

Self-Esteem and Self-Disclosure Among Urban Early Adult Dating App Users

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Abstract

The increasing use of dating apps has transformed how early adults initiate interpersonal and romantic relationships in urban society. In these digital interactions, self-disclosure is important because users share personal information to build trust and relational closeness. However, the role of self-esteem in explaining self-disclosure within dating apps remains unclear. This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society. This research used a quantitative correlational design involving 149 early adults aged 20–30 years who had used or were currently using dating apps and lived in urban areas. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, while self-disclosure was measured using the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale adapted to the dating app context. Data were analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation because one variable did not meet the normality assumption. The results showed no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure, $r_s = -0.069$, $p = 0.400$, $r_s^2 \approx 0.005$. This very small effect size indicates that the two variables shared less than 1% of rank-order variation, suggesting that self-esteem was not a dominant factor in explaining self-disclosure in this sample. Theoretically, self-disclosure in dating apps may be better understood through contextual and interpersonal mechanisms, such as trust, perceived safety, online disinhibition, comfort, authenticity, and interaction quality. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of mindful, gradual, and authentic self-disclosure for users, as well as platform features that support privacy, safety, trust, and controlled information sharing.

Keywords: self-esteem; self-disclosure; dating apps; early adulthood; urban society.

1 INTRODUCTION

The development of internet technology has transformed the way individuals communicate, interact, and establish interpersonal relationships. The internet is no longer used only to obtain information and entertainment, but has also become an important medium for education, work, social interaction, and relationship formation. Globally, the International Telecommunication Union reported that the number of internet users worldwide has reached billions of people [1]. In Indonesia, internet use has also continued to increase, as shown in reports by DataReportal and Badan Pusat Statistik [2], [3]. This condition indicates that digital communication has become an important part of everyday life, including in urban communities where social interaction is increasingly mediated by digital platforms.

One form of digital communication that is increasingly relevant to interpersonal and romantic relationships is the use of online dating applications or

dating apps. Dating apps allow individuals to expand their social relationships, search for romantic partners, and initiate interpersonal communication through digital platforms [4], [5]. In Indonesia, a survey by Populix showed that dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble, Tantan, Omi, and similar platforms are widely used among internet users [6]. The increasing use of dating apps reflects a shift in relationship initiation, in which romantic interaction can begin through mediated communication based on profiles, photos, messages, and matching features [4], [5].

Although dating apps are part of digital communication platforms, their context cannot be fully equated with general social media. In general social media, users may disclose information for broader purposes, such as maintaining existing relationships, expressing opinions, building social networks, or sharing daily activities. In contrast, dating apps are more specifically oriented toward initiating new interpersonal or romantic relationships with people who are initially unfamiliar to the user [4], [5]. Dating app interactions are

also shaped by distinctive platform features, such as profile construction, photo selection, matching systems, and private conversations after a match occurs [5]. These features make dating apps a more selective and evaluative communication context because users need to decide how much personal information to reveal in order to appear attractive, trustworthy, and open to further interaction. This condition is consistent with the Hyperpersonal Model of computer-mediated communication, which explains that users in digital interaction can strategically develop, edit, and control the information they present to others [7]. Therefore, self-disclosure in dating apps may involve different psychological considerations compared to self-disclosure in general social media.

The distinction between dating apps and general social media is also important because dating app users may face specific interpersonal and practical risks. Users may experience rejection, discontinued communication, fake accounts, misrepresentation, privacy concerns, or other negative online experiences [6], [8]. At the same time, dating apps are used in a context where users often seek acceptance, attraction, and relational possibilities from potential romantic partners [4], [5]. Thus, self-disclosure in dating apps does not only involve sharing information, but also managing self-presentation, privacy, interpersonal evaluation, and the possibility of acceptance or rejection in online romantic interaction.

The use of dating apps is particularly relevant among early adults because this developmental period is closely related to the task of building intimacy and establishing close relationships. Early adulthood is a phase in which individuals explore more serious interpersonal and romantic relationships, develop emotional closeness, and seek meaningful connections with others [9]. In urban society, dating apps may function as a digital space that enables early adults to meet new people and initiate romantic communication. However, the process of building closeness through dating apps also requires users to manage how they present themselves and how much personal information they are willing to share with others.

