# The Phenomenon of using the "Bumble" App in Friends with Benefits Relationships

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**Abstract.** Friends With Benefits is a relationship that is becoming more and more common with the advances of technology and online dating these days, such as the Bumble dating app. These applications have led to a new phenomenon called Friends With Benefits (FWB) situations. The commitment free and unbureaucratic nature of these types of apps form casual liaisons without emotional ties, thus ultimately possibly leading to problems with varied expectations. In this paper we focus on the problems, dynamics, and conflicts that are prone to emerge in FWBs started via the Bumble app. Method This study adopts a qualitative, case study research method with data from semi-structured interviews with five informants who have had FWB relationships using the Bumble app. The findings may offer insights into how FWB relationships are initiated, maintained and terminated in the era of social media and contemporary social relations. As information is given, the participants reveal themselves before moving into Orientation, Effective Exchange and finally Stable Exchange. The restriction in FWB arrangements is that freedom, since not all couples have the freedom.

Keywords: FWB, Modern Dating, Gender Equality, Emotional Commitment, Social Relationships

## 1 Introduction

Science and technology are evolving at an unprecedented pace cuing the entire global tech industry to race against each other in innovations that can enhance our quality of life. The development of communication is one of the fast-growing technologies. The internet has virtually resulted in the death of distance and time in communication, making it very easy for humans to communicate and interact with each other using a plethora of[…]. In line with the internet and mobile phones are developing rapidly, social media is also growing rapidly. Social media A part of the internet that acts as a channel to enable users for communication through sharing of information, opinion and interest. That's why socializing is crucial for all of us, no matter what age, what you do or where your status in life. Young people utilise social media in particular as an effective instant communication tool with their friends without necessarily having to make a physical contact. The chatting process provides the ability to completely sense the reactions, satisfaction and other feelings of amayur chat members. Mobile devices that enable social interaction with Bumble, for example, are always available at any time and from any place, serving to increase one's circle of friends and capabilities in engagement activities.

Bumble is an online dating app that has continued to grow in recent years. The Bumble app has become a popular choice for finding partners in the modern era. Data from businessofapps.com shows that the Bumble app had 58 million active users in 2023 [1]. Bumble, designed to bring two people together in a relationship, is an app with a unique feature that gives female users control to start a conversation after "meeting" a male user. This demonstrates Bumble's effort to change the norm in the world of online dating, which usually gives control to men, whereas in the Bumble app, it is women who are in control [2].

With the help of the Bumble app, people no longer need to meet in person as they did in the past, getting to know each other layer by layer in the traditional way. There is no longer a need to know someone's identity in detail if you want to go on a date. In the past, women usually waited for men to introduce themselves and ask them out on a date [3]. Basically, women have very high self-esteem or honor (prestige), which makes them shy to initiate conversation with the opposite sex. In the past, dating was mostly initiated by men, but now the Bumble app promotes gender equality so that women are no longer shy to initiate conversation with the opposite sex.

Humans are social beings who constantly interact with other humans. Humans fulfill their daily needs by interacting with each other, both materially and immaterially [4], Humans are social creatures who have a pure desire to live in society and build bonds with other humans. This desire drives humans to form commitments and ultimately gives rise to romantic relationships between individuals.

Romantic relationships according to Julia T. Wood [4] Viewing romantic relationships as bonds between individuals who consider each other important to be an integral and ongoing part of their lives. Couples in romantic relationships usually involve feelings of mutual love, but romantic relationships can also occur in friendships or family relationships. The difference is that romantic relationships involve intimacy and sexual attraction, which should not exist in friendships or family relationships, commonly known today as Friends With Benefits (FWB). The emergence of this phenomenon has led to diversity in social relationships, making the boundaries in social relationships ambiguous and difficult to measure or distinguish.

