].

According to Sari, early adulthood is important for maintaining the affiliation needs they currently have. Affiliation needs are defined as the basic drive to form and maintain intimate communication between individuals, aimed at having good relationships, intimacy, and maintaining interpersonal relationships [5]. According to Hill's theory, the definition of affiliation needs is a need to form and maintain close relationships with other individuals [6]. According to O'Connor & Rosenblood, affiliation can be seen as a drive, where people seek an optimal range of social contact [7]. Affiliation needs according to Baron and Branscomb are a need that tends to encourage individuals to form friendships aimed at socializing with others. From that definition, affiliation needs can be concluded as an essential need for individuals to remain connected and interact with others [8].

The aspects of affiliation needs formulated by Hill (in Baron and Branscomb) are as follows: first, positive stimulation, which is a pleasant situation obtained through close personal relationships; second, emotional support, which is the individual's need to receive sympathy from others; third, social comparison, which is the individual's need to interact with others to gain knowledge and information to reduce perceived doubts; and finally, attention, which is a need that will encourage individuals to behave [6]. If affiliation needs are not met, this can lead to a decrease in self-confidence and the emergence of feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself. This condition is a psychological consequence that arises when individuals fail to meet their affiliation needs, especially in the context of using online dating platforms like Bumble [9]. If affiliation needs are not met, this can lead to a decrease in self-confidence and the emergence of feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself. This condition is a psychological consequence that arises when individuals fail to meet their affiliation needs, especially in the context of using online dating platforms like Bumble [6].

Based on the initial survey results conducted through interviews with two subjects aged 18-25 who use the Bumble app in Sidoarjo, the first respondent expressed difficulty

in starting conversations with new people, rarely engaging in group activities, feeling dissatisfied with the quality of their relationships, and often experiencing failures in maintaining relationships. Meanwhile, the second respondent tends to avoid social situations involving many people, prefers solitary activities, feels their relationships lack depth, and has difficulty maintaining consistent communication. Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that both respondents face challenges in meeting their affiliation needs, particularly in building, maintaining, and experiencing satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. Based on the aspects of affiliation needs according to Hill, among others: 1) positive stimulation 2) emotional support 3) social comparison and 4) attention [6].

Basically, affiliation needs are a fundamental drive to form and maintain intimate communication between individuals aimed at having good relationships, intimacy, and maintaining interpersonal connections [6]. Some benefits of affiliation needs include improving communication skills, encouraging collaboration and cooperation, and reducing stress and anxiety, thereby creating individuals who are mentally healthier and more cohesive and supportive, which ultimately contributes to better and more harmonious social development [10].

One of the factors influencing the affiliation experienced by Bumble users is the emotional factor, where this feeling is loneliness [11]. According to Vebiyolla and Rohmadani, loneliness is related to affiliation. Loneliness is a feeling of isolation where individuals feel misunderstood, lack meaningful communication, and feel unnecessary to others around them [12].

According to Russel, loneliness is defined as an individual's subjective feeling due to the lack of balance in relationships. The aspects of loneliness according to Russel experienced by individuals are Personality, Social Desirability, and Depression [13]. There is a previous study conducted by Devi titled "The Relationship Between Loneliness and Affiliation Needs Among Tinder Users" which explains the positive relationship between loneliness and affiliation needs [6]. According to Perlman and Peplau, one of the factors that make individuals more susceptible or more vulnerable to experiencing loneliness (predisposing factor) is personal characteristics, such as low self-esteem, shyness, and lack of assertiveness. Using Bumble to listen to complaints and receive attention can create a sense of comfort and reduce feelings of loneliness. Additionally, the use of the Bumble app can influence the way individuals communicate openly and confidently about anything in their lives, such as hobbies, work, things they like, and so on. Individuals who use Bumble can express their emotions and feelings towards others more intimately and can recognize similarities and differences with others. The higher the assertiveness in communication, the smaller the feelings of inferiority and shame that can lead to loneliness in an individual [6].

Affiliation needs can be influenced by other factors in Bumble users, namely interpersonal trust [14]. Interpersonal trust is the trust that someone has in others within the context of social or interpersonal relationships. This refers to the belief that others will act in an honest, reliable manner, and will not disappoint or hurt us in situations involving social interaction. Interpersonal trust according to Mayer and Rousseau defines Interpersonal trust is a psychological state consisting of the intention to accept vulnerability to the actions of others based on the expectation that the other will act in a certain way, regardless of the ability to monitor or control the other party [15]. That is certainly contrary to Devi's definition of affiliation needs, which explains that individuals must have the ability to establish and maintain good relationships and avoid social conflicts [6]. The aspects of interpersonal trust according to Mayer are: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Previous research conducted by Putra S and Marhaeni found a significant relationship between interpersonal trust and affiliation needs. However, data from the research by Sholikhah and Melawati found that affiliation needs and interpersonal trust do not have a significant relationship.

