



# Factors Associated with Dating Behaviour among University Students in Indonesia: Cross-sectional Study

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## Abstract

Dating behaviour among university students has become increasingly complex with the advancement of social media and peer influence. This study aims to analyse the relationship between social media usage and peer influence on dating behaviour among university students. The study used a cross-sectional design. Data were collected from 388 respondents, selected using a purposive sampling technique through a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using the Chi-square test. The study results indicate that most students were 21 years old, female, and originated from outside the province. Most students were categorised as heavy social media users, with a usage duration of more than five hours per day. Regarding social media literacy, most students had a moderate level of proficiency. Peer influence was nearly evenly distributed. Additionally, most students engaged in risky dating behaviour. Statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between age, gender, social media literacy, and peer influence on dating behaviour. No significant correlation was found between place of origin and duration of social media usage with dating behaviour. This study recommends strengthening counselling services at the University level and establishing a peer educator program to provide accurate reproductive health information. Future research is encouraged to explore the influence of geographical and cultural factors on students' dating behaviour.

**Keywords:** Cross-sectional study, Dating behaviour, Peer influence, Social media usage, University student

## Introduction

Globalization is a process of growth that accelerates and expands changes in various aspects of life, influencing human lifestyles, perspectives, and evolving desires. (Lestari 2018). This phenomenon represents a phase of modernization that reorganizes different dimensions of life, including culture and social norms. In this context, local culture is increasingly being displaced, posing particular challenges for young people. (Saputri and F 2022) According to the WHO, adolescents are unmarried individuals between 12 and 24 years old. In the era of globalization, adolescents have greater control over their dating behaviour and the choice of their partners. (Dwi and Nugroho 2015).

Dating is a form of social interaction that allows adolescents to enjoy companionship, gain social recognition, and explore emotional

and sexual aspects. (Dwi and Nugroho 2015). However, cultural changes and modernization have also driven a shift in values regarding dating behaviour. Many adolescents engage in romantic relationships to pass the time, follow trends, or gain recognition from their surrounding environment. (Dwi and Nugroho 2015). Unfortunately, dating can also serve as a gateway to risky sexual behaviour. (Hayati Sibarani et al. 2022).

According to the 2017 Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey (SDKI), 81% of female adolescents and 84% of male adolescents in Indonesia have been in a romantic relationship, with most starting between the ages of 15 and 19 (BKKBN et al., 2017) These dating behaviours are diverse, ranging from mild activities such as holding hands to more intimate sexual behaviours like kissing, petting, and sexual intercourse (Cici, Notoatmojo, and Ulfa 2021)

Such risky sexual behaviours can lead to various negative consequences, including unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV/AIDS (Hayati Sibarani et al., 2022).

The 2017 SDKI results also revealed that 16.4% of adolescents aged 15–19 had experienced unintended pregnancy. (BKKBN et al. 2017). The National Population and Family Planning Board of Indonesia reported that out of a total of 5 million pregnancies per year in Indonesia, approximately 200,000 ended in abortion. (Ocviyanti and Dorothea 2018). Indonesia even ranks fifth in Asia for the highest risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIS). Data from UNFPA and WHO also estimate that 1 in 20 adolescents contracts an STI each year (Hairuddin, K., Passe, R., & Sudirman 2022).

In Central Java, the complexity of dating behaviour issues is reflected in the increasing cases of unintended pregnancies and abortions. Data from the Youth Information and Service Centre of Central Java, Indonesia, indicate that the number of unintended pregnancy cases in Semarang City has continued to rise each year. Additionally, the number of new STI cases in Central Java remains significantly high, with 8,671 cases recorded in 2012 (Noviany 2017)

Dating behaviour is an important issue to study, especially among university students, who are part of the adolescent and young adult population. Students, particularly migrant students, often face challenges in social, cultural, and mental adaptation in a new environment, away from parental supervision. This adaptation, combined with greater freedom, makes migrant students more vulnerable to exploring romantic relationships and engaging in risky sexual behaviour. (Yalew, Olayemi, and Yalew 2023).