In dating app interactions, self-disclosure becomes an important process because users often need to reveal certain aspects of themselves before trust and closeness can develop. Self-disclosure refers to the process of communicating personal information, such as thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, and other aspects of the self, to others [10]. In the context of dating apps, self-disclosure may appear through profile descriptions, photo choices, personal preferences, conversations with matches, and stories shared during online interaction [5]. This process is important because openness can help individuals build initial impressions, develop trust, and create interpersonal closeness [5],

[10]. At the same time, self-disclosure in dating apps may also involve privacy concerns and the possibility of negative evaluation from others, especially because users interact with people who may not yet be personally known to them [6], [8].

One personal factor that may be related to self-disclosure is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the self [11]. Individuals with higher self-esteem are generally assumed to feel more secure in social interactions, more comfortable presenting themselves, and more confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings [11], [12]. Conversely, individuals with lower self-esteem may be more sensitive to social evaluation and may show greater caution when revealing personal information [12]. In the context of dating apps, self-esteem may be relevant to how users construct their profiles, interpret responses from others, respond to matches, and decide what personal information they are willing to disclose during online conversations. Therefore, self-esteem is theoretically important to examine in relation to self-disclosure within dating app interactions.

Previous studies have shown mixed findings regarding the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in digital communication contexts. Salsabilla and Rahardjo found that self-esteem was related to online self-disclosure among Tinder users [13]. Helmi *et al.* found that self-esteem was positively correlated with self-disclosure, although its effect on self-disclosure in the research model was not significant [14]. However, Erawati *et al.* found no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in social media use [15]. These differing findings indicate that the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure is not always consistent and may depend on the context in which online interaction occurs. Findings from general social media contexts cannot automatically be generalized to dating apps because dating apps involve more specific romantic intentions, interpersonal evaluation, matching mechanisms, selective self-presentation, and privacy-related considerations [4], [5], [6], [7].

Based on these conditions, there is a need to examine the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in the specific context of dating apps, particularly among early adult users in Indonesian urban society. Although previous studies have examined self-esteem and self-disclosure in online communication and social media contexts, research that specifically focuses on dating app users remains limited, especially in relation to how early adults disclose themselves in a digital space designed for romantic and interpersonal connection [13], [15]. This study addresses this gap by examining whether self-esteem is related to self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society.

This study contributes to the fields of social psychology and urban psychology by providing empirical evidence on self-disclosure in dating apps as a digital environment that differs from general social media in terms of relational goals, interaction patterns, selective self-presentation, and risks related to personal disclosure. By focusing on early adult dating app users in urban society, this study is expected to enrich the understanding of how personal factors, particularly self-esteem, relate to openness in digital romantic interaction. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the self, reflecting how individuals evaluate their worth, capability, and acceptance in social relationships [11]. In this study, self-esteem is not only understood as a general personal evaluation, but also as a psychological mechanism related to interpersonal acceptance and rejection. According to Sociometer Theory, self-esteem functions as an internal monitor of relational value, indicating the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as accepted, valued, or rejected by others [16]. From this perspective, self-esteem is relevant in interpersonal contexts because it reflects individuals' sensitivity to social approval, inclusion, and possible rejection [16].

This theoretical perspective is important in the context of dating apps because users interact in a digital space where relational feedback is often selective and evaluative. Dating app interactions are shaped by profile construction, photo selection, matching systems, and private conversations after a match occurs [5]. In this context, matches, message replies, compliments, continued conversations, rejection, or discontinued communication may function as interpersonal cues through which users evaluate their social acceptance and relational value [16], [17]. Recent research describes online dating platforms as creating a distinct form of external validation through likes, matches, and compliments, which is relevant to users' self-perception in digital dating interactions [17]. Therefore, feedback received in dating apps can be understood not only as ordinary interactional responses, but also as signals of acceptance, desirability, and relational worth that are relevant to self-esteem [16], [17].