This research offers a new perspective on the interaction between loneliness, interpersonal trust, and affiliation needs among early adult individuals using the Bumble app. Unlike previous research that emphasized the psychological aspects of dating app users in general, this study specifically examines how these three variables—loneliness (X1), interpersonal trust (X2), and affiliation needs—interact with each other in the context of Bumble users. This study highlights that the relationship between loneliness and interpersonal trust with affiliation needs in early adulthood has not been simultaneously researched before. These findings provide deeper insights into the social dynamics occurring within dating applications, as well as how these factors interact in fulfilling users' affiliation needs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a correlational quantitative approach. This research consists of three variables: affiliation needs, loneliness, and interpersonal trust. The population used in this study consists of early adult individuals who are users of the Bumble application in Sidoarjo Regency. The population in this study is 1,996,825 people. From that population, a sample of 349 respondents was taken based on the Issac & Michael table with a 5% margin of error. The sampling technique used in this research employs purposive sampling.

The data collection technique in this research is using a scale. The scale model used is the Likert scale, which provides responses of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Based on the focus of the research to be conducted, there are three research instruments to collect data from the predetermined population. On the affiliation needs scale, an adaptation developed by Devi is used, consisting of 26

statement items that refer to the aspects of affiliation needs according to Hill on a scale called the "interpersonal orientation scale" These aspects include positive stimulation, emotional support, social comparison, and attention. With a reliability of 0.86 to measure these aspects [6]. In the loneliness scale instrument, an adapted scale was used, compiled by Dila, consisting of 20 statement items that refer to aspects of loneliness according to Russell in the UCLA loneliness scale, including loneliness traits, social desirability, and depression. With a reliability of 0.854 to measure these aspects [16]. In the interpersonal trust instrument, an adaptation scale developed by Arwa is used, consisting of 22 statement items that refer to the aspects of interpersonal trust according to Mayer in the "trust scale," including ability, benevolence, and integrity. With a reliability of 0.815 to measure those aspects [17].

Data analysis in this study uses correlation analysis techniques to identify the presence or absence of a relationship between the variables of loneliness, interpersonal trust, and affiliation needs. Before conducting the correlation analysis, the initial step taken is to perform prerequisite tests, including normality test, linearity test, and multicollinearity test. This test is important to ensure that the data meets the assumptions required in statistical analysis. In this study, the independent variable (X) of focus is affiliation needs. If there is more than one independent variable, then multiple correlation analysis will be applied to evaluate the relationship between these variables more comprehensively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the normality test indicate that the data is normally distributed, as shown by the curved pattern in Figure 1.

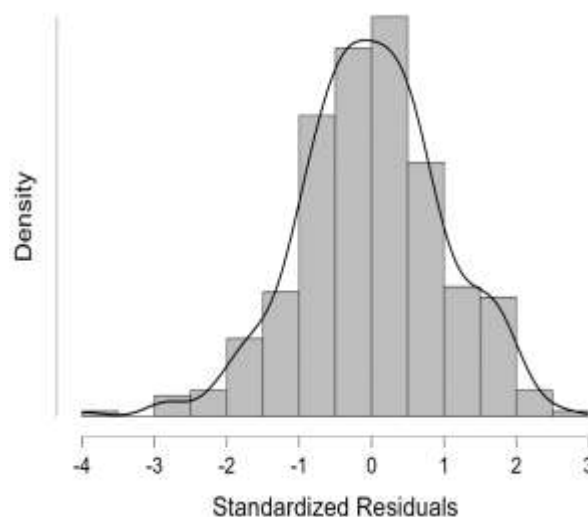


Figure 1. Uji normalitas

Based on the collinearity statistic results, a VIF value of $1.135 < 10$ was obtained. Therefore, the data does not exhibit multicollinearity. The calculation results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Uji Multikolinieritas

Coefficients						Collinearity Statistics	
Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	Tolerance VIF
H ₀	(Intercept)	78.818	0.484		162.886	< .001	
H ₁	(Intercept)	23.602	4.806		4.911	< .001	
	Kesepian (X1)	0.100	0.083	0.054	1.197	0.232	0.881 1.135
	Kepercayaan Interpersonal (X2)	0.783	0.062	0.577	12.714	< .001	0.881 1.135

Based on the results of the linearity test analysis, it is known that the variables of affiliation needs and loneliness. The data spreads close to a linear line, and the data points will form an ellipse if a circular line is drawn. It can be concluded that the assumption of linearity has been met. Same with the variables of affiliation needs and interpersonal trust. The results can be seen in figures 2 and 3.