According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI) in 2022, the number of university students in Indonesia reached 9.32 million, with approximately half of them being migrant students. (Handini et al. 2020). At Diponegoro University, one of the leading public universities in Semarang, migrant students form an integral part of the academic community. They face various social pressures, academic expectations, and the need to adapt to a heterogeneous environment.

Individual and social environmental factors significantly influence the dating behaviour of migrant students. One of the most influential

factors is social media usage, which serves as the primary platform for students to access information, interact, and express themselves. (Nuraeni, Nainar, and Hikmah 2021) However, this ease of access also increases the likelihood of exposure to harmful content, including pornography, which can influence their dating behaviour. (Mooduto, Abdul, and Tompunuh 2021).

In addition to social media, peers play a crucial role in shaping university students' norms and dating behaviour. Peer influence often encourages students to conform to specific behavioural standards to gain recognition and social acceptance, even when those choices may be risky. (Andriyani and Al Muadudi 2018).

A preliminary study conducted at Diponegoro University revealed that 13 out of 20 migrant students had engaged in risky dating behaviours, such as touching, kissing, petting, and intercourse. These findings highlight the need for further research to understand the factors influencing risky dating behaviour among university students, particularly in the context of social media influence and peer influence.

This study aims to analyse the factors associated with dating behaviour among students at Diponegoro University. By understanding the contributing factors to such behaviour, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for designing effective interventions to prevent risky dating behaviour among university students.

## Literature Review

### *Social Media Usage*

Social media can be defined as an interactive digital platform that facilitates social interaction, information sharing, and the formation of virtual communities. (Puspitarini and Nuraeni 2019). Social media emphasizes user presence and enables individuals to interact and collaborate in various activities. According to Meike and Young, as cited in Nasrullah (2015), social media is a combination of personal communication, which involves direct exchanges between individuals (one-to-one), and public media, which allows for the widespread dissemination of information without restrictions to specific individuals. (Siregar 2022).

Social media has eliminated geographical and temporal boundaries in social interactions, allowing users to communicate without being

constrained by space and time. A once unknown individual can become widely recognised through social media, and vice versa. Social media users can easily access these platforms via the internet without incurring significant costs, and the process can be carried out independently without extensive difficulty (Istiani & Islamy, 2020)

The use of social media has both positive and negative impacts. Its positive effects include the ease of interacting with many people, expanding relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and eliminating distance and time constraints through interactive features. Additionally, social media facilitates authentic self-expression, enables the rapid dissemination of information, and offers a more affordable alternative compared to conventional media. (Banyumurti 2018).

On the other hand, social media use has a negative impact on adolescent behaviour. Excessive use can isolate individuals from real social environments and increase the risk of internet addiction. These platforms also make users more vulnerable to manipulation and negative influences, raise privacy concerns due to digital footprints that are difficult to erase, and have the potential to trigger conflicts due to unrestricted freedom of expression without corresponding responsibility. (Banyumurti 2018)

#### *Peer Influence*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *peers* are divided into two categories: individuals who hold the same status as the referenced individual and individuals who differ in age or social standing from the referenced individual. (Hoezein 2022) Peers typically serve as a source of information exchange that can influence their members' behaviour and beliefs. (Suhaida and Mardison 2019). Generally, individuals receive social support from their peers, which is the satisfaction gained from appreciation, care, and assistance in strengthening established relationships. (Budikuncoroningsih 2017; Suhaida and Mardison 2019).

Peer groups consist of individuals who share many similarities and a close bond that resembles a family, despite not being related by blood, and they tend to imitate one another. Within these relationships, individuals receive social support. Characteristics of peer groups include being informal and lacking a formal organizational structure, although informal

leaders may emerge and be recognized for specific skills. These groups are also temporary due to the absence of a clear structure. Additionally, they provide opportunities to learn diverse cultures from members with different backgrounds and are composed of individuals of similar age. (Dr. Nufiar, M. Ag 2022).