In relation to self-disclosure, self-esteem is theoretically relevant because users' evaluations of themselves may be associated with their confidence in self-presentation and their sensitivity to interpersonal evaluation [12], [16]. Individuals with higher self-

esteem may feel more secure in presenting themselves and engaging in interpersonal communication, whereas individuals with lower self-esteem may be more cautious when facing possible rejection or negative evaluation [12], [16]. Forest et al. explained that self-esteem can contribute to intimacy-building through self-disclosure and interpersonal responsiveness [12]. In the context of dating apps, King et al. showed that Bumble interactions involve self-disclosure, rejection, stress, and self-esteem [18]. Thus, self-esteem is positioned in this study as a personal factor that may be related to how dating app users interpret interpersonal feedback, manage self-presentation, and consider the extent to which they are willing to disclose personal information during online romantic communication [12], [18].

2.2 Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure refers to the process of communicating personal information about oneself to others [10]. This information may include thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, preferences, and other personal aspects that individuals consciously share in interpersonal interactions [10]. Wheelless developed self-disclosure as a multidimensional construct consisting of intent, amount, positive-negative nature, depth-control, and honesty-accuracy [19]. These dimensions indicate that self-disclosure is not only related to how much information is shared, but also to the intention, depth, valence, control, and honesty of the information disclosed [19].

Theoretically, self-disclosure is closely related to the development of interpersonal closeness. Social Penetration Theory explains that interpersonal relationships generally develop through gradual self-disclosure, moving from more general and superficial information to deeper and more personal information as trust and intimacy increase [20]. From this perspective, self-disclosure is not a single act of sharing information, but a gradual and selective process through which individuals manage how much of themselves they reveal to others [20]. This theory is relevant to dating app interactions because users usually begin communication with limited information, such as profile descriptions, photos, interests, or short conversations, before deciding whether to share more personal experiences, feelings, or expectations [5], [20].

In dating apps, self-disclosure may occur through profile descriptions, photo choices, personal preferences, and conversations with matches [5]. This process allows users to build initial impressions, trust, and interpersonal closeness, but it also requires caution because users often communicate with people who are initially unfamiliar to them [5], [21]. Previous studies show that self-disclosure in dating apps can be shaped by interpersonal and

contextual factors, such as application-use goals, two-way interaction, trust, partner responsiveness, conversation fluency, and comfort in communication [5], [22]. Therefore, self-disclosure in dating apps can be understood as both a personal and interactional process, in which users gradually manage openness, privacy, and relational closeness during online romantic communication [5], [19], [22].

2.3 Dating Apps, Early Adulthood, and Urban Society

Dating apps are digital platforms that facilitate users in finding potential partners, initiating communication, and developing interpersonal or romantic relationships online [4], [5]. Unlike general social media, dating apps are more specifically oriented toward relational and romantic interaction through profile construction, photo selection, matching systems, and private conversations after a match occurs [5], [18]. These features make dating apps a communication context in which users present themselves to potential romantic partners and receive interpersonal responses, including acceptance, rejection, or discontinued interaction [17], [18].

The characteristics of dating apps can also be understood through the Hyperpersonal Model of computer-mediated communication. This model explains that computer-mediated communication may allow individuals to present themselves more selectively because users can strategically develop, edit, and control the information they share before it is received by others [7]. In dating apps, this process may appear through the selection of profile photos, the writing of profile descriptions, the choice of personal information to display, and the way users respond in private conversations. Thus, dating apps provide a setting where self-presentation and self-disclosure are not entirely spontaneous, but can be selectively managed according to users' relational goals and perceived audience [5], [7].

Dating apps are particularly relevant among early adults because this developmental period is closely related to the task of building intimacy and establishing close relationships [9]. In urban society, dating apps may provide a flexible communication space for early adults to meet new people and initiate romantic interaction without immediate face-to-face contact [5], [9]. However, dating app interactions may also involve privacy concerns, misrepresentation, rejection, and other negative online experiences [6], [8], while rejection-related processes are relevant to self-disclosure in online dating contexts [21]. Therefore, self-disclosure in dating apps can be understood as a process in which users manage openness, self-presentation, privacy, and

possible interpersonal evaluation during online romantic interaction [5], [21], [23].

