



Dating apps and their relationship with body image, mental health and wellbeing: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT


Online dating is becoming increasingly prevalent, with many single individuals opting to use dating applications (apps) to find a romantic partner. Recent research has shed light on the potential harmful relationships that mobile dating services can have on body image, mental health and wellbeing. This systematic review aimed to determine the impacts of dating app use on these outcomes. Six online databases were searched (PsycINFO, PsycArticles, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science), and studies were eligible if they examined the impacts of dating apps on outcomes related to body image (e.g., body dissatisfaction, muscle dissatisfaction, eating disorders), mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety) or well-being (e.g., mood, self-esteem). A total of 45 studies were included in this review. Studies were published between 2016 and 2023, with 48.9% (n = 22) reporting on body image outcomes, and 64.4% (n = 29) reporting on mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Over 85% (n = 19) of studies reported a significant negative impact of dating app use on body image, and 48.6% (n = 14) of studies reported significant negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. This review indicates that dating apps have potentially harmful effects on the body image, mental health and wellbeing of their users. As such, there is considerable scope to improve the design of such apps to attenuate their harmful effects.

1. Introduction

In contemporary western society, finding romantic partners online is becoming the norm. Online dating is a practice that has been popular since its inception in 1995, when the first internet based dating site, 'Match.com' was created (Orchard, 2019). Following an exponential growth in both popularity and revenue with the release of mobile dating apps in 2007 (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021). While dating apps are similar to online dating sites, they possess several fundamental differences that greatly increased their popularity, including being readily accessible to any smartphone user (Orchard, 2019). Unlike internet based dating sites, mobile dating is geolocal, meaning profiles are close in proximity to the user (MacLeod & McArthur, 2019). Furthermore, users are in control of their matches, increasing the likelihood that dating apps will produce successful outcomes (i.e. dates, relationships, friendships) (Orosz et al., 2018). Dating apps now boast a total 337 million users globally, the primary demographic of which, is those aged 18–29 (Vogels & McClain, 2023). Despite their popularity, a growing body of research suggests that mobile dating may have adverse implications for users' body image, mental health and wellbeing (Echevarria et al., 2022;

Her & Timmermans, 2021; Malz, 2020).

1.1. Body image

Body image refers to the perceptions or feelings that one has towards their own appearance, often revolving around body size, shape, and attractiveness (Dahlenburg et al., 2020). There exists both positive and negative body image, whereby positive body image denotes a general satisfaction with appearance, whilst negative body image implies a general dissatisfaction with appearance (Breslow et al., 2020). Body image can encompass general appearance and specific body attributes simultaneously (e.g. an overall satisfaction with body shape but dissatisfaction with skin tone) and can be influenced by both internal and external factors, including body surveillance, social comparisons, and social media (Griffiths et al., 2018). Several studies have examined the influence of mobile dating on dimensions of body image, such as body surveillance, body dissatisfaction, and body shame (Fong et al., 2022; Rodgers et al., 2020; Strubel & Petrie, 2017). Other studies have reported psychopathological body image disorders in dating app users, including body dysmorphia, eating disorders, ise disorders, and

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steroid use (Griffiths et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2023; Portingale et al., 2022). This has been attributed to unique features specific to mobile dating apps, particularly the prevalence of visual content and ease of viewing multiple profiles (Griffiths et al., 2018). Unlike online dating websites, dating app profiles are initially restricted to profile pictures, names, and age, with written content such as a short biography accessible only after clicking into the profile (Parry et al., 2023). The limited written content found on dating app profiles implies that physical appearance is likely a key factor in initial reactions and assessments of profiles (Miller, 2020). Anticipating this appearance-based scrutiny, users are potentially at risk of self-objectification, where they tend to increase focus on their appearance and body image (Strübel & Petrie, 2017). This increased focus on appearance and body image can, in turn, lead to body dissatisfaction and appearance concerns (Bell et al., 2018). This too, may have potentially adverse implications for users' mental health and wellbeing.

1.2. Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health is often described as an individual's level of mental, physical, and social functioning over time (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020), where poor mental health could be defined as mental, physical, and social dysfunction. Poor mental health includes the presence of enduring conditions, such as depression, anxiety, or psychological distress (Echevarria et al., 2022). Conversely, wellbeing is often linked to psychological affect, or an individual's thoughts, emotions, and feelings, and usually fluctuates over short periods of time (Rose et al., 2017). Common indicators of wellbeing are mental factors such as resilience, self-esteem, or life satisfaction (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2023). Mental health is a universal public health concern, with 1 in 8 currently living with a mental health disorder globally, of which young adults aged 15–24 are the most impacted (28.9% of all cases) (World Health Organization, 2022). Interestingly, this age group overlaps with the age demographic that are the highest users of dating apps. Research has highlighted a potential relationship between mobile dating and mental health dimensions, including depression, anxiety, and neuroticism (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021; Holtzhausen et al., 2020; Toma, 2022). Similarly, dating apps have been linked to concerns around wellbeing, including poorer levels of general wellbeing, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and increased stress (Musan, 2020; Obarska et al., 2020; Sanhaji, 2020). A pervasive awareness of being evaluated on dating apps can often induce anxiety or stress for users (Musan, 2020). Unlike traditional online dating websites, dating app users are in charge of their own matches, which potentially increases their exposure to rejection. Rejection on dating apps, including both implicit rejection (low number of matches) or explicit rejection (voiced disapproval) has been linked to lower self-esteem, mood and depression (Sparks et al., 2023).

1.3. The current study

Dating apps are becoming increasingly popular, with global usage increasing exponentially each year (Curry, 2024). Accordingly, the body of evidence that has examined the impacts of mobile dating on the body image, mental health and wellbeing of users is rapidly growing. Despite this, existing reviews have largely focused on online dating broadly (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021), or the characteristics and motives of dating app users (Castro & Barrada, 2020). Therefore, the aim of the present systematic review was to determine the impacts of dating apps on users' body image, mental health and wellbeing. The use of mobile dating services is ubiquitous, and this review will have critical implications for

ongoing efforts to safeguard population body image, mental health and wellbeing.

2. Methods

A review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Page et al., 2021) (see Supplementary File 1), and prospectively registered on Open Science Framework (Registration DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/D8235>).

2.1. Search strategy

The search was conducted in November 2023. Articles were retrieved from six databases, including PsycINFO, PsycArticles, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science. Studies published before 2007 were excluded, as this was when location-based mobile dating apps were first introduced (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021), and search results were limited to English only. The search strategy was developed in collaboration with an academic librarian and is presented in Appendix A.

2.2. Eligibility criteria

Studies that examined the impacts of dating apps (geolocal mobile phone applications that are explicitly intended for dating) on outcomes related to body image (e.g., body dissatisfaction, muscle dissatisfaction, eating disorders), mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety) or well-being (e.g., stress, self-esteem), were eligible for inclusion. Included studies were peer-reviewed, published in the English language and include primary, empirical data (both qualitative and quantitative).

2.3. Study selection

All citations identified by the database search were exported into Endnote and duplicates were removed. Following this, citations were screened on the Covidence platform. Two reviewers (ZB and JC) independently screened the titles and abstracts, and then the full texts against the eligibility criteria. Conflicts concerning the eligibility of specific studies were resolved by a third independent reviewer (JP). Both the reference lists and citations of included studies were also reviewed to identify any other eligible studies.