Peers are important in the interaction process, providing information by exchanging insights due to their diverse backgrounds. They also provide feedback, helping individuals assess their abilities compared to their friends. Additionally, peers function as motivators, physical supporters, emotional supporters, sources of social comparison, and providers of closeness and attention, all of which reinforce an individual's positive self-perception (Dr. Nufiar, M. Ag 2022).

As individuals grow older, the role of peers becomes increasingly important in their development. Interactions with peers foster a sense of solidarity and togetherness and help individuals acquire new knowledge, develop skills, become more independent, and express emotions and opinions. However, peer influence can also have adverse effects, such as triggering feelings of envy and unhealthy competition when differences or disparities exist within the group. (Dr. Nufiar, M. Ag 2022).

#### *Dating Behaviour*

Dating behaviour refers to a series of activities carried out by a couple in love, aimed at seeking pleasure, fulfilling the need for companionship, testing love and sexual attraction, and getting to know each other. (Pransiska 2019). Dating behaviour is also described as a process of acquaintance between two individuals of the opposite sex with the expectation of progressing toward marriage. Additionally, dating is considered a way to assess compatibility with a partner in building a household and family life (Wisnuwardhani 2021).

Heterosexual behaviour during dating reflects how adolescents express love through physical interaction with an opposite-sex partner (Pransiska 2019). The initial stage typically involves touching, such as holding hands or hugging, which is still acceptable. This then progresses to kissing, starting with kisses on the forehead, cheeks, and lips. At the necking stage, intimacy increases with kissing in the neck and upper body area (Wisnuwardhani 2021). Next, petting



involves touching and stimulating sensitive areas, ranging from light caresses to heavy genital petting. The final stage is intercourse, which refers to sexual activity involving penetration (Basri et al. 2022).

Factors influencing dating behaviour among adolescents consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors include age, where physical development and reproductive hormones trigger curiosity about relationships with the opposite sex; exposure to pornographic media, which introduces sexual messages; sexual attraction, which drives the desire for physical closeness; expression of freedom, as a form of self-identity exploration; and limited knowledge of reproductive health (Hafida, 2019; Pransiska, 2019). Meanwhile, external factors include the ease of access to global information, which allows adolescents to imitate dating behaviours portrayed in the media; peer influence, which increase the likelihood of adopting specific lifestyle patterns; and social status, where having a partner is often perceived as enhancing recognition within their social circles (Pransiska, 2019; Suparyanto dan Rosad 2020).

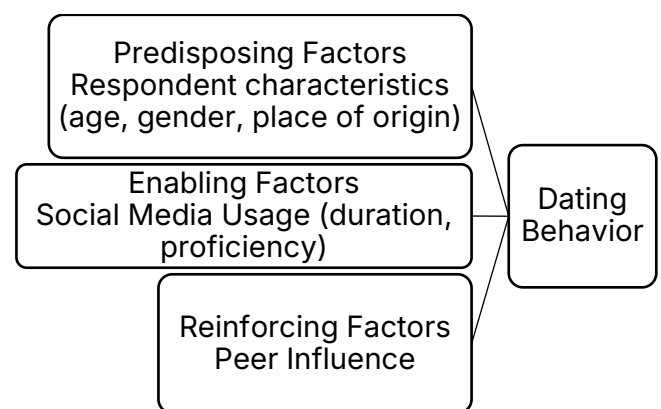
#### *University students*

University students are individuals pursuing higher education. They are those who have completed their secondary education and are currently engaged in learning and socialization at a university (Wulandari 2022). Migration for education is a temporary relocation from one's place of origin to gain new experiences and knowledge, with the expectation of eventually returning to their hometown (Opier 2022) Migrant students are individuals who leave their hometowns to pursue education in a different region to prepare themselves to obtain a diploma or bachelor's degree while undergoing the socialization process (Wulandari 2022) They are recognized as students who come from outside the area or from a different region than where they are studying (Agustina and Deastuti 2023).