2.4 Dynamics of Self-Esteem and Self-Disclosure

The relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in this study is understood through the interaction between personal evaluation and the specific characteristics of dating app communication. Based on Sociometer Theory, self-esteem reflects individuals' perception of relational value, including the extent to which they feel accepted, valued, or rejected by others [16]. In dating apps, relational feedback may appear through matches, message replies, compliments, continued conversations, rejection, or discontinued communication [17]. These forms of feedback can be interpreted as interpersonal cues that are relevant to users' confidence in self-presentation and their sensitivity to social evaluation [16], [17]. Therefore, self-esteem is theoretically relevant in dating app interactions because users are not only presenting information about themselves, but also interpreting whether their self-presentation receives acceptance or rejection from potential romantic partners [16], [17].

Self-disclosure in dating apps can also be understood through Social Penetration Theory, which explains that interpersonal closeness develops through gradual and selective disclosure, from more general information to deeper and more personal information as trust and intimacy increase [20]. In dating apps, this process may occur when users begin with profile-based information, such as photos, interests, and short descriptions, and later decide whether to share more personal experiences, feelings, or expectations during private conversations [5], [20]. Thus, the decision to disclose personal information is not only related to individual characteristics, but also to the perceived development of trust, comfort, and relational closeness within the interaction [5], [22].

The Hyperpersonal Model further explains why this process may operate differently in dating apps compared to face-to-face interaction or general social media [7]. In computer-mediated communication, individuals can strategically develop, edit, and control the information they present to others [7]. Dating apps provide users with opportunities for selective self-presentation through profile photos, bio descriptions, preference displays, and private messaging [5], [7], [18]. This selective environment may make self-disclosure more dependent on how users evaluate themselves, how they expect others to respond, and how safe or comfortable they feel in continuing the interaction. Therefore, the dating app context may strengthen the relevance of self-esteem to self-disclosure because users disclose information while simultaneously managing

impression, privacy, and possible interpersonal evaluation [12], [18], [21].

Previous empirical findings also indicate that the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure is not always consistent across digital contexts. Salsabilla and Rahardjo found that self-esteem influenced online self-disclosure among Tinder users [13]. Helmi et al. found that self-esteem was positively correlated with self-disclosure, although its effect on self-disclosure in the research model was not significant [14]. Meanwhile, Erawati et al. found no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in social media use [15]. These mixed findings suggest that the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure may depend on the characteristics of the platform, the purpose of interaction, and contextual factors surrounding online communication [13], [14], [15]. In addition, studies on dating app interactions suggest that self-disclosure may be related to trust, rejection sensitivity, interaction quality, and comfort in communication [5], [21], [22]. Other studies also indicate that online self-disclosure may be associated with perceived value, authenticity, and privacy-related concerns [24], [25].

Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, this study positions self-esteem as a personal factor that may be associated with self-disclosure among dating app users. Conceptually, self-esteem may be related to users' perceived relational value and confidence in self-presentation, which can shape their willingness to disclose personal information in online romantic communication. However, because dating app interactions also involve trust, privacy, selective self-presentation, and interpersonal evaluation, the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure may be context-dependent rather than direct or universal. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis that there is a relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design. A quantitative approach was used because the research data consisted of numerical scores obtained through psychological scales, while a correlational design was used to examine the relationship between two variables without manipulating the research variables [26], [27]. The independent variable in this study was self-esteem, while the dependent variable was self-disclosure.

3.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The population in this study consisted of early adult dating app users living in urban society. The respondent criteria included: (1) being 20–30 years old, (2) having used or currently using dating apps, and (3) living in urban areas. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with an accidental sampling or convenience sampling approach, namely the selection of respondents based on their availability and suitability with the research criteria [28].

Data were collected online using Google Forms distributed through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and X. Because this study used online convenience sampling, the final composition of respondent characteristics depended on respondents' willingness, availability, and suitability with the research criteria. Therefore, demographic characteristics, including gender distribution, were reported descriptively in the results section and considered when interpreting the findings.