2.4. Critical appraisal

All eligible studies were appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for critical appraisal of included studies (Hong et al., 2018). The MMAT is a critical appraisal tool for systematic reviews that include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies (Hong et al., 2018). Studies were subject to two initial screening questions to ensure eligibility for appraisal, followed by five quality assessment questions based on the nature of the study (qualitative, quantitative). Each study was given a quality score based on how many criterion were fulfilled. The critical appraisal was completed by two independent reviewers (ZB and JK), with conflicts resolved by discussion.

2.5. Data extraction and synthesis

Two reviewers (ZB and JK) extracted the following data from eligible

citations: (1) study design, (2) sample characteristics, (3) details of the dating app, (4) outcome measures, (5) key findings, and (6) theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks. Data was synthesised narratively to establish the impact of dating apps on body image, mental health and wellbeing.

3. Results

The electronic database search retrieved 1362 studies. Duplicates were removed in Endnote and Covidence ($n = 127$), resulting in 1235 studies eligible for title and abstract screening. After the first round of screening, 1136 studies were deemed irrelevant and subsequently removed, leaving 99 texts suitable for full text screening. During full text screening, 54 studies were excluded, and thus, a total of 45 studies were included in the review (see Fig. 1). There were no new studies found from reference lists or citation tracking. Inter-rater reliability between reviewers was high for both title/abstract screening (Cohen's Kappa = 0.83) and full-text screening (Cohen's Kappa = 0.92).

3.1. Study characteristics

Table 2 (see Appendix B) shows the characteristics of the included studies ($n = 45$). The studies were cross-sectional ($n = 40$; 88.9%), longitudinal ($n = 4$; 8.9%), and experimental ($n = 1$; 2.2%). Studies were published between 2016 and 2023, with most studies published from 2020 onwards ($n = 39$; 86.7%). Of the 45 included studies, most were conducted in North America ($n = 19$; 42.2%), with studies also based in Europe ($n = 13$; 28.9%), Oceania ($n = 6$; 13.3%), and Asia ($n = 2$; 4.4%). The sample sizes ranged from 13 to 5253 participants, with the median sample size being 322. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 69 years, with the mean age of all participants being 26.7 years. Most studies included all genders ($n = 22$; 48.9%) or men exclusively ($n = 20$; 44.4%), with fewer studies examining women exclusively ($n = 3$; 6.7%).

Table 1

Summary of the effects of dating app use on body image.

Outcome	[+]	[-]	[0]
Body dissatisfaction	8	1	5
Muscularity dissatisfaction	3		
Body fat dissatisfaction	1		1
Height dissatisfaction	1		1
Body image disturbance	3		
Body esteem		1	
Body surveillance	4		
Body shame	2		
Disordered eating	6		4
Unhealthy weight control behaviours	4		

Note. [+] = significant positive effect, [0] = no significant effect, [-] = significant negative effect.

Table 2

Summary of the effects of dating app use on mental health and wellbeing.

Outcome	[+]	[-]	[0]
Depression	4		8
Anxiety	3		2
Stress	2		
Self-esteem	2	5	14
Life satisfaction		1	1
Mood	1	2	2

Note. [+] = significant positive effect, [0] = no significant effect, [-] = significant negative effect.

Across the studies, subpopulations examined included emerging adults (aged 18–29 years; $n = 19$; 42.2%), sexual minority men ($n = 16$; 35.6%), college students ($n = 8$; 17.8%), incels (i.e. involuntarily celibate men; $n = 1$; 2.2%), and sexual minority women ($n = 1$; 2.2%).

Most studies measured dating apps broadly ($n = 28$, 62%). Several

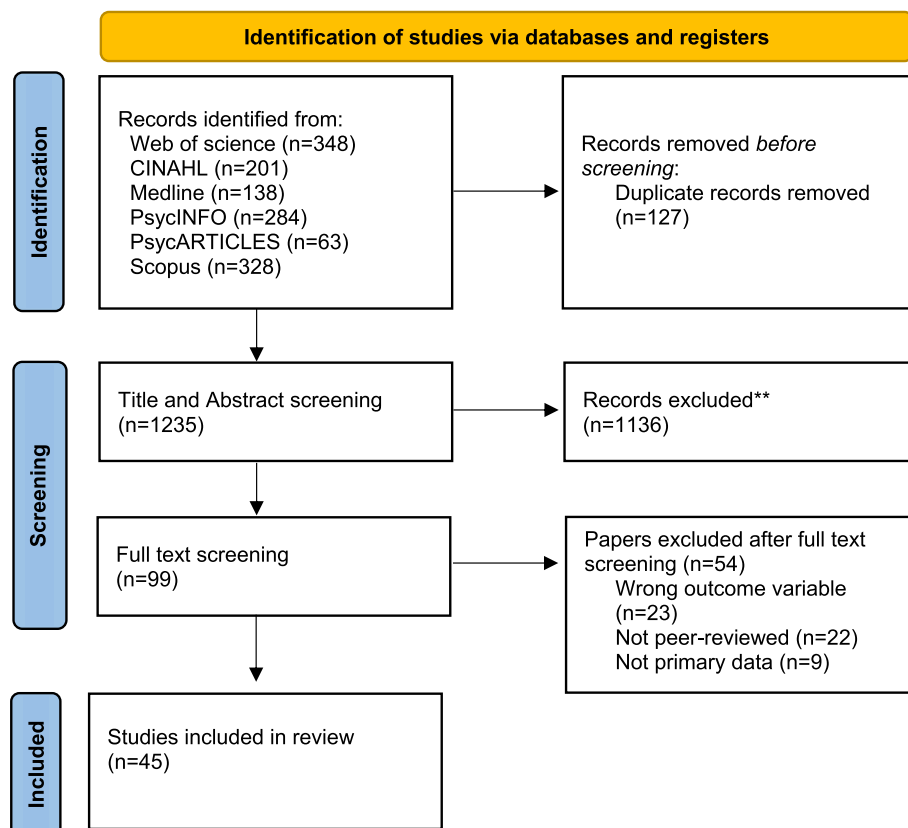


Fig. 1. Prisma flow diagram.

studies specifically examined users of “Tinder” (n = 8, 18%), gay dating apps (n = 5, 11%), Grindr (n = 3, 7%), and “The L” (n = 1, 2%).

Overall, 66.7% of studies (n = 30) reported that a theoretical framework underpinned their research. There was a large variance amongst theories used, with a total of 20 different theories reported (see [Appendix B](#)). Objectification Theory (n = 8; 17.8%) and Minority Stress Theory (n = 5; 11.1%) were most utilised.

3.2. Outcomes

Dating app use was largely measured as a binary outcome (user/non-user; n = 20, 44.4%), other studies measured dating app frequency (i.e., times used per day/week; n = 16; 35.6%), motivations for use (n = 10; 22.2%), number of apps used (n = 4; 8.9%), duration of use (i.e., time period since commencement of use; n = 4; 8.9%), and problematic or compulsive use (n = 4; 8.9%).