While living away from home, they are required to be independent in facing various challenges with limited support from others (Fauzia, Asmaran, and Komalasari 2021) This independence encompasses psychosocial aspects, such as emotional independence, which refers to the ability to manage emotional correlations with others; behavioural independence, which involves the ability to make decisions

and take responsibility for their consequences; and cognitive independence, which signifies the freedom to establish personal principles and values (Fauzia et al. 2021; Hadawiah 2019). Additionally, students possess a high level of adaptability in adjusting to new environments and cultures and building social networks with their peers. This adaptation process plays a crucial role in helping them cope with homesickness and navigate the challenges they face during their academic journey (Hadawiah 2019).

Based on the theoretical analysis above, this study constructs a conceptual model, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Model.

### **Methodology**

This study used a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional design. The research was conducted at Diponegoro University, with the study population of actively enrolled students. The minimum sample size was calculated using the Lemeshow formula, and a minimum sample of 384 was obtained. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with the criteria: Diponegoro University students who are actively registered, have dating experience, and are willing to become respondents. A total of 388 respondents were obtained who contributed to this study.

Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms and subsequently analyzed using the chi-square test to determine the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The Survey Link is shared with representatives of student organizations in each faculty and then shared with all students in their faculty.

The instrument has been tested on students from other universities in the same city.

The test results showed that all question items were valid with Cronbach's alpha  $>0.839$ . The questionnaire comprised three main sections: respondent characteristics, social media usage, and peer influence on dating behaviour.

This study's data analysis adopted a quantitative approach using statistical models. The analysis included univariate analysis, which described the frequency distribution of each research variable, including age, gender, place of origin, social media usage intensity, purpose of social media usage, social media proficiency, peer influence, and dating behaviour. Bivariate analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables, using the chi-squared test to determine whether these variables had a significant correlation.

Social media used by college students include Instagram, Facebook, X, and TikTok. Social media usage was assessed based on usage duration and proficiency in using social media. Peer influence was assessed through the level of peer involvement in decision-making and the extent of influence exerted in various aspects of life. Meanwhile, dating behaviour was assessed based on actions that lead to sexual activity.

The independent variables in this study include respondent characteristics (age, gender, and place of origin), social media usage (duration and proficiency), and peer influence. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is dating behaviour. This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Public Health, Diponegoro University, with ethical approval number 318/EA/KEPK-FKM/2024.

## Results and Discussion

Age refers to the time calculated from birth until their most recent birthday. As age increases,

an individual's level of maturity and ability to think and act tend to develop further (Kamelia and Pratiwi 2022). Age is a predisposing factor that makes a person more likely to engage in certain behaviours.

Based on the Chi-Square test results, a p-value of 0.013 was obtained (p-value  $< 0.05$ ), indicating a significant correlation between respondents' age and their dating behaviour. These findings are consistent with a study by Nababan (2020), which also showed a correlation between age and dating behaviour. Individuals who engage in dating at a younger age tend to show riskier dating behaviours compared to those who start dating at a more mature age (Nababan 2020). This study also aligns with research by Shulam (2019), which states that age influences dating behaviour patterns, where individuals aged  $\leq 20$  years tend to seek social validation in their romantic relationships, while young adults place greater emphasis on intimacy and commitment (Shulman and Connolly 2019).

Age can influence an individual's ability to comprehend and think. As a person grows older, cognitive abilities and thought patterns tend to improve, leading to better knowledge acquisition (Bahdad et al. 2023). These findings indicate that age is crucial in predicting risky dating behaviour, with younger students ( $\leq 20$  years old) being more vulnerable to such behaviour. This result aligns with the Precede-Proceed Theory, which identifies age as a predisposing factor influencing an individual's tendency toward dating behaviour. As students grow older, they become more independent in decision-making and gain broader access to sexual information through social media and social interactions, which can ultimately increase the tendency to engage in risky dating behaviour.