Friends With Benefits (FWB) is an interaction between two people of the opposite sex that describes friendship and usually involves spending time together, which can lead to intimacy and sexual issues [4]. Because there is no commitment in friendship contact, *Friends With Benefits* can be established without the need for feelings of love. Because neither party dares to commit to a serious relationship, the Friends With Benefits relationship has no status but only to make money or seek mutual benefits. The Friends With Benefits friendship phenomenon is seen as part of the change in society along with the development of information technology and social media.

In a Friends With Benefits relationship, the advantage is that you can have fun and feel close, both physically and emotionally, with someone you already know and trust. However, there are also disadvantages: the friendship can be damaged or broken, jealousy and other negative emotions can arise, and the desire to move on to a more serious stage may never be fulfilled. Therefore, the agreement to keep emotional involvement in check and avoid commitment is key. If both parties understand these boundaries and agree not to expect more, the negative effects can be minimized. When an FWB ends, the outcome is usually one of two things: the friendship remains intact as before, or it ends completely [5].

The first study analyzing the phenomenon of dating apps in Friends With Benefits relationships was conducted by "The Process of Social Penetration of Online Dating App (Tinder) User Couples During the Covid-19 Pandemic" by [6]. The second is "Factors Driving the Urban Community of Denpasar to Use Bumble to Find a Partner" by [7]. Then the third research objective, "Self Disclosure of Men Engaged in Friends With Benefits (FWB) in the Friends With Benefits Community on Twitter" by [8]. The three studies focused only on certain aspects of Friends With Benefits, but not on the factors that influence the success of this type of relationship. Therefore, researchers are interested in analyzing this topic in order to understand the challenges and conflicts that often arise in Friends With Benefits relationships.

## 2 Literature Review
### 2.1 Interpersonal Communication and Social Media

Interpersonal communication is face-to-face interaction between individuals who influence each other's perceptions. One of its main forms is dyadic communication, which DeVito defines as communication between two people who have a clear relationship and are connected in some way.

Interpersonal communication is direct communication between two or more people, such as between a mother and child, teacher and student, or in an interview. Interpersonal communication allows participants to directly capture each other's reactions, both verbal and nonverbal. Interpersonal communication is an interaction between two people who communicate with each other, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication. Interpersonal communication also has a fast feedback speed. These friendships evolve through various phases of closeness, separation and these phases can continue to the next level [9].

Social media refers to the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other (Wikipedia).It is just software that sits on top of Web 2.0 technologythat gives users the abilityto contribute and share their own content.User-generated content (UGC)is what makes social media so effective. These social media enable the user presence and makes it easier for collaborarion and strengthening of relationship via online [10]. ocial media has grown rapidly. Now there are multiple social media platforms, one of them the Bumble app.

Bumble This app allows people to express their feelings without any age limits using the comfort of the online world who feel more empathy. The anonymity feature protects users' identities and locations when they share their feelings [11]. The Bumble app is an online dating-based social network that empowers its users to build connections, whether for friendship, romance, or career development. The Bumble app was also created with the aim of bringing together individuals who could potentially become lovers [12].

### 2.2 Social Penetration Theory

Social penetration is a process that explains how to build information exchange and also decide interpersonal relationships. This social penetration process describes how a person's bond becomes closer to others through self-disclosure, which describes the removal of the outer layers of a person's self to reach a deeper level of intimacy [13]. This theory explains how a person (communicator) approaches their conversation partner to get to know them better.

According to Altman and Taylor, humans basically have the ability to establish closeness with one another through a process. This theory of social penetration is likened to or illustrated by the analogy of an onion, in which relationships can be formed. There are four stages in the process of social penetration, namely: Orientation is the very early stage of an interaction that occurs at the level of communication with the public and a small amount of personal information being disclosed. The affective exploration exchange stage is the phase in which individuals begin to reveal their true selves or expand the parts of themselves that can be known by others. The affective exchange stage is the third stage where relationships are accompanied by commitment and a sense of comfort, so that interactions are more relaxed, casual, and communication occurs spontaneously. And the final stage, stable exchange, is characterized by openness and the scope and depth of discussion on various topics of conversation (Kania, Nia. 2014).