Body image outcomes were assessed in 48.9% of studies (n = 22) and included outcomes such as general body dissatisfaction (n = 14; 31.1%), muscularity dissatisfaction (n = 3; 6.7%), body image disturbance (n = 3; 6.7%), height dissatisfaction (n = 2; 4.4%), body fat dissatisfaction (n = 2; 4.4%), body shame (n = 2; 4.4%), and body esteem (n = 1; 2.2%). Body surveillance (i.e., the observation and evaluation of one's own body) was measured in 8.8% of studies (n = 4). Ten studies (22.2%) assessed disordered weight control behaviours, including disordered eating (n = 10; 20%), induced vomiting (n = 2; 4.4%), laxative use (n = 2; 4.4%), diet pill use (n = 2; 4.4%), muscle building supplement use (n = 2; 4.4%), protein powder use (n = 2; 4.4%), and anabolic steroid use (n = 3; 6.7%). Four studies (8.9%) qualitatively examined the impacts of dating app use on body image.

Overall, 62.2% of studies (n = 28) investigated the relationship between dating app use and mental health and wellbeing. Outcomes included self-esteem (n = 20), depression (n = 12), anxiety (n = 5), mood (n = 5), life satisfaction (n = 2) and stress (n = 2).

3.3. Key findings

3.3.1. Body image

Across all included studies that examined body image (n = 22), 86.4% (n = 19) reported adverse relationships between dating app use and body image (see [Table 1](#)). More specifically, among the 16 quantitative cross-sectional studies, 87.5% (n = 14) reported significant relationships between body image and dating app use. Positive relationships were reported between dating app use and body dissatisfaction (n = 8), disordered eating (n = 6), body surveillance (n = 4), unhealthy weight control behaviours (n = 4), body image disturbance (n = 3), muscularity dissatisfaction (n = 3), height dissatisfaction (n = 1), body image disturbance (n = 1), and body shame (n = 2). Significant negative relationships were found between dating app use and body esteem (n = 1), and body dissatisfaction (n = 1).

All four qualitative studies indicated adverse body image outcomes as a result of dating app use. More specifically, [Waling et al. \(2023\)](#) found that body ideals are prevalent on dating apps, and there is a level of discomfort for heterosexual men when they don't match these ideals. For gay men, weight/appearance-based stigma and discrimination was widespread on gay dating apps ([Filice et al., 2019](#); [Hammack et al., 2022](#); [Tran et al., 2020](#)). Key findings from [Filice et al. \(2019\)](#) depict a culture of social comparison and self-objectification on dating apps, and [Tran et al. \(2020\)](#) reported that majority of participants engaged in weight control behaviours to better align with body ideals. Two longitudinal studies examined body image and dating app use. Dating app use was significantly positively associated with disordered eating over 7-

and 14-day measurement periods.

3.3.2. Mental health and wellbeing

Across all included studies that measured mental health and wellbeing (n = 29), 48.3% (n = 14) reported correlations between dating app use and adverse mental health and wellbeing outcomes (see [Table 2](#)). Twenty-six cross-sectional studies investigated the relationship between dating app use, mental health and wellbeing. Of these studies, 57.7% (n = 15) reported significant findings. Positive relationships were identified between dating app use and depression (n = 4), anxiety (n = 3), self-esteem (n = 2), stress (n = 2), and mood (n = 1). Additionally, significant negative relationships were reported between dating app use and self-esteem (n = 5), mood (n = 2), and life satisfaction (n = 1). In a longitudinal study, [Erevik et al. \(2020\)](#) did not find a significant impact of dating app use on mental health and anxiety over a one-year period. [Thomas et al. \(2022\)](#) conducted an experimental study, which found that increasing the number of available partners on dating apps lowered self-esteem.

Several studies (n = 15) also reported relationships between mental health and wellbeing outcomes and factors linked with dating app use, such as ghosting or online sexual violence. Depression was significantly positively correlated with perceived rejection on dating apps (n = 2), dating app facilitated sexual violence (n = 1), low perceived popularity on dating apps (n = 1), and being ghosted on dating apps (n = 1). Anxiety was positively related to online dating debut (women who first used dating apps before 18 were significantly more anxious) (n = 1) and dating app facilitated sexual violence (n = 1). Self-esteem was positively correlated with dating app notifications (n = 1), and negatively correlated with perceived rejection (n = 2), dating app facilitated sexual violence (n = 1), preference for social interaction via dating apps (n = 1), dating app facilitated weight-based discrimination (n = 1), low perceived popularity on dating apps (n = 1), perceived partner availability (n = 1), and being ghosted (n = 1). Mood was negatively correlated with being ghosted, and positively correlated with dating app notifications.

3.4. Quality appraisal

The overall quality score across all 45 studies was 85.8%, with 34 studies (75.6%) scoring 80% or higher using the MMAT (see [Appendix C](#)). Ten studies scored 60% (indicating moderate quality), and one study scored 40% (indicating low quality). Among the low-quality studies, there was insufficient information in relation to criterion such as sampling strategy, target population, and non-response bias. The two independent assessors had high agreement across all studies (Cohen's Kappa score of 0.91).

4. Discussion

This systematic review aimed to determine the impacts of dating apps on users' body image, mental health and wellbeing. Overall, there is a large and rapidly growing body of research (90% of studies published from 2020 onwards) pertaining to the impacts of dating app. The findings of this review overwhelmingly suggest that dating apps have adverse implications on body image, mental health and wellbeing.

4.1. Body image

This review indicates that dating app use has a negative impact on body image, with majority of studies (86.4%) reporting significant associations between dating app use and poorer body image outcomes (e.

g., body dissatisfaction). This finding is consistent with, and supported by, a body of literature pertaining to social media and body image. Social media often impacts body image negatively due to its image-centric nature and perpetuation of unrealistic body ideals (Watson, 2022). For example, a review conducted by Vandenbosch et al. (2022) found that image-centric social media (like Instagram and Snapchat) had a stronger relationship with negative body image than textual platforms like Facebook. The use of filters, photoshop, posing, and lighting mean that most photos on social media are unrealistically reflective of unattainable body ideals (thin, toned bodies for women and lean, muscular bodies for men) (Fioravanti et al., 2022). Exposure to these images often cause feelings of body dissatisfaction when users compare their natural bodies to these unnatural body ideals (Watson, 2022). As with dating apps, users are viewing and posting enhanced photos in order to attract other users (Mills et al., 2018). Taking photos for these platforms, especially when positive feedback is given to these photos (likes, matches, messages of approval etc), is suggested to increase self-objectification (Vandenbosch et al., 2022). The act of taking and posting photos combined with an awareness that these photos will be evaluated by other users, may lead to a hyperawareness of one's body, which can result in body dissatisfaction when it does not meet unrealistic body ideals (Butkowski et al., 2019).

This review also suggests that dating app use has adverse implications for disordered eating and unhealthy weight control behaviours, such as steroid use, induced vomiting, and laxative use. This may be a result of dating app users striving to attain unrealistic body ideals through maladaptive means. For women, the ideal body is unnaturally skinny, with slight muscle tone (Bozskik et al., 2018). To attain this ideal body, women may engage in unhealthy weight control behaviours, including restricted eating, laxative use, induced vomiting, and diet pill use. For men, the ideal body is lean with high musculature (McNeill & Firman, 2014). Men also may engage in restrictive eating to lose weight and highlight musculature (leanness rather than thinness), in conjunction with potentially harmful muscle building behaviours such as anabolic steroid use (Danielsen et al., 2018).