**Table 1:** Statistical Analysis of the Correlation Between Independent and Dependent Variables.

No	Variables	Dating Behaviour Category				df	p-value
		At Risk		Not at Risk			
		f	%	f	%		
1	Age						
	≤ 20 Years	144	37,1	94	24,2	1	0,00
	> 20 Years	63	16,2	87	22,4		
2	Gender						
	Female	77	19,8	144	37,1	1	0,00
	Male	130	33,5	37	9,5		
3	Regional Origin						

No	Variables	Dating Behaviour Category				df	p-value
		At Risk		Not at Risk			
		f	%	f	%		
4	Outside Central Java & Jogjakarta	133	34,3	130	33,5	1	0,11
	Central Java & Jogjakarta	74	19,1	51	13,1		
	<b>Duration of Social Media Usage</b>						
	Heavy User (≥ 6 hours per day)	204	52,6	177	45,6	1	0,57
5	Medium User (< 6 hours per day)	3	0,8	4	1,0		
	<b>Social Media Proficiency</b>						
	Medium	88	22,7	135	34,8	1	0,00
6	High	119	30,7	46	11,9		
	<b>Peer Influence</b>						
	Low	80	20,6	69	17,8	1	0,00
	High	127	32,7	112	28,9		

The majority of college students are migrants. They may face unique challenges in dating due to cultural differences and the need to adapt to a new environment. These challenges can manifest in various ways, including communication styles, expectations about relationships, and family involvement. However, by understanding these differences and actively seeking to bridge the gap, migrant students can navigate their dating experiences more successfully. Migrant students may come from cultures with different communication styles, such as direct vs. indirect, or emphasis on verbal vs. nonverbal cues. This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations in dating interactions. Cultural values and expectations regarding dating and relationships can vary significantly. For example, some cultures may emphasize arranged marriages or place more emphasis on family involvement in dating (Adriyati and Hatiningsih 2019; Henriksson et al. 2023).

Family members play a more active role in their children's romantic lives, offering guidance or deciding about dating partners. Cultural beliefs about gender roles can influence expectations about who initiates dates, who pays, and the roles of men and women in relationships. Some cultures value respecting elders and family members, which may influence dating behaviours and choices. Migrant students may come from cultures with different dress codes and social customs related to dating, such as public displays of affection (Widjanarko et al. 2022).

When cultural traits are a convention of social coordination, the fact that a person has been exposed to them and the right situation to use them should make them a better predictor of

their behaviour than other cultural traits. Parents in good condition will like their sons, while parents in bad condition will like their daughters. The idea is that if there is a correlation between the parents' condition during the parental investment period and the offspring's reproductive success, the daughters are a safer bet for the parents in poor conditions because almost all females reproduce, but the low-quality males often do not. Parents tend to be more careful caring for their daughters than their sons. In adolescent relationships, women are considered to experience more of the impact of a risky dating relationship (Indraswari et al. 2022).

According to the Precede-Proceed Theory by Lawrence Green, age is a predisposing factor that shapes an individual's mindset, attitudes, and decisions regarding dating behaviour. Younger students ( $\leq 20$  years old) tend to have lower self-control, are more easily influenced by social norms, and have less awareness of the long-term risks of risky dating behaviour. In contrast, older students are more capable of considering risks before taking action. The findings of this study confirm that predisposing factors within the Precede-Proceed model play a crucial role in explaining age-related tendencies in dating behaviour.

According to Lawrence Green's theory, gender is one of the predisposing factors related to an individual's motivation to shape behaviour. Gender refers to the biological differences between males and females, which are inherent and determined at birth by God, encompassing biological aspects such as reproductive functions, body organs, and specific physical characteristics (Jannah and Sefta Bramastia 2021). These biological differences also influence dating behaviour,

where male individuals tend to engage in riskier dating behaviours compared to female individuals (Yulianto, Putri, and Moningka 2022).