## 2.3 Previous Research

Based on the first previous study entitled "The Process of Social Penetration in Relationships Between Users of Online Dating Applications (Tinder) During the Covid-19 Pandemic." This study examines the process of social penetration in couples who met through Tinder during the Covid-19 pandemic using qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach. Using Social Penetration Theory, this study found that Tinder users are motivated by various needs, but social restrictions make it difficult to achieve stable relationships. Although the process of openness is similar to the real world, the pandemic complicates the development of intimacy. This study provides an understanding of changes in behavior and social interactions in finding partners during the pandemic [6].

The second previous study was titled "Factors Driving the Urban Community of Denpasar to Use Bumble to Find a Partner." This study investigated the reasons for the popularity of the Bumble app in finding partners among the urban community of Denpasar using qualitative methods through observation, interviews, and literature studies. Using Reiss-Wheel's Partner Search Theory and Social Penetration Theory, the study found that Bumble is popular because of its efficiency for users with busy lifestyles, the similarity of serious intentions among users, and features that empower women in communication. Bumble is considered a modern alternative for finding a partner, with values that support gender equality [7].

The third previous study was titled "Self Disclosure of Men in Friends With Benefits (FWB) Relationships in the Friends With Benefits Community on Twitter." This study examines how men in the Friends with Benefits (FWB) community on Twitter engage in self-disclosure, using a qualitative method with a case study approach. It was found that self-disclosure is done to find a partner, share fantasies, and express preferences, with motivations such as seeking validation, building self-confidence, and creating envy. This process also reveals individual preferences regarding the physical appearance and personality of a partner [8].

The journal concluded that the three researchers discussed how individuals build social relationships through digital platforms, both for romantic and non-committal relationships. The first study found that the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the stability of Tinder users' relationships. The second study suggests that Bumble is popular among urban dwellers in Denpasar as it is relatively easy to use, has shared values with the app company and supports gender equality. On the other hand, the third study found that validation, self-esteem and preference expression are reasons for men to self-disclose in a friends with benefits community on Twitter.

The three works vary in theoretical focus on relationships, platforms, wisdom of the crowd theories and contexts, motivations of users compared to our work. The first and second studies examine partner search on dating apps Tinder and Bumble respectively, the third study discusses swinging: non-committal relationships in discussions around Twitter. The first two studies refer to the Social Penetration Theory, and the third study refers to self-disclosure. Only in the first study there is a pandemic context and motivation for Tinder and Bumble users is primarily directed to finding a serious partner and not to self-validation /free relationship as in the FWB community.

## 3 Research Method

Descriptive-qualitative is the method of this research. In qualitative research the researcher looks at things the way that they are without doing anything to them. Researcher is key data collector and the data is analyzed inductively and meaning emerges instead of generalization (Sugiyono, 2020). Eligible informants were of either sex, between 20 and 25 years old. The term was specifically explored in the context of Friends With Benefits (FWB) on the dating app Bumble with descriptive qualitative methods, exploring this phenomenon by paying attention to forms of self-expression, revealing the challenges and conflicts that often arise in Friends With descriptive qualitative research methods, to demonstrate in detail that the phenomenon through attention to ways of expression by arguing, showed the challenges and types of conflict which usually occurs during Friends With Benefits relationships among users' online dating applications. Methods The methods of data collection are observation, interview, document study and case study of individual users in Bumble online dating application.

## 4   Results and Discussion

### 4.1   Orientation

I've never matched with anyone in the Bumble dating app. When people are first introduced to each other there is a bit of an orientation phase, and they're still very cautious about what information to divulge. Self-disclosure considered to be cautious and superficial in the current stage as caution in trusting others. As an illustration, when they meet for the first time such as first date, one is likely to show them a conventional picture that fits appropriate social condition rather than true self. According to Taylor and Altman, the information shared is more generic and it is about creating good first impression [14].

