

Development of the Situationship Scale (SHTS): Measuring the Psychological Impact of Statusless Relationships

Faaruuq Al Fattah^{1ABC}, Siti Hafizhah Burhan^{1ABC}, Sahidatul Aulia^{1ABC}, Narissa Tria Ananda^{1ABC}, Syifa Yoza^{1ABC}, Shaucy Syach Yendri^{1ABC}, Zira Ajeng Ervianza^{1ABC}, Habibilla Ramizah^{1ABC}, Najla Calista Noer^{1ABC}, Nelia Afriyeni^{1A}, Weno Pratama^{1A}, Reza Asep Adi Purnomo^{2BD}, Earlene Tania Rahma^{3D}

1Departement of Psychology, Andalas University, Indonesia.

2Departement of Psychology, State University of Surabaya, Indonesia.

3Faculty of Business and Communication, INTI International University, Malaysia.

*Authors' Contribution: A – Study design; B – Data collection; C – Statistical analysis; D – Manuscript Preparation; E – Funds Collection

ABSTRACT

Background: Situationship, or a relationship without clear commitment, is increasingly common among adolescents and is associated with emotional stress and risky behaviors. Despite this, there is a lack of quantitative tools to measure the degree and effects of such relationships, especially among Indonesian youth. **Objective:** This study aims to develop a Situationship Scale (SHTS) to assess individuals' levels of involvement in situationships and explore the related psychological and social impacts. **Method:** A quantitative design was used, employing a Likert-type Situationship Scale (SHTS). Data were collected from 200 adolescents aged 13 and above through an online questionnaire. The scale's reliability and validity were examined using Cronbach's Alpha and Aiken's V. **Results:** The SHTS demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.913) and acceptable content validity (mean Aiken's V = 0.81). However, certain items had low corrected item-total correlation scores, suggesting a need for item refinement. **Conclusion:** The SHTS is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring statusless relationships and holds promise for use in psychological research and practice. Future studies should enhance item clarity and test the scale across more diverse populations to improve its generalizability.

Keywords: Reliability, statusless relationship, situationship, validity.

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: *Situationship* atau hubungan tanpa komitmen yang jelas saat ini semakin sering terjadi di kalangan remaja dan dikaitkan dengan stres emosional serta perilaku berisiko. Meskipun demikian, masih minim alat ukur kuantitatif yang dapat menilai tingkat keterlibatan dan dampak dari hubungan semacam ini, khususnya pada remaja Indonesia. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan *Situationship Scale* (SHTS) guna menilai tingkat keterlibatan individu dalam situationship serta mengeksplorasi dampak psikologis dan sosial yang terkait. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif dengan menerapkan Skala Situationship (SHTS) tipe Likert. Data dikumpulkan dari 200 remaja berusia 13 tahun ke atas melalui kuesioner daring. Reliabilitas dan validitas skala diuji menggunakan Cronbach's Alpha dan Aiken's V. **Hasil:** Skala SHTS menunjukkan reliabilitas yang tinggi (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,913) dan validitas isi yang memadai (rata-rata Aiken's V = 0,81). Namun, beberapa butir memiliki skor korelasi item-total terkoreksi yang rendah, yang mengindikasikan perlunya perbaikan pada item tertentu. **Kesimpulan:** SHTS merupakan instrumen yang reliabel dan valid untuk mengukur hubungan tanpa status, serta memiliki potensi penggunaan dalam penelitian dan praktik psikologi. Studi lanjutan disarankan untuk memperjelas item dan menguji skala ini pada populasi yang lebih beragam guna meningkatkan generalisasinya.

Kata Kunci: Reliabilitas, hubungan tanpa status, *situationship*, validitas.

Corresponding Author: Faaruq Al Fattah
 E-mail: 2210321005_Faaruuq@student.unand.ac.id
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Introduction

Personal relationships between individuals are often viewed through the lens of romantic relationships and have become a major focus in the social lives of young people. Romantic relationships refer to relationships based on emotional attraction with the aim of building intimate closeness to establish a long-term relationship. The concept of "intimacy" refers to close interpersonal closeness, both physically and mentally (Muniruzzaman, 2017). Romantic relationships represent the complex dynamics of sexuality, intimacy, and emotion for young people (Ellis & Dumas, 2018). Although idealized as an ideal relationship between individuals, romantic relationships continue to change along with social changes in society, especially for young people (Azzizah, 2020).