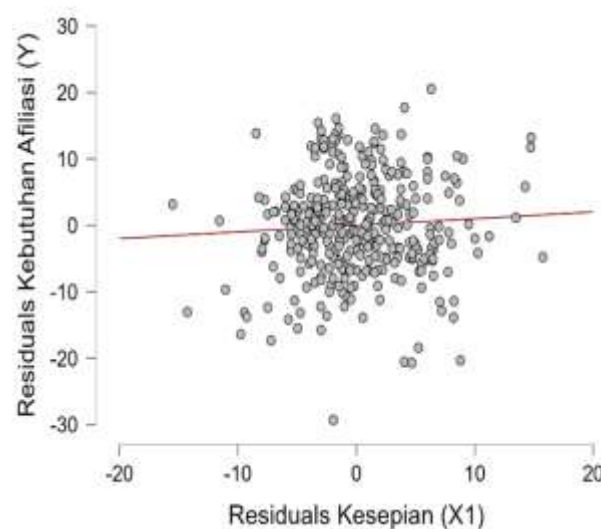


Figure 2. Uji Linieritas

Partial Regression Plots (*Affiliation Needs vs Loneliness*)

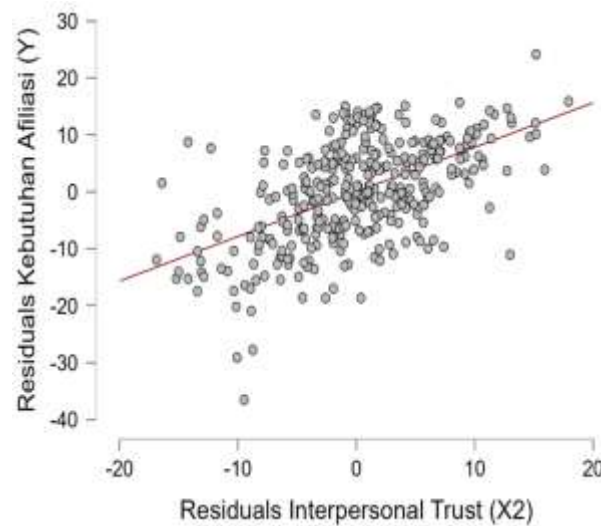


Figure 3. Uji Linieritas

Partial Regression Plots (*Affiliation Needs vs Interpersonal Trust*)

Table 2. Uji Hipotesis
Pearson's Correlations

Variable		Kesepian (X1)	Kepercayaan Interpersonal (X2)	Affiliation needs (Y)
1. Kesepian (X1)	Pearson's r	—		
	p-value	—		
2. Kepercayaan Interpersonal (X2)	Pearson's r	0.345	—	
	p-value	< .001	—	
3. Affiliation needs (Y)	Pearson's r	0.253	0.595	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—

The results of the Pearson correlation test indicate that there is a significant relationship between the variables studied. Loneliness (X1) has a positive correlation with affiliation needs (Y) with Pearson's $r = 0.253$ ($p < 0.001$), which means that the higher the level of loneliness, the higher the affiliation needs. Additionally, interpersonal trust (X2) also has a stronger positive correlation with affiliation needs (Y), with Pearson's $r = 0.595$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the higher the interpersonal trust, the higher the affiliation needs. Meanwhile, loneliness (X1) and interpersonal trust (X2) also have a positive relationship with Pearson's $r = 0.345$ ($p < 0.001$), which means that individuals who feel lonely tend to have different levels of interpersonal trust. All relationships are significant, thus supporting the hypothesis that there is a connection between these three variables. Based on the data analysis results, an R value of 0.597 and an R^2 value of 0.357 were obtained. Which means this is the explanation or the effective contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The variance of affiliation needs

explained by loneliness and interpersonal trust is 64.3%. Meanwhile, the remaining portion is explained by other factors that are not examined here.

Tabel 3. Uji Determinasi
Model Summary - Affiliation needs (Y)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	9.156
H ₁	0.597	0.357	0.353	7.363

Discussion

Based on the research results, there is a significant simultaneous relationship between loneliness and interpersonal trust on affiliation needs in early adulthood users of the Bumble app. The effective contribution of both independent variables to the dependent variable is shown by an R² value of 0.357, which means that 35.7% of the variance in affiliation needs can be explained by loneliness and interpersonal trust, while the remaining 64.3% is influenced by other factors outside this study.

The need for affiliation is a fundamental aspect of human social life, especially in early adulthood, which is characterized by the exploration of interpersonal relationships. Individuals at this stage have a strong urge to form and maintain meaningful social connections, especially in digital contexts such as online dating apps. Loneliness, as an emotional condition resulting from a lack of satisfying social connections, often triggers an increase in affiliation needs [6]. On the other hand, interpersonal trust becomes an important foundation in the process of forming new social connections [16].