4.2. Mental health and wellbeing

The findings of this review highlight the negative impacts of dating app use on mental health and wellbeing, with almost half of studies (48.3%) reporting harmful relationships. More specifically, dating app use was linked to poorer self-esteem, and higher depression and anxiety. This too, is consistent with the literature pertaining to social media and mental health and wellbeing. Sadagheyani and Tatari (2021) conducted a review on the impact of social media use and reported significant relationships with anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and life-satisfaction. O'Reilly et al. (2018) similarly reported the negative impacts of social media on mental wellbeing, citing it as a platform for cyber abuse and addiction, leading to mood and anxiety disorders. A common theme of social media's impact on mental health is active use and passive use. Active use of social media (messaging, commenting, engaging with other users) can see positive effects on wellbeing, such as self-esteem, but passive use (i.e., doomscrolling, the act of scrolling through social media without engaging with other users) is a large cause of negative impacts on mental health (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2021). Dating app users similarly participate in passive use, with a large portion of users engaging in the act of endless swiping rather than messaging others (Thomas et al., 2023). This may underpin the adverse impacts of dating app use on users' mental health and wellbeing. It should be noted that many studies examined dating app use broadly, and thus, it was not

possible to determine the features of dating apps that may impact body image, mental health and wellbeing. Future research should seek to provide insight into the features of dating apps that may be most detrimental (e.g., features that facilitate appearance related comparisons).

4.3. Subpopulations

Noteworthy, 35.5% of studies ($n = 16$) in this review examined sexual minority men. This is not surprising, as sexual minority men are more likely to use dating apps and have poorer mental health, increased body dissatisfaction, and lower self-esteem (Meyer, 1995; Tiggemann et al., 2007; Vogels & McClain, 2023). Despite being similarly at risk of body image and mental health concerns (Dan et al., 2013), as well as more likely to use dating apps (Vogels & McClain, 2023), sexual minority women were the primary demographic sample in a singular study (Xu & Zheng, 2022). This may be attributed to the lack of a prevalent lesbian dating app (such as Grindr for gay men). As such, future research could usefully provide enhanced insight into the impacts of dating app use among subpopulations (e.g., sexual minority men and women) that may be at greater risk of adverse outcomes of such use.

4.4. Theoretical frameworks

There was heterogeneity in the utilisation of theoretical frameworks across the included studies. Most studies (66.7%) used a theory or model to frame their research (e.g., Uses and Gratification Theory, Social Comparison Theory, Minority Stress Theory). Twenty different theoretical frameworks were used, and notably, Objectification Theory was most widely used ($n = 8$; 17.8%). This is perhaps not surprising given the objectifying and appearance centred nature of dating apps (Watson, 2022). Furthermore, theoretical frameworks can be specific to, or contextualised by subpopulations (i.e., Social Comparison Theory; sexual minorities are comparing themselves to members of the same gender on dating apps) and should be considered in future research. The utilisation of many theoretical frameworks highlights the complexity of dating apps and their impact on body image, mental health and wellbeing. It does, however, preclude conclusions pertaining to the most useful theory to underpin examinations of dating app use, and this warrants greater consideration in future.

4.5. Strengths and limitations

There are several strengths of this review. It was preregistered, utilised a robust methodology, and is largely comprised of high-quality studies. This review includes a large body of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing comprehensive insight into the impacts of dating app use on body image, mental health and wellbeing. This review also had several limitations. Most studies were of a cross-sectional quantitative study design, with two longitudinal studies and a singular experimental study, thus causation could not be established. In future, longitudinal or experimental research designs may for example, usefully provide insight into the direction of the relationship between dating app use and body image, mental health and wellbeing. There was a large heterogeneity in constructs measured, and instruments used to examine these constructs. As such, it was not possible to conduct a meta-analysis to quantify the impacts of dating app use on body image, mental health and wellbeing. Finally, most studies (84%) were conducted in western regions in predominantly white samples, and this may limit the generalisability of the findings.

4.6. Implications and recommendations

This review has important implications for the development and refinement of dating apps in the future. Our findings indicate that mobile dating services have detrimental impacts on the body image, mental health and wellbeing of their users. Developers of dating apps should be seeking ways to decrease the adverse implications of mobile dating services. This could, for example, include decreasing the importance and prevalence of visual content on user profiles, increasing the moderation of discrimination and abuse on their platforms, and promoting active use rather than passive use. Greater regulations should be imposed on dating apps, including enhanced usage restrictions (i.e. age limit) or daily time limits. Younger adults are more likely to be dating app users as well as possess mental health and wellbeing concerns (Vogels & McClain, 2023; World Health Organization, 2022), and protecting younger users might aid in protecting their mental wellbeing. The development of strategies to educate the general population on the potential risks of dating app use, may also be critical to safeguarding population wellbeing.

There are also important implications for guiding future research. To date, there is limited research examining the impacts of dating apps and their relationship with body image and mental health. Future research should seek to examine both body image and mental health to ascertain the interconnectedness of these outcomes when investigating the implications of dating app use. Enhanced insight into the impacts of dating app use on specific subpopulations is necessary. For example, sexual minority men and women are frequent users of dating apps, and thus, may be at risk of poorer body image, mental health and wellbeing outcomes (Vogels & McClain, 2023) This review also identified that there is a lack of research that has examined the impacts of particular types of dating apps or dating app features. Future research should investigate population dating app use (e.g., most commonly used app features, duration/frequency of use), and how this may differentially impact users’ body image, mental health and wellbeing. Ascertaining the mechanisms that may underpin the adverse effects of dating app use on body image, mental health and wellbeing (e.g., appearance related comparisons, objectification) warrants examination in future, and could

usefully be guided by theoretical frameworks (e.g., Social Comparison Theory). Future research designs should include longitudinal and experimental designs, to establish causational relationships between dating app use and adverse body image, mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and their impacts on these constructs over time. In addition, the recruitment of more diverse samples in such studies would provide an enhanced insight into how cultural context may influence relationships between dating app use body image, mental health and wellbeing.

5. Conclusion

This review provides an important contribution to the existing research by examining the impacts of mobile dating apps on the body image, mental health and wellbeing of their users. The findings indicate that these apps have detrimental impacts on such outcomes. The use of mobile dating services is becoming exponentially widespread and thus, ongoing efforts to safeguard population body image, mental health and wellbeing are critical. This review has important implications for improving (or refining) the design of dating apps to attenuate their harmful effects.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Zac Bowman: Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Murray Drummond:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Julia Church:** Data curation. **James Kay:** Formal analysis. **Jasmine M. Petersen:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108515>.

Appendix A. Online Database Search Strategy

PsychINFO Search Terms	
1	Online Dating/
2	(dating app* or online dating or mobile dating).ti,ab,id.
3	(tinder or bumble or hinge or badoo or grindr or “plenty of fish” or feeld or match or okcupid or eharmony) adj2 (dating or app*).ti,ab,id.
4	1 or 2 or 3
5	Mental Health/or Well Being/or Stress/
6	(mental health or mental well* or mental-well* or psychological well*or mental disorder* or mental ill*or wellbeing or stress or distress or depress* or anxi* or self esteem or mood or suicid*).ti,ab,id
7	Body Image/or Body Dysmorphic Disorder/or Body Image Disturbances/or Body Dissatisfaction/or Body Awareness/or Eating Disorders/
8	(body image or body dissatisfaction or body satisfaction or body esteem or body dysmorph* or body percept* or body aware* or body surve*or body shame or eating disorder or disordered eating or weight control or muscle dissatisfaction or muscle satisfaction or muscular ideal or compulsive exercise).ti,ab,id
9	5 or 6 or 7 or 8
10	4 and 9