Indonesia is a country with an almost equal number of female and male populations (BPS, 2022). Because the population is almost evenly distributed, this makes it easy for the Indonesian population to find partners, especially the teenage population. Teenagers, or what are currently often referred to as generation Z (gen z), are the dominant population in Indonesia; around 27.4% of the total national population is generation Z (Jayani, 2021). In their daily lives, Indonesian teenagers have often interacted with love problems; 80% of all Indonesian teenagers have had partners (Ansori, 2020). However, many Indonesian teenagers who already have partners are in relationships without status or situationship with their partners; 59% of female teenagers and 74% of male teenagers have had premarital sex (Kautsar, 2024).

Situational relationships are a form of interpersonal relationship that cannot be categorized as friendship, romantic relationships, or family ties. Situational relationships tend to have a pattern of push and pull and belittle the partner, showing interest but not fully caring about the partner's feelings (Becker-Phelps, 2014). Generally, Situational relationships resembles a dating relationship but without a formal commitment or label. This is often considered a transitional stage to a more serious relationship, although it can also last long-term. Pushkar & Singh (2023) added that Situational relationships involves two individuals without a clear commitment, sometimes just for fun or self-exploration. However, Situational relationships can have a negative impact on a person's emotional, mental, personal, and professional well-being.

Couples who are in a Situational relationships or situationship have a relationship like people who already have a commitment, but actually they do not have a commitment and label in the relationship they are in (Leban & Gibson, 2020). Relationships without status or situationship are a serious concern due to the impacts caused by this relationship, such as declining mental and emotional health, wasting time, and vulnerability to being caught in a toxic relationship (Ayun, 2024). Relationships without status or situation can result in friends with benefits in couples who are in this relationship. Friends with benefits in adolescents can interfere with the mental and future of adolescents (Ariadna & Kesuma, 2023). And friends with benefits can have fatal consequences for health because it can cause sexually transmitted diseases HIV caused by premarital sex (Choudhry et al, 2022). Therefore, research related to relationships without status or situationship is interesting to study more deeply and sharply.

According to Pushkar & Singh (2023), there are five important aspects in a relationship without status. First, relationship ambiguity creates uncertainty that results in confusion and stress due to the unclear nature of the relationship. Second, emotional distress can arise from this uncertainty, characterized by feelings of anxiety, depression, and emotional tension that affect a person's quality of life. Third, cognitive distress refers to mental discomfort that interferes with thought patterns, such as difficulty concentrating and feelings of dissatisfaction. Fourth, the need for physical intimacy or sexual desires is part of this relationship, which allows a person to feel connected through physical and emotional closeness, even without commitment. Fifth, individual preferences also play an important role in the dynamics of Situational relationships; each individual has their own needs and boundaries, which, if not met, can trigger conflict and increase tension.

The measurement tool for relationships without status has also been developed by many researchers. This situational relationships measurement tool was developed to capture interpersonal relationships without formal boundaries or commitments. According to Becker and Phelps (2014), situationship is characterized by instability and lack of clarity regarding long-term goals, which can result in emotional and cognitive distress that affects mental well-being. The need for intimacy and personal preferences play a role in the dynamics of situational relationships, especially when the preferences of both parties are not aligned, potentially disrupting the balance of personal and professional life. Pushkar & Singh (2023), adds that while situational relationships offers the freedom and flexibility to explore feelings without commitment, these relationships can also trigger confusion, frustration, and emotional problems. These impacts can interfere

with a person's focus and productivity and create feelings of isolation because individuals find it difficult to share their experiences or feelings with others.

There is previous research on status-free relationships about how students in Surabaya perceive status-free relationships or relationships that lead to friends with benefits (FWB), as depicted in the Korean drama titled "Nevertheless." (Ramadani dan Alamiyah, 2023). The presence of friends with benefits contributes to the phenomenon of casual sex among students, making them bolder in engaging in premarital sex. (Yudia et al., 2018). Based on data from LSCK PUSBIH in 2002 involving 1,660 students from 16 universities in Yogyakarta, 97.05% of them admitted to having lost their virginity due to premarital sex. The places frequently used for premarital sex are male dormitories (63%), female dormitories (14%), budget hotels (21%), and open tourist spots (2%). Where students in Surabaya define friends with benefits relationships as a type of relationship that combines the benefits of romantic relationships and friendships. In this relationship, there is an element of sexual behavior, but without the commitment found in a marriage. However, there are differing understandings among the public regarding the concept of sexual activity that occurs in friends with benefits. (Ramadani dan Alamiyah, 2023).