In the Precede-Proceed model developed by Green, gender is categorized as a predisposing factor influencing an individual's decision-making regarding health behaviours, including dating behaviour. This factor shapes an individual's attitudes, motivations, and behavioural tendencies, based on biological and social aspects inherent to their gender. In the context of this study, gender differences contribute to variations in dating behaviour, where male individuals show riskier dating behaviours more frequently than female individuals.

The results of this study show a p-value of 0.00 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant correlation between gender and dating behaviour among students. The proportion of male students engaging in risky dating behaviour is higher than that of female students, at 62.8%. This finding aligns with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which states that gender can influence attitudes that ultimately shape an individual's behaviour, in this case, dating behaviour. Biologically, males have higher levels of the hormone testosterone compared to females. This hormone plays a crucial role in increasing sexual drive, making males more likely to engage in risky dating behaviour compared to females (Bahdad et al. 2023).

The findings of this study are consistent with a similar study by Fadillah (2023), which states that females have higher self-efficacy in avoiding risky sexual behaviour than males (Fadillah, Anitasari, and Kusumaningrum 2023). Male adolescents are also three times more likely to engage in risky dating behaviour compared to female adolescents (Herwandar & Nirmawati). This is due to the greater leniency of social norms for males, which grants them more freedom, thereby increasing their opportunities to engage in risky dating behaviour (Nashrullah, 2023). This indicates that gender is one of the factors influencing the tendency toward risky dating behaviour among adolescents (Elvira, Hastono, and Maisyiah 2019).

Thus, it can be concluded that male adolescents tend to have a higher motivation to engage in risky dating behaviour compared to female adolescents. This is due to the more permissive nature of male adolescents, as well as their biologically more potent sexual drive compared to females (Elvira et al. 2019; Herwandar and Nirmawati 2019). These factors contribute to

differences in dating behaviour between genders. Consequently, this study's findings align with the Precede-Proceed Theory, which identifies gender as a predisposing factor shaping social norms and self-control in decision-making related to dating behaviour.

As an educated group, university students often represent a certain social status reflected in their lifestyle. Additionally, the differences between the campus environment and their place of origin, combined with the freedom to act that is often experienced in temporary residences, also influence changes in students' behaviour and habits during their education (Yulianti, Dewi, and Febrilia 2020). The Chi-Square test results showed a p-value of 0.11 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating no significant correlation between place of origin and student dating behaviour. These findings do not align with the Precede-Proceed Theory developed by Lawrence Green, which emphasizes that social, cultural, and environmental factors influence individual behaviour, including dating behaviour.

Although students come from various regions, campus life creates a relatively homogeneous social environment. They are exposed to the same values, lifestyles, and social interactions, which can gradually reduce differences in regional norms over time (Putra, R. A. 2022). However, the social and environmental factors that influence students are no longer their place of origin, but rather the new environment they enter, namely the campus and its social interactions.

Thus, although the Precede-Proceed Model highlights the role of social factors in shaping individual behaviour, the broader and more homogeneous social environment in campus life may become a more dominant factor compared to the cultural background of a student's place of origin. This suggests that a new social environment can reshape individual norms, particularly in the context of migrant students adapting to campus life. They must build new social correlations and adjust to a more heterogeneous environment. This adaptation process often leads to a shift in personal values and norms, making regional differences less influential in decision-making related to dating behaviour (Santoso, I. 2019).

Additionally, the globalization of information, particularly through social media and the internet, has led to the widespread dissemination of more uniform social values and norms across different regions. Migrant students, regardless of their



place of origin, have equal access to global information, lifestyle trends, and broader social norms, compared to previous generations. As a result, traditional values and norms from their hometowns may gradually fade or merge with more modern and permissive values acquired from the internet.