After the data collection and cleaning process, 149 respondents met the criteria and were used in the final analysis. This number exceeded the minimum sample requirement that had previously been determined using the Lemeshow formula for an unknown population.

3.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of a self-esteem scale and a self-disclosure scale. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg [11]. The RSES is a unidimensional instrument used to measure individuals' global evaluation of themselves. The original version of the RSES consists of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale response format, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Before being used in the field study, the researcher conducted a pilot study involving 35 respondents to examine item validity through corrected item-total correlation and instrument reliability through Cronbach's Alpha. The pilot respondents were selected based on criteria that were generally comparable to those of the main sample, namely early adults who had used or were currently using dating apps and lived in urban areas. Overall, the pilot respondents were within the early adult age range of 20–30 years, had relevant experience with dating app use, and represented urban users. Therefore, the pilot sample was considered appropriate for preliminary instrument testing before the scales were administered to the main sample, which also consisted of early adult dating app users aged 20–30 years living in urban areas. The similarity of these characteristics was considered important to support the

external validity of the instruments before they were administered in the field study. The results of the pilot study showed that the self-esteem scale had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.829. Based on the item analysis, two items had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.30, namely item 4 and item 8, so both items were eliminated. Thus, the final RSES used in the field study consisted of 8 items. Several unfavorable items were reverse-scored, and higher total scores indicated higher levels of self-esteem.

Self-disclosure was measured using the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (RSDS), which was developed based on the concept of Wheelless and Grotz [10], [19]. This scale measures self-disclosure through five aspects, namely intent, amount, positive-negative nature, depth-control, and honesty-accuracy. The initial version used in the pilot stage consisted of 30 items with a 7-point Likert scale response format, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The same pilot testing procedure was also applied to the self-disclosure scale to examine item validity and instrument reliability before the field study. The results of the pilot study showed that the self-disclosure scale had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.896. Based on the item analysis, eight items had corrected item-total correlation values below 0.30, namely items 4, 6, 8, 11, 24, 25, 28, and 29, so these items were eliminated. Thus, the final RSDS used in the field study consisted of 22 items. Unfavorable items were reverse-scored, and higher total scores indicated higher levels of self-disclosure.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. The analysis process began with data cleaning to ensure response completeness, respondents' suitability with the criteria, and the absence of input errors in the scale items. After that, reverse scoring was conducted on unfavorable items, followed by the calculation of total scores for each variable.

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to examine the internal consistency of the instruments. Next, normality testing was conducted using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, while linearity testing was conducted to examine the relationship pattern between self-esteem and self-disclosure. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Spearman's rho correlation if one of the variables did not meet the normality assumption, with a significance level of 0.05.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 149 early adult respondents who were dating app users in urban society. All respondents analyzed in this study represented the final data after the data cleaning process. Respondent characteristics based on age, gender, domicile, and dating apps used are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics.

Characteristic	Category	N (%)
Age	Mean = 22.57; SD = 2.414; range = 20–30	149 (100%)
Gender	Male	33 (22.1%)
	Female	116 (77.9%)
Domicile	Bekasi	47 (31.5%)
	Jakarta	21 (14.1%)
	Bandung	13 (8.7%)
	Surabaya	10 (6.7%)
	Others	58 (38.9%)
Dating apps	Bumble	63 (42.3%)
	Tinder	58 (38.9%)
	Omi	13 (8.7%)
	Others	15 (10.1%)

Based on Table 1, respondents were between 20 and 30 years old, with a mean age of 22.57 years and a standard deviation of 2.414. Based on gender, female respondents constituted the majority of the sample, with 116 respondents or 77.9%, while male respondents accounted for 33 respondents or 22.1%. This indicates that the sample had an unequal gender distribution. Therefore, the gender composition of the sample is reported transparently as part of the respondent characteristics and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Based on domicile, the largest proportion of respondents came from Bekasi, with 47 respondents or 31.5%, followed by Jakarta with 21 respondents or 14.1%, Bandung with 13 respondents or 8.7%, and Surabaya with 10 respondents or 6.7%. Meanwhile, the most frequently used dating app was Bumble, with 63 respondents or 42.3%, followed by Tinder with 58 respondents or 38.9%, and Omi with 13 respondents or 8.7%. These findings indicate that most respondents were in the early phase of early adulthood, were predominantly female, and mostly used Bumble and Tinder as platforms to initiate communication and build interpersonal relationships online.