Appendix B. Characteristics of Included Studies

Study journal	Aim	Theoretical framework	Study design	Population	Location	N	Age (Range, M, SD)	Gender (Male %, Female %, Other %)	Sexuality (Heterosexual %/Sexual minority %)		Instruments used	Key findings
Barrada and Castro (2020)	This study had three aims; to determine characteristics of tinder users, to discover motivations for use, and to determine psychosocial correlates of use	Not specified	Cross-sectional	University students	Spain	1261	18–26 M 20.59, SD 2.04	M 26.6% F 77.4%	H 77.5% SM 26.5%	Tinder	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ; Cash 2000)	No significant differences were found between users and non-users regarding mood and body satisfaction.
Blake et al. (2022)	investigated whether dating app usage moderated the effects of appearance- based rejection sensitivity, fear of negative evaluation, emotion dysregulation, and perceived social rank on Disordered eating. also examined the unique effects of individuals' dating app use motivations on Disordered Eating.	Transdiagnostic model for eating disorders	Cross-sectional	University students	Australia	687	17–51 M 20.28, SD 4.63	M 22.9% F 77%	H 87.1% SM 12.9%	Tinder, Bumble, Okcupid, Grindr, Her, Coffee meets bagel,	Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire short form (EDE-QS; Gideon et al., 2016)	Dating app use was significantly related to disordered eating. Disordered eating was negatively associated with using dating apps for love or excitement. Disordered eating was positively associated with using dating apps for ease of communication or validation of self-worth.
Bonilla-Zorita et al. (2023)	to overcome the limitations of subjective measures in cross-sectional designs by investigating for the first time the relationship between dating app users' wellbeing (self-esteem, craving and mood) and objective measures of their use during a one-week period	Interaction Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution (I-PACE) model	longitudinal (measured daily over one week)	Online dating app users	UK	22	Not specified M 24.82, SD 4.36	M 27.3% F 72.7%	H 63.6% SM 36.4%	Not specified	Developed for study	Mood and self-esteem remained stable throughout the study week. Time spent on dating apps did not significantly impact mood or self-esteem.
Breslow et al. (2020)	To evaluate tenets of Objectification theory by testing relations between proposed variables and self-esteem among a national sample of SMM who use dating/hook-up apps.	Objectification Theory	Cross-sectional	Sexual Minority Men who use dating apps	USA	230	18–68, M 31.02, SD 10.15	NA	NA	Not specified	Body Surveillance subscale of Objectified Body Consciousness scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996) Body-Image Ideals Questionnaire (BIQ; Cash & Szymanski, 1995) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	Neither number of dating apps nor frequency of dating app use were directly correlated with body dissatisfaction. Number of dating apps used was positively associated with objectification, internalisation, body surveillance, and low self-esteem. Frequency of app use was positively associated with

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Cargnino and Lemke (2023)	To examine whether online dating sites and mobile dating apps help sexual minority men cope with minority stress	Minority stress theory	Cross-sectional	Sexual minority men	Germany	97	19–73, M 38.34, SD 11.86	NA	NA	Grindr, PlanetRomeo, Scruff, Hornet, Jack'd, Tinder	Life satisfaction (adapted from Janke & Glockner-Rist, 2012; Watson et al., 1988)	internalisation and body surveillance. Life satisfaction was not related to online dating site use
Ciocca et al. (2022)	to investigate hypersexual behavior and depression symptoms among DA users and non-users	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Adults	Italy	1000	Not specified, M 29.59, SD 10.94	M 28.9% F 71.1%	H 81.5% SM 18.5%	Not specified	Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001)	Dating app users had higher levels of depressive symptoms than non-users.
Coduto et al. (2020)	To investigate the relationship between problematic use of dating apps and negative outcomes	Social Skill Model of Problematic Internet Use	Cross-sectional	College students who use(d) dating apps	USA	269	18–24, M 20.85, SD 2.45	M 37.9% F 62.1%	H 91.1% SM 8.9%	Not specified	Social Phobia and Anxiety Index scale (SPAIS; Vente et al., 2014) Negative outcomes (adapted from Caplan, 2005)	Perceived dating app use and preference for online social interaction via dating apps were both negatively associated with self-esteem. Compulsive use of dating apps was not related to self-esteem.
Echevarria et al. (2022)	to: 1) provide descriptive information about college students' experiences using dating apps, including perceptions of safety; 2) assess differences in DAFSV based on gender identity and sexual orientation; and 3) investigate cross-sectional associations between DAFSV victimization and symptoms of depression, anxiety, self-esteem, loneliness, and perceived control	Not specified	Cross-sectional	College students who use(d) dating apps	USA	277	18–54, M 21.02, SD 5.02	M 33.6% F 64.6% O 1.8%	H 74.0% SM 26.0%	Not specified	Generalised Anxiety Disorder – 7 (GAD-7; spitzer et al., 2006) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001)	Dating app use was not directly related to depression, anxiety, or self-esteem. Frequency of dating app facilitated sexual violence was positively associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, and low perceived control. Women and sexual minority respondents were both more likely to experience dating app facilitated sexual violence.
Erevik et al. (2020)	To examine the relationship between dating app use and relationship formation, and identify personality, mental health, and demographic covariates.	Five-factor model of personality	Longitudinal 2015–2016	Tinder users	Norway	5253	17–75 M 23.3, SD 4.6	M 40%, F 60%	Not specified	Tinder	Hopkins Symptoms Check List (HSCL; Derogatis et al., 1974)	There were no significant differences in depression between tinder users and non-users. Tinder users had significantly more anxiety symptoms than non-users.

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Study journal	Aim	Theoretical framework	Study design	Population	Location	N	Age (Range, M, SD)	Gender (Male %, Female %, Other %)	Sexuality (Heterosexual %/Sexual minority %)		Instruments used	Key findings
Filice et al. (2019)	Investigate how Grindr impacts men's body image and body satisfaction	Objectification theory Social comparison theory	Semi-Structured interviews	Sexual minority Men	Canada	13	18–65, M 29, not specified	M 77% O 23%	NA	Grindr	NA	Weight stigma was a central theme, with nine of the 13 participants experiencing discrimination based on their appearance and body shape. The mention of Sexual objectification frequently occurred in interviews, with men frequently feeling objectified, and that they objectify others. Appearance comparisons were also frequently cited as sources of dissatisfaction with appearance and body image.
Fong et al. (2022)	To examine the association between dating app use and male body image using two culturally diverse samples, taking into account the potential confounding or moderating effect of sexual orientation	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Men	Sweden and Singapore	279 (Sweden) 201 (Singapore)	Singapore Not specified M 23.21 SD 2.90 Sweden Not specified M 29.08, SD 7.70	NA	Singapore H 67.2% SM 32.8% Sweden H 71.0% SM 29.0%	Not specified	Body Image Disturbance Questionnaire (BIDQ; Cash et al., 2004) Male Body Attitudes Scale (MBAS; Tylka et al., 2005)	In the Singaporean sample, dating app use predicted higher overall dissatisfaction and muscularity dissatisfaction. In the Swedish sample, dating app use predicted higher body image disturbance, overall dissatisfaction, and height dissatisfaction, while Sexual minority users reported greater muscularity dissatisfaction than nonusers, no difference was found between heterosexual users and nonusers, indicating that dating app use may only impact sexual minority men's body image.