According to Heinrich and Gullone, loneliness is not just a subjective feeling, but a psychological signal that drives individuals to seek deeper social connections [18]. Individuals who feel lonely tend to use digital platforms like Bumble to meet that need. Furthermore, Weiss explains that loneliness can create emotional pressure that drives individuals to seek social attachment, either directly or through digital media [19]. Meanwhile, Rotenberg et al. emphasize that interpersonal trust is the foundation of healthy social interactions – without trust, individuals tend to withdraw or are reluctant to open up in new relationships [20].

The results of the data analysis show that loneliness has a significant positive relationship with affiliation needs, with a correlation value ($r = 0.253$ ($p < 0.001$)). These findings indicate that the higher the level of loneliness experienced by individuals, the greater their drive to establish and maintain social relationships. Research by Heinrich and Gullone also states that loneliness is closely related to an increased need for meaningful social bonds, especially in individuals who are in transitional life stages such as early adulthood [18]. This aligns with Weiss's view, which states that loneliness can drive individuals to expand their social networks as a form of compensation for the emotional emptiness they feel [19]. This creates a conducive environment for users, especially those with high affiliation needs who may face obstacles in building

relationships directly in the real world. For individuals who feel lonely, this application serves as an alternative medium to seek emotional and social connections without the pressure of face-to-face interactions [6].

The results of the data analysis also show a significant positive relationship between interpersonal trust and affiliation needs, with a correlation value (r) = 0.595 ($p < 0.001$). This means that individuals who have a high level of trust in others tend to be more open and motivated in building meaningful social connections. Research by Rotenberg et al. shows that interpersonal trust is an important foundation in the formation and maintenance of healthy social relationships, as individuals with trust tend to feel safe to open up and forge social bonds [20]. These findings affirm that affiliation needs are not only driven by negative feelings such as loneliness but are also reinforced by positive aspects within the individual, namely the capacity to trust others [6]. For individuals with high interpersonal trust, this application offers the opportunity to establish meaningful relationships more quickly and effectively [16]. Thus, bumble acts as a catalyst that brings together the urge to connect (due to loneliness) and the readiness to establish intimacy (thanks to interpersonal trust).

Based on the results of the simultaneous analysis, a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.357 or 35.7% was obtained, indicating that loneliness and interpersonal trust together contribute 35.7% to the affiliation needs of early adults using the Bumble app. Meanwhile, the remaining 64.3% is influenced by other variables outside this study.

If viewed partially, the analysis results show that the variable of interpersonal trust has a stronger and more significant influence compared to loneliness on affiliation needs. This indicates that an individual's capacity to trust others is a key factor in forming meaningful social relationships. Individuals with a high level of trust will feel safer and more comfortable opening to new people, including in a digital environment full of uncertainty [21].

On the other hand, loneliness also has a significant influence, but with a lower correlation strength. This shows that although loneliness drives individuals to seek social relationships, such efforts do not always succeed if not accompanied by adequate interpersonal trust. In this case, individuals may want to relate, but still keep their distance or show defensive tendencies due to fears of being rejected or hurt. This condition illustrates the psychosocial dynamics of early adulthood living amidst the currents of digitalization of interpersonal relationships [22].

This research has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the data collected is limited to Bumble app users in the Sidoarjo area, so the results may not necessarily be generalizable to the population of online dating app users in other regions or cultural backgrounds. Second, the use of survey methods with self-report instruments opens up the possibility of subjective bias in respondents' self-assessment. Additionally, this research has not considered other external factors that may influence affiliation needs, such as past relationship experiences, real-world social support, or perceptions of online relationships. Therefore, further research is highly recommended to delve deeper

into the qualitative aspects of this dynamic and to examine the mediating or moderating roles of other factors.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study concludes that loneliness has a significant positive relationship with affiliation needs, indicating that individuals who experience higher levels of loneliness are more motivated to form social relationships. Interpersonal trust also plays a role, albeit to a lesser extent, in influencing the drive to affiliate with others. **Implication :** These findings underscore the importance of addressing psychological factors, particularly loneliness and trust, in the design of social interventions aimed at enhancing well-being in digital contexts, such as online dating applications. **Limitation :** The study is limited by its sample scope, which may not represent diverse cultural or demographic populations, and focuses solely on users of the Bumble app within a specific context. **Future Research :** Further studies are recommended to include participants from various cultural backgrounds and regions, explore additional psychological variables such as relationship satisfaction, anxiety, and depression, and investigate gender differences and cultural influences on the dynamics of loneliness, trust, and affiliation needs in digital social environments.

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