4.2 Data Screening and Instrument Reliability

Before conducting the main analysis, the researcher examined data completeness and instrument reliability. Based on the missing value examination, all items in the self-esteem and self-disclosure variables had 149 valid data points and 0 missing values. Thus, all

respondent data used in this study were complete and could be further analyzed. The instruments used in the field study were the final instruments after the pilot study process, consisting of an 8-item self-esteem scale and a 22-item self-disclosure scale. Furthermore, instrument reliability in the field study data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The reliability test results for the self-esteem and self-disclosure scales are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability test results.

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Self-esteem	8	0.810
Self-disclosure	22	0.917

Based on Table 2, the self-esteem scale obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.810, while the self-disclosure scale obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.917. Both values were above the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating that the self-esteem and self-disclosure instruments were reliable and appropriate for further analysis.

4.3 Assumption Test

Assumption testing was conducted through normality and linearity tests. The normality test was conducted using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, while the linearity test was examined through the deviation from linearity value. The results of the normality and linearity tests are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality and linearity test results.

Test	Variable/Relationship	Sig. Value
K-S	Self-esteem	0.032
S-W	Self-esteem	0.037
K-S	Self-disclosure	0.200
S-W	Self-disclosure	0.208
DFL	SE * SD	0.158

Note: K-S = Kolmogorov-Smirnov; S-W = Shapiro-Wilk; DFL = Deviation from Linearity; SE = self-esteem; SD = self-disclosure.

Based on Table 3, the self-esteem variable was not normally distributed because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value was 0.032 and the Shapiro-Wilk significance value was 0.037, both of which were lower than 0.05. Meanwhile, the self-disclosure variable was normally distributed because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value was 0.200 and the Shapiro-Wilk significance value was 0.208, both of which were higher than 0.05. The linearity test showed a deviation from linearity value of 0.158, or $p > 0.05$, indicating that there was no significant deviation from linearity. Because one variable did not meet the normality assumption, hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the nonparametric Spearman's rho correlation.

4.4 Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Spearman's rho correlation because one variable did not meet the normality assumption. The correlation test results between self-esteem and self-disclosure are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Spearman correlation results.

Variable	N	r_s	p
Self-esteem – Self-disclosure	149	-0.069	0.400

Note: r_s = Spearman's rho; p = significance value.

Based on Table 4, the correlation coefficient was $r_s = -0.069$ with a significance value of $p = 0.400$. Since $p > 0.05$, it can be concluded that there was no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society. Thus, the alternative hypothesis stating that there is a relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure was rejected, while H_0 was retained. The negative correlation coefficient indicates an opposite direction of the relationship, but its strength was very weak and not statistically meaningful. This indicates that self-esteem was not a primary factor explaining the tendency for self-disclosure among dating app users in this study sample.

4.5 Discussion

The results showed that self-esteem was not significantly associated with self-disclosure in this sample ($r_s = -0.069$, $p = 0.400$, $r_s^2 \approx 0.005$). The very small effect size indicates that the two variables shared less than 1% of rank-order variation. This finding suggests that global self-esteem, when examined as a single personal variable, was not a central factor in explaining self-disclosure among the respondents of this study. Because this study used a correlational design, the result should be interpreted as the absence of a meaningful bivariate association rather than as evidence of a causal or predictive relationship.

This pattern is consistent with the view that online self-disclosure is shaped by multiple and interacting factors rather than by a single personal characteristic. Self-disclosure can be understood as a voluntary decision in which individuals consider the potential benefits and risks of sharing personal information, and this decision may be influenced by social, psychological, and platform-related factors [25]. From this perspective, self-esteem is only one possible factor among several conditions that may shape disclosure. In dating apps, users may disclose personal information while also considering the perceived value of the interaction, trust, perceived safety, comfort in

communication, partner responsiveness, and the degree of authenticity in self-presentation [5], [22], [23], [25]. Therefore, self-disclosure in dating apps may depend more on users' appraisal of the interactional context than on global self-evaluation alone.