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Gatter and Hodkinson (2016)	To examine potential differences between Tinder users and users of Online Dating Agencies, with the aim of further understanding the psychological and sociological impacts of online dating and providing indications about useful future research avenues.	Uses and Gratifications theory	Cross-sectional	English speaking adults	Not specified	75	Tinder M 27.40 SD 9.07 Online M 44.08 SD 10.98 Non-users M 43.00 SD 16.13	M 39% F 61%	Not specified	Tinder	Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	There were no significant differences in self-esteem between dating app users, online dating agency users, and non-users.
Griffiths et al. (2018)	to determine whether, and to what extent, the frequency of use of various social media platforms is associated with body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms, and thoughts about using anabolic steroids, among sexual minority men.	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Sexual minority men	Australia and New Zealand	2733	18–78 M 33.93, SD 11.94	M 99.1% O 0.9%	NA	Not specified	The Male Body Attitudes Scale – Revised (MBAS-R; Tylka et al., 2005) Eating disorders Examination Questionnaire Short (EDE-QS; Gideon et al., 2016)	Dating app use was positively associated with muscularity dissatisfaction and thoughts about using anabolic steroids.
Hammack et al. (2022)	To investigate experiences of intracommunity stigma in young sexual minority men who use dating apps.	Life course theory	Semi-structured interviews	Young sexual minority men who use dating apps	USA	32	19–25 M 21.94, Not specified	NA	NA	Not specified	NA	When asked about what comes to mind when thinking of the gay community, gay dating apps were often brought up. Experiences of body/weight stigma were prevalent amongst participants, with internalisation of ideals and discrimination being frequent facets of dating apps. Racial stigma was also a key finding from the interviews. Ethnic minority participants discussed the exclusion of racial minorities on dating apps – with disinterest in certain races a frequent narrative on dating apps. Gender expression

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Study journal	Aim	Theoretical framework	Study design	Population	Location	N	Age (Range, M, SD)	Gender (Male %, Female %, Other %)	Sexuality (Heterosexual %/Sexual minority %)		Instruments used	Key findings
Harren et al. (2021)	To investigate the relationship between problematic online dating, problematic social media use, and problematic online sexual behaviours with body esteem and sexuality	Tripartite model of influence Objectification theory	Cross-sectional	Adults	France	875	18–54 M 25.0, SD 9.7	M 20% F 80%	H 70% SM 30%	Tinder Happn Adopte un Mec Once Meetic	The Body Esteem Scale (BES; Mendelson et al., 2001)	stigma and sexual position stigma were also cited as a frequent point of discrimination. Femininity was often regarded as inferiority and was stigmatized. Problematic online dating was significantly positively correlated with body esteem.
Her and Timmermans (2021)	To investigate the extent to which Tinder users' compulsive use, motives, subjective online success and self-conscious social comparison are associated with their well-being	Uses and Gratifications theory Social Comparison theory	Cross-sectional	Tinder users	USA	296	18–29 M 26.30, SD 2.90	M 61% F 39%	H 90% SM 10%	Tinder	Joviality and Sadness subscales of Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Expanded (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1999) Anxiety (adapted from Dhir et al., 2018)	Compulsive tinder use was a significant predictor of joviality, sadness, and anxiety. Motivations can influence the negative consequences of compulsive tinder use. Users with increased social comparison to other users were more likely to have lower wellbeing.
Holtzhausen et al. (2020)	To investigate the relationship between swipe-based dating apps and psychological distress	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Adults	Australia	437	Not specified	M 41.6% F 58.4%	H 86.7% SM 13.3%	Tinder Bumble Coffee meets bagel Grindr Plenty of fish	Kessler Psychological distress Scale (K6; Kessler et al., 2010) Generalised Anxiety disorder – 2 scale (GAD-2; Plummer et al., 2016) Patient Health Questionnaire – 2 (PHQ-2; Carey et al., 2016) Rosenberg self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	There was a significant positive association between swipe-based dating apps, and distress, depression, and anxiety. Daily users have significantly higher distress and depression.
Jayawardena et al. (2022)	whether individual differences in attachment were differentially associated with motivations for using	Adult attachment theory	Cross-sectional	MSM who used grindr within the last 30 days	Australia and USA	118	Not specified M 33.62, SD 12.67	NA	NA	Grindr	Depression subscale of Depression, Anxiety, stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)	Problematic Grindr use was significantly related to higher depression

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Karniej et al. (2023)	Grindr, a widely used geosocial networking application (GSNA) among MSM, and whether these motivations, in turn, predicted problematic Grindr use and depression To identify predictors of Orthorexia Nervosa in gay men, including PrEP use, social media use, and dating app use.	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Gay men	Spain and Poland	394	18–62, M 38.08, SD 11.01	NA	NA	Grindr	Orthorexia Nervosa (ORTO-15; Donini et al., 2004) Eating attitudes test (EAT-26; Garner et al., 1982)	Grindr use was significantly positively associated with Orthorexia Nervosa
Kelly et al. (2023)	To investigate whether dating app use is associated with disordered eating in young men	Not specified	Longitudinal Measured daily over 14 days	Young men	USA	39	18–35, M 25.1, SD 5.3	NA	H 87% SM 13%	Not specified	Body dissatisfaction, Retained eating, loss of control eating (developed for study)	Dating app use was positively associated with significantly higher same-day and next-day eating restraint. Dating app use was not significantly associated with same-day and next-day body dissatisfaction or loss of control eating.
Konings et al. (2023)	To explore the associations between being ghosted on an MDA and emerging adults' self-esteem, by drawing on the Disillusionment model and the Expectancy Violations Theory	Disillusionment model and expectancy violations theory	Cross-sectional	Dating app users	Belgium	268	18–30, M 23.17, SD 2.52	M 31.3% F 68.7%	H 74.3% SM 25.7%	Not specified	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	Being ghosted on dating apps was not significantly associated with self-esteem
Lenton-Brym et al. (2021)	To explore associations between symptoms of social anxiety (SA) and depression with participants' extent of dating app use, self-reported motivations for dating app use, and likelihood of initiating interaction with dating app matches	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Dating app users	Not Specified	243	Not specified, M 30.38, SD 7.8	M 54.7% F 45% O 0.3%	H 72.3% SM 27.7%	Not specified	Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)	Dating app use was positively associated with social anxiety and depression.
Meanley et al. (2020)	To investigate the prevalence of sexual discrimination online, and examine its relationship with depression and self-esteem in young adult men	Social stress theory	Cross-sectional	Young adult men who have sex with men dating app users	USA	172	18–24, M 21.7, SD 1.8	NA	NA	Not specified	Centre for Epidemiological studies of Depression Scale (CES-D 10; Zhang et al., 2012) Rosenberg's Society	Racial minorities experienced more discrimination online than their white peers. No significant