Most of Bumble's FWB users are 20-24 years old and students and young professionals. They tend to share taste in partners, too: fans of indie music. Hilmi, the initial tipster, said he was seeking women who are into indie music. What's more, they want to socialize. Most like guys that are solo and busy. Biraldy, the second informant, said he is a professional and hopes to find women who also work hard, are independent and have lives of their own. Account verification is a good tool for security and profile matching.

Account verification is also deemed necessary to minimise the risk of meeting someone that does not look like their photos, at least in real life. Verifying their accounts helps them feel that they are being open, and although profiles may be faked or exaggerated, their mates will approach the relationship in a similar manner to themselves. The fourth informant, Hanifa, explained that she often looks up other social media accounts for potential partners to confirm their identity and safety is most important to her.

Issues: The orientation focus on relative caution and self-discloure. The question is how to create enough trust that the interactions can go deeper. On the other hand, the conflicts in this phase are due to people's tendency to show themselves according to a more or less standard and social image rather than their actual personality. This creates an internal conflict between the desire to be liked and accepted and the need to be oneself.

### 4.2   Affective Exploration Exchange

Issues: The orientation focus on relative caution and self-discloure. The question is how to create enough trust that the interactions can go deeper. On the other hand, the conflicts in this phase are due to people's tendency to show themselves according to a more or less standard and social image rather than their actual personality. This conflict between the need to be liked and fit in, and the desire for autonomy is internal [14].

On Bumble, people are encouraged to be real with one another, but they do have a limit. They would like to open up in a steady process that they are comfortable with and trust. Some right from the start, while others wait until they receive a positive response from someone who interests them before declaring more. Fajar, the third informant, said he goes slow and will test drive a potential partner first.

Intimacy develops through significant connection and regular dialogue. Shared activities, be they watching movies online together, playing games together or trying out new restaurants, also serve to strengthen the relationship. It starts with a public gathering (usually the first time) where security is established before moving to a more private setting. Some take the opportunity to do something new together and others fall back on a good time-tested pastime. They like to experience new things together, Biraldy says — whether that's trying a new restaurant or going to see a movie.

The wonder of feeling safe: In this stage, some time is necessary to develop trust and the potential partner should show responsiveness. This can be difficult because not everyone trusts or feels comfortable being transparent at the same pace. Conflicts that occur however, generally originate from uncertainty or suspicion about the other party. For instance, one party may become suspicious or fearful about the other party's intentions, which can often inhibit the growth of the relationship.

### 4.3   Affective Exchange

Affective Exchange The PSESK0) mmmrmnrnm mmrmf(lrmk is the stage of exchange in which more personal information is being disclosed with a degree of comfort and real conversation taking place. Dialogue is easy and decisions are made, sometimes without entering robustly into a discussion about the long-term relationship. This phase is characterized by a growing closeness and intimacy [15].

Many times is when one party begins to have deeper feelings unlike how they each became FWB in the first place. Sometimes, added Syafa, the fifth informant, conflicts resulted from different perceptions or expectations.

Trust is established through integrity and reliability. Deceit can cost us trust, and we lose people in spirit. "The trust comes from being consistent, and being honest," said Hanifa. If a potential partner is in general congruent with the agreement and honest in their behavior, trust will develop organically.

Bumble's casual approach to meeting people is fun, but it must be balanced with good communication so as not to create misunderstandings. There are those who like to do things on a whim, and others who like to arrange

meetings and activities in advance. So that fireworkness, if you will, is spontaneous and makes it more intriguing," Fajar said of the random call-and-text-meet-ups.

Problems, discrepancies in ideal two typically not shared burden; one will bear stronger feelings for the other and eventually…someone can feel more / less# but unhappy. The key is in handling these disparate feelings and an assemblage for honest little conceit without residual hurt. Conflict: Untruthfulness can be a trust-breaker that leads to the end of relationships. There is going to be conflict when someone lies and hides the big stuff.