The globalization of information has created a uniformity of social values and norms among university students, regardless of their place of origin. This may explain why no significant correlation was found between the place of origin and dating behaviour, as broader social environmental factors such as campus life, social media, and the internet have a greater influence on their decision-making. In this context, university students who actively access social media and the internet may adopt new, more modern values, which may differ from the norms of their place of origin. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that in the case of students, broader social factors such as campus interactions and digital media play a more significant role in shaping their behaviour than cultural norms from their place of origin.

Lawrence Green's theory states that three factors, including the enabling factor, contribute to behaviour formation. The enabling factor refers to the abilities and resources necessary to facilitate an individual's behaviour. One of the enabling factors in this study is the advancement of technology and information.

Social media has an important role in human life, especially in today's digital era. Its use enables quick and accurate access to information, fulfilling various needs. However, the satisfaction gained from social media often causes users to lose track of their time accessing it (Rahmawati, Iqomh, and Hermanto 2019). The massive use of social media has increased its frequency among adolescents, as social media has become a popular trend today (Pratiwi, Adam, and Nurlinda 2024). Although it provides positive benefits, social media also negatively impacts adolescent development.

The study results show a p-value of 0.574, indicating no significant correlation between social media usage duration and dating behaviour among university students. This reflects the advancements in information and communication technology, which have permeated various aspects of life, including education. Social media serves as a platform that facilitates information exchange

without being constrained by space and time (Rahmawati et al. 2019).

The findings of this study do not align with research conducted by Febriyanti (2018), which indicated that adolescents with high social media usage durations are more vulnerable to exposure to content that can influence their attitudes and behaviour in dating (Febriyanti A 2018). Similarly, a study by Pratiwi (2024) found a significant correlation between social media usage frequency and deviant dating behaviour among high school students at Al-Ihsan Private School, Lekopancing, Maros Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The higher the intensity of social media usage among adolescents, the greater the tendency for sexual harassment behaviour to occur. Conversely, the lower the intensity of social media usage, the lower the likelihood of such behaviour (Pratiwi et al. 2024).

The duration of social media usage does not have a significant correlation due to the evolving functions of social media within the university environment (campus). Social media is now widely used as a platform for submitting assignments to lecturers, showcasing academic activities, sharing information with peers from other universities, and organizing protest movements (Madjid and Subuh 2019). University students often use social media to communicate with their families, relatives, and friends. These factors contribute to the high duration of social media usage among university students, making them more likely to be classified as Heavy Users.

Social media serves as a platform for accessing information from various sources. It contains a wide range of information, including positive and educational content, which can expand users' knowledge, understanding, and insights on various topics (Pratiwi et al. 2024). The use of social media has shaped a new social structure, enabling users to interact and collaborate virtually (Zuniananta 2021). Social media proficiency refers to an individual's ability to utilize technology for communication, interaction, and participation in various aspects of life. This includes skills in using social media platforms to access information, share content, and effectively build social networks (Budiman et al. 2024).

The Chi-Square test results show a p-value of 0.00 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant correlation between social media proficiency and dating behaviour among university students. This study aligns with similar research by Lestari



(2021), which found a correlation between social media usage and risky dating behaviour, with Chi-Square test results showing a p-value of 0.005 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Unfiltered social media usage, such as accessing pornographic content, can encourage individuals to imitate and engage in the behaviours they observe (Lestari Nurul Aulia 2021).

This study also aligns with research conducted by Prihatin (2023), which states that there is a correlation between social media usage and high-risk dating behaviour. Adolescents tend to imitate what they see or read, often drawing their conclusions and deciding to follow trending behaviours (Prihatin Idris et al. 2023). Social media also allows individuals to conceal their identity or engage in other deviant behaviours (Putri, Hafid, and Haryati 2021). This can encourage the emergence of new cultural norms among adolescents (Prihatin Idris et al. 2023).

The analysis results indicate that students with moderate social media proficiency are more likely to engage in risky dating behaviour than those with high proficiency. The more frequently an individual is exposed to experiences of hearing, seeing, or experiencing risky dating behaviour, the greater the likelihood of developing the urge to imitate such behaviour. Exposure to scenes of hugging or kissing on social media, for instance, can encourage individuals to replicate and apply similar behaviours with their partners (Lestari Nurul Aulia 2021).