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	who have sex with men that seek partners online.										and the Adolescent Self-Image (Rosenberg, 1965)	relationships were found between sexual racism and depression/self-esteem symptoms. Weight based discrimination was negatively associated with self-esteem. It was also associated with depression in racial minority participants.
Miller and Behm-Morawitz (2020)	To investigate the connection between visual self-presentation strategies, demographic variables, and psychosocial attitudes about masculinity and the body on dating apps	Selective self-presentation	Cross-sectional	Men who have sex with men	USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Other	322	18–71 M 30.16 Not specified	NA	NA	MSM-specific dating apps	The Male Body Dissatisfaction Scale (MBDS; Ochner et al., 2009) Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS-15; McCreary & Sasse, 2000) Drive for Thinness subscale of Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI; Garner et al., 1983)	Disclosing your face in dating app profile was associated with higher app usage, long-term app usage, and outness. Disclosing your Body in dating app profile was linked with age, drive for muscularity, self-perceived masculinity, and anti-effeminacy. More than 1 in 10 men refrained from disclosing face pictures.
Miller (2020)	Daily, weekly, and lifetime usage was examined in relation to effects on attitudes about men's own masculinity, femininity, and bodies, as well as feelings of internalized homonegativity	Cultivation theory	Cross-sectional	MSM dating app users	Not specified	322	18–71, M 30.6, Not specified	NA	NA	MSM specific dating apps	The Male Body Dissatisfaction Scale (MBDS; Ochner et al., 2009) Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS-15; McCreary & Sasse, 2000) Drive for Thinness subscale of Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI; Garner et al., 1983)	Daily frequency of usage was significantly negatively related to body dissatisfaction. Masculinity consciousness was positively related to not only self-perceived masculinity but also drive for thinness, drive for muscularity, and body dissatisfaction.
Orosz et al. (2018)	(Study 3) To investigate the motivational, personality, and psychological background of problematic Tinder use	Five factor personality model	Cross-sectional	Tinder users	Hungary	298	19–65, M 25.09 SD 5.82	M 41.6% F 59.4%	Not specified	Tinder	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	Problematic tinder use was not significantly associated with self-esteem.

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Portingale et al. (2022)	whether women's dating app use predicted body dissatisfaction (BD), urges to engage in disordered eating (DE), and negative mood in daily life. We also examined the unique effects of women's dating app partner preferences (i. e., seeking idealised versus non-idealised physical characteristics) on the aforementioned outcomes, and whether appearance-based rejection sensitivity (appearance-RS) moderated the effects of dating app use.	ED specific model of interpersonal psychotherapy	longitudinal	Women	Australia	296	18–48, M 20.56, SD 4.64	NA	H 77.7% SM 22.3%	Not specified	Single item indicators	Dating app use (even one time use) was positively related to urges for disordered eating and negative mood
Sparks et al. (2023)	To explore the dating application experiences of incels (involuntary celibate) and to determine whether they respond differently to this relatively novel form of rejection than users who do not identify as incels	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Incels men	Global	145	Incels M 25.34 SD 5.98 Non-Incels M 23.02 SD 4.34	NA	Incels H 97.4% SM 2.6% Non-Incels H 85% SM 15%	Not specified	Centre for Epidemiological Studies for Depression (CES-D; Eaton et al., 2004) Relationship Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Knee et al., 2008)	Lower perceived dating popularity was associated with depressive symptoms and lower self esteem
Strübel (2023)	To examine self-reported motivations for joining Tinder, experiences meeting people from the app, and users' thoughts and feelings about themselves after using the app	Objectification theory Uses and gratifications theory	Mixed methods	Tinder users	USA	234	Not specified, M 20.50, Not specified	M 25.5% F 74.5%	Not specified	Tinder	Developed for study	For most female users, tinder improved self-esteem, self-perceptions of attractiveness and confidence. Most men claimed Tinder made them feel bad about themselves, and was associated with negative mood, depression, and distress.
Strubel and Petrie (2017)	To examine the main effects of Tinder use, and its interaction with gender, in relation to men's and women's body image concerns, internalisation processes, and self-esteem.	Objectification Theory	Cross-sectional	Tinder users	USA	1147	18–34, Not specified	M 20.4% F 79.6%	Not specified	Tinder	Body Parts Satisfaction Scale for Men and Females (BPSS-M & BPSS-F; McFarland & Petrie, 2012; Petrie et al., 2002) Physical Appearance Comparisons Scale	Tinder users had significantly higher levels of internalisation, appearance comparisons, face and body dissatisfaction, body shame, and

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Thomas et al. (2022)	To investigate whether the sheer number of partner options on dating apps can impact fear of being single, self-esteem, and partner choice overload	Partner choice overload	Experimental	Adults	Austria	667	18–67, M 41.64, SD 13.26	M 50.1% F 49.9%	H 87.0% SM 13.0%	Not specified	Q; Fairburn & Beglin, 1994) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)	There were no significant differences between low and moderate, and moderate and high partner availability, however, high partner availability significantly decreased self-esteem more than low partner availability. Specifically, the high number of potential partners on dating apps is significantly related to lower self-esteem.
Tie et al. (2023)	to evaluate the associations between gay dating apps usage, body image inflexibility, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating with the inclusion of both body fat and muscularity dissatisfaction and both thinness–and muscularity–oriented disordered eating	Objectification theory Minority stress model Tripartite model	Cross-sectional	Gay men	China	247	18 - 30, M 21.92, SD 2.74	NA	NA	Gay Dating Apps	Eating Disorder Inventory – Body Dissatisfaction subscale (EDI-BD; Garner et al., 1983) Muscularity Body Image subscale of the Drive for Muscularity Scale (DMS-MBI; McCreary & Sasse, 2000) Body Image Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (BI-AAQ-5; Basarkod et al., 2018) Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q; Gideon et al., 2016) Muscularity-Oriented Eating test (MOET; Murray et al., 2019)	Gay dating apps usage was positively associated with both body fat dissatisfaction and muscularity dissatisfaction. Gay dating app usage was associated with higher body image inflexibility, thinness-oriented and muscularity-oriented disordered eating.
Timmermans et al. (2021)	To investigate the experience of ghosting on	Not specified	Mixed Methods	Dating app users	Belgium	328	18–59 M 31.68, SD 9.33	M 37.2% F 62.8%	H 86% SM 14%	Tinder Happn Badoo	Developed for study	Majority of respondents felt sad or hurt by being (continued on next page)

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	mobile dating apps and the potential consequences										Grindr OkCupid Bumble Grindr	ghosted, with others feeling hurt or disillusioned. A large proportion of respondents perceived that ghosting had long-term effects on their mental health, including lower self-esteem, distrust of others, and even depression.
Tomaszewska and Schuster (2020)	To compare users and non-users of dating apps concerning their sexuality-related cognitions, namely their risky sexual scripts and sexual self-esteem, as well as their risky and assertive sexual behavior.	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Heterosexual Young adults	Germany	491	Not specified	M 39.9% F 60.1%	Not specified	Tinder (70.8%) and Lovoo (41.5%), Badoo, OkCupid, Happn, Jauma, and Zoosk,	Sexual Self-Esteem Inventory (SSEI; Zeanah & Schwarz, 1996)	Male dating app users reported lower sexual self-esteem than non-dating app users.
Tran et al. (2019) <i>Journal of Eating Disorders</i>	To evaluate the association between dating app use and unhealthy weight control behaviors (UWCBs) among a sample of U.S. adults.	Not specified	Cross-sectional	Adults aged	USA	1726	18–65, Not specified	M 36.4% F 63.6%	H 87.4% SM 12.6%	Not specified	Developed for study	Dating app users were more likely to exhibit all six unhealthy weight control behaviours than nonusers, controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, age, and marital status.
Tran et al. (2020) <i>Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health</i>	To examine the role body image ideals play on mobile dating applications (“dating apps”) for gay and bisexual men	Objectification theory Minority stress model	Semi-structured interviews	Gay and bisexual men	USA	30	19–30, M 24.7, Not specified	NA	NA	Not specified	NA	Most men described the ideal body as muscular with little body fat, which was often sourced from media such as dating apps. Dating apps were often described as objectifying and picture based. Racism, colorism, and appearance-based discrimination were notable features of dating apps.
Tran et al. (2023) <i>BMC Public Health</i>	To the association between dating app use and unhealthy weight control	Tripartite influence model	Cross-sectional	Sexual minority men	USA	549	18–50, Not specified	NA	NA	Not specified	Male Body Attitude Scale (MBAS; Tylka et al., 2005)	Dating app use was significantly positively associated