The present finding also helps clarify the mixed results found in previous studies. Salsabilla and Rahardjo reported that self-esteem was related to online self-disclosure among Tinder users, although its contribution was relatively small [13]. Forest *et al.* also argued that self-esteem may support intimacy-building through self-disclosure and interpersonal responsiveness [12]. However, the present result is consistent with Erawati *et al.*, who found no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure in social media use [15]. Helmi *et al.* also showed that self-esteem was positively correlated with self-disclosure, but its direct effect in the model was not significant [14]. Taken together, these findings suggest that the role of self-esteem in self-disclosure may be conditional and context-dependent. In other words, self-esteem may not always operate as a direct factor, but may become more relevant when other mediating or moderating variables are considered. The findings should also be interpreted within the empirical characteristics of the present sample. This study involved 149 respondents with a mean age of 22.57 years. The most frequently used dating apps were Bumble ($n = 63$, 42.3%) and Tinder ($n = 58$, 38.9%). Because age and platform type were not examined as moderators, these characteristics cannot be used to explain the non-significant association between self-esteem and self-disclosure. However, they indicate that the finding should be understood within a relatively young early adult sample whose dating app experience was mostly represented by Bumble and Tinder users.

The gender composition of the sample should also be considered when interpreting the findings. In this study, female respondents were overrepresented, with 116 women (77.9%), while male respondents accounted for 33 participants (22.1%). Previous studies have shown that gender may be associated with differences in self-disclosure tendencies. Dindia and Allen found that women tend to disclose slightly more than men, particularly in closer interpersonal relationships [29]. More recent evidence also indicates that gender differences in disclosure may vary depending on the type of information shared, including positive and negative information [30]. In the context of dating apps, Morlat *et al.* found significant gender differences in Tinder use motivations among young users, with men more often oriented toward casual encounters and women more often oriented toward serious relationships and friendships [31]. Their study also found no significant differences in self-esteem across Tinder use groups [31]. Although Morlat *et al.* did not examine self-disclosure

directly, their findings support the view that gender may be related to users' relational motivations and dating app engagement patterns rather than to global self-esteem alone.

Because women constituted the majority of the sample, the overall pattern of self-disclosure in the present study may reflect female dating app users' experiences more strongly than male users' experiences. Therefore, the findings should be generalized carefully. Since gender was not tested as a covariate or moderator in this study, it cannot be concluded that gender influenced the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure. Instead, the unequal gender distribution should be understood as a limitation of the present study. Future studies are encouraged to involve a more balanced gender distribution, use probability-based or quota sampling, and examine gender as a potential covariate or moderator to determine whether the relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure differs across gender groups [29], [30], [31].

The psychological characteristics of online communication may also help explain why self-disclosure in dating apps is not sufficiently captured by self-esteem alone. Suler explained that individuals may become more open in online communication because of anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, and reduced social pressure [32]. In dating apps, users can regulate their responses, choose what information to present, and discontinue interaction when they feel uncomfortable. These conditions may reduce some psychological barriers to self-disclosure. Stuart and Scott also noted that reduced restraint in online environments can encourage individuals to share thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences more freely [33]. However, because online disinhibition was not measured in this study, this explanation should be treated as a theoretical possibility rather than a direct conclusion from the present data.

Self-disclosure in dating apps may also be related to interpersonal and contextual factors that were not examined in this study. Previous research suggests that application-use goals, two-way interaction dynamics, trust, partner responsiveness, conversation fluency, and comfort in communication may shape users' willingness to disclose personal information [5], [22], [23]. True self-expression has also been linked to disclosure in online dating contexts [21], while loneliness, FOMO, and privacy concerns have been discussed as relevant factors among dating app users [24], [34]. Since these variables were not included in the present model, they should not be used to directly explain the non-significant result. Instead, they provide directions for future research that may better capture the contextual nature of self-disclosure in dating app interactions.