## 4.4 Stable Exchange

Stable Exchange is the last level, when mutual trust and honesty prevail. They are in a rapport, an agreement of thought that is challenging itself with the combination each one into being open to other and actually predicting the other. A more personal relationship is reached when the exchange becomes stable, and each person starts to reveal her thoughts opinions feelings and habits without restraint or inhibition. It makes communication more honest and spontaneous at this stage.

Honesty with feelings and boundaries is necessary to a healthy relationship. But there are limits to what can be revealed in the interest of privacy. Openness is important, Syafa says, but that doesn't mean you have to tell all. It can be tricky when emotional intimacy happens unexpectedly, so make sure you keep your distance emotionally and not get too head over heels. Biraldy says he tries to keep an emotional distance and doesn't want to become too emotionally involved, which leads to quarrel.

The patterns of interaction are likely to be more flexible since each person has their own schedule, but communication is key for both to keep the relationship rolling.

Some users have regular and predictable interaction patterns, while others are more flexible and spontaneous. Hanifa says that interaction patterns are usually flexible, depending on each person's schedule.

Challenges: Managing unexpected emotional closeness can be problematic. The challenge is to maintain a healthy emotional distance and not get too emotionally involved so as not to cause conflict. Conflict: Excessive emotional involvement can lead to conflict, especially if one party feels pressured or uncomfortable. For example, one party may be overly emotionally dependent or demand too much attention.

Friends with Benefits is a friendship that includes emotional intimacy and romantic relationships, but without the ties of dating [8]. The behavior of someone in a Friends with Benefits relationship is that neither party wants a binding status. Based on the results of interviews with 5 informants, all informants experienced the same thing. Below is a discussion of the Friends with Benefits phenomenon on the online dating app Bumble. The interview results show that FWB relationships on Bumble are based on several main factors:

a. Bumble users seeking FWB relationships tend to be honest and open when sharing personal information, but they do so gradually, only to the extent that they feel comfortable and trust has been established.

b. loseness and a sense of security usually grow through meaningful communication, such as regular, clear, and open conversations that help both parties align their expectations and prevent conflict, especially when it comes to emotional boundaries.

c. Their interaction patterns vary; some enjoy spontaneous meetings, while others prefer a more regular and predictable schedule, according to their individual needs and preferences.

In Altman & Taylor's social penetration theory, the behavior of Bumble users who are looking for FWB reflects a step-by-step process in which they open themselves up from the surface (Orientation) to deeper layers step by step, in line with their increasing comfort and trust (Affective Exchange). Regular conversations clearly serve as a means of building intimacy in the relationship, so the depth of the relationship will increase and the process will be delayed or stopped if one party deviates from the initial agreement (Affective Exchange). The boundaries of FWB from the outset serve as a buffer to prevent the agreed-upon emotional bond from being breached. Eventually, as meeting patterns—spontaneous or planned—differ among FWB couples, it is how each couple negotiates the level of intimacy and intensity that works for them at any given time which provides a balanced sense of safety and adventure (Stable Exchange).

## 5 Conclusion

FWB Bumble users match well as they have common interest and lifestyles where they do things on their own. However, other account verification methods like verifying identity have been deemed necessary to ensure the safety and security of users. Transparency and truthfulness are important in communication between individuals who, however, share information gradually. Intimacy develops with one another when doing things together and good direct, honest communication while trust is established from the continuity and clarity of agreements. Even when the communication is largely unscripted, the users stress on maintaining emotional distance and selective openness in order to ensure stability of their relationship.

The system's interactivity is casual, fitting to everyone's busy agenda. Good communication is still the cornerstone of a healthy FWB relationship, in keeping with your original arrangement. These emotional

limitations are not to bind each other, normal emotions and freedom as couple grow old. Anyway despite the boundaries, you still share more intimate stuff and you feel good about each other.

Conflict occurs when this strategy of limitation fails; to control the other party is possibly no longer possible, or perceptions about how deep the relationship should be (which by rights should be identical) are different. In this sense, the current study demonstrates that, in digital dating app age, users don't just experience social penetration passively; rather they take an active or strategic role in regulating this process to sustain their desired relational order.

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