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	behaviors and muscle enhancing behaviors among a sample of adult SMM in the U.S.										Unhealthy Weight Control Behaviours (adapted from multiple scales)	with using diet pills, protein powders, laxatives, and muscle building supplements. Body dissatisfaction was significantly higher in dating app users
Trub et al. (2023) <i>Archives of Sexual Behavior</i>	To investigate the relationship between sexual awareness, depression and anxiety, with consideration to sexual debut and online sexual debut.	Sexual awareness theory	Cross-sectional	Heterosexual young adult women	USA	2379	18–29 M 23.09, SD 3.03	NA	H 63.6%/SM 36.4%	Not specified	Centre for epidemiological studies for depression scale (CES-D 10; Zhang et al., 2012) Generalised anxiety disorder – 7 scale (GAD-7; spitzer et al., 2006)	Women with an earlier online debut (signed up for a dating app before 18) were more likely to be depressed and anxious. Women who refrained from online dating were significantly less depressed.
Wade et al. (2021) <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>	Investigating the relationship between ethnic identity, racialized sexual discrimination and mental health outcomes in young sexual minority black men who use dating apps	Minority Stress Theory	Cross-sectional	Young Sexual Minority Black men	USA	690	18–29, M 24.47, SD 3.18	NA	NA	Not specified	Centre for epidemiological studies for depression scale (CES-D 10; Zhang et al., 2012) Feelings of Self-Worth Measure (FSWM; Critcher & Dunning, 2015)	Dating app use was not a significant predictor of depression or self-worth. Racialized Sexual discrimination on dating apps was linked with poorer psychological well-being.
Wade and Pear (2022) <i>Sexuality Research and Social Policy</i>	This study seeks to identify a relationship between racialized sexual discrimination and psychological wellbeing in young gay black men who seek partners online	Minority stress theory	Cross-sectional	Young sexual minority black men who used dating apps	USA	603	18–29, M 24.47 SD 3.18	NA	NA	Not specified	Centre for epidemiological studies for depression scale (CES-D 10; Zhang et al., 2012) Feelings of Self-Worth Measure (FSWM; Critcher & Dunning, 2015)	Dating app use was not a significant predictor of depression or self-worth. Perceived rejection and self-perceived attractiveness significantly predicted higher depression and lower self-worth
Waling et al. (2023) <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i>	To examine how cisgender, heterosexual men construct dating app profiles, and how self-presentation and authenticity may be impacted by body image	Not specified	Qualitative interviews	Heterosexual cisgender men	Australia	15	18–30, Not specified	NA	NA	Tinder, bumble, hinge, okcupid, feeld, blender, change, coffeemeetsbagel	NA	Dating app self-presentation was consistently linked with perceptions of one's own body. Body image is a regular point of

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	and perceptions of ideal bodies											tension in men on dating apps, and how the recipient will perceive their body is a primary facilitator of anxiety. Men continually assess and evaluate how their image will be read as both masculine and appropriate in a world where such images are increasingly under scrutiny and criticized.
(Winter et al., 2021) <i>Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research</i>	To identify predictors (e.g., socioeconomic status) of body image among individuals who use dating/hook-up mobile apps	Sociocultural model of body image	Cross-sectional	Dating app users	USA	342	20–65, M 32.41 SD 8.20	M 71.1% F 29.9%	H 82.3% SM 17.7%	Not specified	The Body Appreciation Scale (BAS-2; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015) Body Image Self-Consciousness Scale (BISC; Wiederman, 2000)	Dating app users with a higher socioeconomic status had higher body appreciation and lower body image self-consciousness.
Xu and Zheng (2022) <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	To identify whether the use of a popular Chinese dating app impacted sexual minority women's self-objectification	Objectification theory	Cross-sectional	Sexual minority women who use "the L"	China	777	16–40, M 21.61, SD 3.35	NA	NA	"The L"	Body Shame and Body Surveillance subscales of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996)	Objectifying experiences, appearance orientation in partner preference, posting selfies, receiving likes, and receiving positive comments were all positively associated with self-objectification. There was an indirect effect of Using time and using motivation on self-objectification, via objectifying experiences and appearance orientation in partner preference. Using motivation and geolocational use were both related to

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Study journal	Aim	Theoretical framework	Study design	Population	Location	N	Age (Range, M, SD)	Gender (Male %, Female %, Other %)	Sexuality (Heterosexual %/Sexual minority %)		Instruments used	Key findings
Zervoulis et al. (2020) <i>Psychology & Sexuality</i>	To investigate the extent that gay dating apps are impacting men who have sex with men (MSM) and their lives	Minority stress theory	Cross-sectional	Men who have sex with men	UK	191	(Fong et al., 2022) 18–72, M 36.51, SD 10.17	NA	NA	Gay dating apps	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985)	body shame and body surveillance Dating app use was significantly linked with higher life dissatisfaction, loneliness, and reduced sense of community. Participants who used GDAs for sex had higher self-esteem and life satisfaction than those who had other motivations such as love, friends, and killing time.

Appendix C. Quality assessment of studies using the MMAT tool

Study	Screening questions	Qualitative studies					Quantitative studies					Mixed methods studies					Quality Score (%)
(Barrada & Castro, 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Blake et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y CT N Y Y										60
(Breslow et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Cargnino & Lemke, 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y N Y										80
(Ciocca et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Coduto et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y CT Y										80
(Echevarria et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y N N Y Y										60
(Erevik et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Filice et al., 2019)	Y Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y											100
(Fong et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Gatter & Hodgkinson, 2016)	Y Y						N CT Y CT Y										40
(Griffiths et al., 2018)	Y Y						Y CT Y N Y										60
(Hammack et al., 2022)	Y Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y											100
(Harren et al., 2021)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Her & Timmermans, 2021)	Y Y						Y N Y CT Y										60
(Holtzhausen et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Jayawardena et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y CT Y Y										80
(Karniej et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Kelly et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y N Y										80
(Konings et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Lenton-Brym et al., 2021)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Meanley et al., 2020)	Y Y						CT Y Y CT Y										60
(Miller & Behm-Morawitz, 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Miller, 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Orosz et al., 2018)	Y CT						Y CT CT Y Y										60
(Portingale et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Sparks et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y CT Y										80
(Strübel, 2023)	Y CT	CT	N	CT	Y	Y											60
(Strubel & Petrie, 2017)	Y Y						Y CT Y CT Y										60
(Strübel & Petrie, 2022)	Y Y						Y CT Y Y Y										80
(Thomas et al., 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Tie et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Timmermans et al., 2021)	Y Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y Y Y Y Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
(Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Tran et al., 2019)	Y Y						Y Y Y N Y										80
(Tran et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y N Y										80
(Tran et al., 2023)	Y Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y											100
(Trub et al., 2023)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Wade et al., 2021)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Wade & Pear, 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Waling et al., 2023)	Y CT	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y											60
(Winter et al., 2021)	Y Y						Y CT Y N Y										60
(Xu & Zheng, 2022)	Y Y						Y Y Y Y Y										100
(Zervoulis et al., 2020)	Y Y						Y Y Y CT Y										80

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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