Future research should move beyond a direct bivariate model by examining the conditions under which, and the pathways through which, self-esteem may relate to self-disclosure in dating apps. Privacy concerns may be tested as a moderator because research on dating app users suggests that privacy-related concerns can shape disclosure-related processes and user fatigue [24]. Future studies could examine whether users with higher self-esteem may still limit their disclosure when they perceive high privacy risks. Attachment style and perceived anonymity may also be examined as moderators. Hu and Thomas found that perceived anonymity affordance weakened the negative association between attachment anxiety and perceived dating app success [35]. This suggests that dating app affordances, particularly anonymity, may shape how personal characteristics are expressed in online dating interactions. In addition, trust may be tested as a mediator. Andriani *et al.* showed that trust was related to self-disclosure among online dating application users [23]. Related evidence from another online communication context also suggests that trust may mediate the relationship between self-esteem and online self-disclosure [36]. Although this evidence was not obtained from a dating app context, it supports the possibility that self-esteem may relate to disclosure indirectly through trust. Examining privacy concerns, attachment style, perceived anonymity, and trust may clarify when and how self-esteem becomes relevant to self-disclosure in dating app contexts.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that there was no significant relationship between self-esteem and self-disclosure among early adult dating app users in urban society. The Spearman's rho correlation test showed a correlation coefficient of $r_s = -0.069$ with a significance value of $p = 0.400$, indicating that the research hypothesis was rejected and H_0 was retained. The negative direction of the relationship indicates an opposite tendency between the two variables; however, because the correlation value was very small and not significant, this tendency cannot be interpreted as a statistically meaningful relationship. This finding indicates that self-esteem was not a dominant factor in explaining self-disclosure among dating app users in this sample. Self-disclosure in dating apps may be more closely related to other contextual and interpersonal factors, such as online communication characteristics, perceived safety, trust in the other person, comfort in conversation, online disinhibition, application-use goals, and interaction quality. However, because these variables were not directly measured in this study, they should be understood as possible

directions for future research rather than direct conclusions from the present findings.

For dating app users, the findings of this study imply the importance of mindful, gradual, and authentic self-disclosure. Since self-esteem was not significantly associated with self-disclosure in this study, users should not assume that confidence or positive self-evaluation alone is sufficient to determine how much personal information should be shared. Before disclosing personal information, users are encouraged to reflect on their motivation for using dating apps, whether they are seeking meaningful connection, casual interaction, or external validation. This is important because dating apps may provide validation through likes, matches, and compliments, which can influence users' behavior and self-perception [17]. Users are also encouraged to disclose information gradually, beginning with general information and moving toward more personal topics as trust, comfort, and reciprocity develop during post-match interaction [37]. In addition, users should prioritize authenticity in presenting themselves, because authentic self-presentation may support more meaningful disclosure, while overly curated self-presentation may limit the quality of interpersonal connection [25].

For platform developers, the findings highlight the importance of designing dating apps that support safer, gradual, and authentic self-disclosure. Since self-esteem was not a dominant factor explaining self-disclosure in this sample, platforms should provide features that help users manage what they disclose, when they disclose it, and to whom they disclose it. Developers may design staged self-disclosure features, such as interest-based prompts, icebreaker questions, or optional disclosure layers that allow users to share deeper information only after interaction and trust have developed. Safety-oriented design can also support users' control over visibility, personal information, and risk management during dating app use [38]. In addition, profile design should encourage more realistic and authentic self-presentation, for example through reflective bio prompts, narrative profile sections, and photo verification, because online daters often balance attractiveness with accuracy when presenting themselves [39]. Matching systems may also consider relational goals, communication preferences, and openness preferences, not only physical attraction or rapid engagement, because dating app experiences are shaped by users' motivations, perceived success, and platform affordances [40].

Therefore, future studies are suggested to consider other variables that are more contextual to dating app use, such as trust, online disinhibition, loneliness, FOMO, motivation for using dating apps, or the quality of interpersonal interaction. Future studies

are also suggested to involve respondents with a more balanced distribution of age, gender, and domicile, and to examine gender or platform type as potential moderators. In addition, because this study analyzed self-disclosure using a total score, future studies may examine self-disclosure based on each of its dimensions so that self-disclosure in digital romantic relationships can be understood more specifically.

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