These findings align with the Precede-Proceed Theory, where proficiency in managing social media functions as an enabling factor that influences the extent to which individuals are exposed to and engage in dating behaviour. Students with moderate proficiency in using social media tend to be more active in accessing sexual content, interacting with peers on topics of sexuality, and being more open in discussing their sexual preferences through social media. This reinforces the argument that social media is not merely a communication tool but also a factor that shapes and reinforces dating behaviour among university students.

Peer groups are social groups consisting of individuals within a similar age range, from children and adults to the elderly. Members of these groups share similar ways of thinking, acting, and imagining. Peer groups are believed to play a crucial role in the socialization process among their members (Arifianingsih, Muhaimin,

and Permatasari 2021). Social support from peers is significant for an individual's well-being (Febriyola, Ikhsan, and Kosasih 2023).

As university students, they need to adjust to a new environment in their place of residence and adapt to different cultures (Anggraeni and Hidayati 2024). Peers have a significant influence on adolescents, shaping their attitudes, self-identity, and behaviour, which ultimately contributes to the formation of their character (Kurniawan and Sudrajat 2018). One of the primary functions of peer groups is to provide various forms of information about the world beyond the family.

The Chi-Square test results show a p-value of 0.00 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant correlation between peer influence and dating behaviour among university students. This study aligns with research by Fahdilla (2022), which states that peer interactions have the potential to influence an individual's dating behaviour patterns (Noviyanti Fahdilla, Dr. Drs. Abdul Wahab 2022). Harmful or unhealthy friendships among peers can increase the risk of engaging in risky dating behaviours, which may lead to casual sexual relationships. Conversely, positive friendships can serve as a protective factor (Fariana, Novita, and Nina 2024). Thus, peer influence has a significant impact on the dating behaviour of university students.

Another study by Paudel (2023) also found similar results, indicating that peer influence is a contributing factor to the increased tendency among students to engage in dating behaviours leading to casual sex. Students who have close friends with prior experience in casual sex are 5.2 times more likely to engage in such behaviour compared to those who do not have friends with similar experiences (Paudel et al. 2023).

The probability of engaging in risky dating behaviour is higher among students influenced by their peers compared to those who are not affected (Damtie et al. 2022). Peer influence plays a decisive role in shaping an individual's attitudes, behaviour, and personality. The study concludes that the stronger the peer influence, the higher the tendency for students to engage in risky dating behaviour. These findings support the Precede-Proceed Theory, where peers are a reinforcing factor that strengthens dating behaviour among university students.

A high level of peer influence among university students is associated with increased

risky dating behaviour, indicating that peers can provide strong social support and reinforce risky norms or behaviours. In this context, peers serve not only as a source of information sharing but also as a reinforcing factor that influences and strengthens an individual's decisions regarding dating behaviour.

This study has limitations, including the possibility of self-report bias and the social desirability effect. Respondents might be less likely to admit to engaging in risky behaviours due to social desirability. This can be avoided if the data is collected using interview techniques, which can build rapport first. However, this study still uses questionnaires because of the limited human resources and budget required to reach all respondents.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a significant correlation between age, gender, social media proficiency, and peer influence on dating behaviour among university students. Conversely, no significant correlation was found between place of origin and duration of social media usage with dating behaviour. Therefore, it is recommended that Diponegoro University strengthen counselling services to help students cope with social pressures and peer influence. Additionally, the Public Health Centre and the Semarang City Health Office are encouraged to provide adolescent reproductive health counselling clinics, implement peer educator mentoring programs, and conduct educational initiatives on the psychosocial impacts of risky dating behaviour. For future research, a comparative study between migrant and local students' dating behaviour is recommended to better understand the influence of geographical and cultural factors on dating patterns.

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