Some current research focuses solely on qualitative studies of the variable of status-free relationships, or situationships. (Pushkar & Singh, 2023). In line with that, relationships without status or situationships also have a correlation with premarital sexual behavior. (Choudhry et al., 2022). But the existing research does not explain the level or scale of status-free relationships or situationships. Therefore, the research team is interested in examining the depiction of the level of status-free relationships or situationships of individuals. However, the existing studies are qualitative in nature and do not have a measurement tool for the situationship variable, and thus the research team is interested in constructing a measurement tool for situationships. The purpose of creating this measurement tool is to measure the extent of situationship or relationship without status.

Therefore, the construction of this measurement tool for situationship can be beneficial as it can provide an overview of the varying levels of situationship, allowing for mitigation actions to be taken against its impacts on teenagers in Indonesia.

Material and Method

Participants

The participants in this study were adolescents aged 13 years and above, who were unmarried. This criterion was essential as the concept of a "situationship" refers to a relationship formed without commitment, often seen among individuals in early adulthood. A total of 200 respondents were selected as the sample for this study, aligning with the recommendation by Crocker (2012), that suggests using a sample size of at least 200 participants for field tests. The study sample consisted of 200 respondents who met the eligibility criteria and were recruited based on their involvement in a situationship. The sample size was chosen to ensure a sufficient representation of the population, as per the standards of psychological measurement validation.

Procedure

The study followed a structured process, starting with the development and refinement of the Situationship Scale (SHTS). The scale was subjected to initial reviews by experts to ensure its validity and reliability. This was followed by a small-scale linguistic trial with a subset of participants to identify any potential issues in wording or comprehension. After these preliminary stages, the full-scale instrument was administered to the selected sample of 200 respondents using a Google Form survey to collect responses. The participants were provided with an informed consent form before the test began, detailing the purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of their participation.

Data Collection

Data was collected through the Situationship Scale (SHTS), designed as a Likert-type scale with five response options: Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Neutral (N), Disagree (ST), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The items on the scale were divided into favorable and unfavorable categories. In the Likert scale, each item consisted of statements structured to capture various aspects of a situationship, such as ambiguity, emotional and cognitive distress, sexual desire, and individual preferences. Responses were recorded through Google Forms to facilitate easy access and aggregation of data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 25.0, focusing on evaluating the scale's reliability and validity. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was computed to assess internal consistency across the items. The reliability analysis aimed to ensure that the items accurately reflected the constructs being measured, with a reliability coefficient close to 1.0 indicating high consistency. For validity, content validity was assessed using Aiken's V formula, involving expert judgment to evaluate whether each item adequately represented the constructs of interest. Content Validity Coefficient was calculated using the formula:

$$V = \sum s / [n(C-1)]$$

Description:

$$S = r - lo$$

Lo = Lowest assessment number (e.g. 1)

C = Highest assessment number (e.g. 5)

R = Number given by the assessor

In the preparation of this measurement instrument, the code of ethics was strictly adhered to, including obtaining consent from participants. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were strictly maintained, and consent was obtained from respondents to ensure compliance with ethical standards in psychological research.

Result

Reliability Test of Construct Measurement Instruments

In this situationship measuring instrument, to measure reliability, the compiler uses the IBM SPSS 25.0 program with the Cronbach Alpha method.

Table 1. Reliability Results

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
.913	56

Based on the reliability data above, it is known that the reliability results of the situationship scale measuring instrument are 0.913. According to Azwar (2016), a measuring instrument is considered reliable and can be relied on if its Cronbach's alpha coefficient value exceeds 0.500. Therefore, the situationship scale can be considered to have good reliability because its Cronbach's alpha coefficient value is above 0.500.

Validity Test of Construct Measurement Tool

In this study, the researcher used content validity as a validity test of the situationship construct. The content validity used by the researcher is the Aiken's v value on each item, which is tested by expert judgment. According to Aiken (1985), the Aiken's v value is the value of the expert judgment's agreement on the suitability of the item with the indicator to be measured. The Aiken's v value has a range from 0 to 1. if the value obtained is closer to 1, then the item is a valid item. In this study, the average Aiken's v value was 0.81, with the lowest value ranging from 0.56 to the highest value of 0.96. This Aiken's v value shows that the items on this situationship measuring instrument have good content validity.

Item analysis

According to Supratiknya (2014), the purpose of item analysis is to select items that will form a uniform scale and have good discrimination ability. The main purpose of item analysis is to examine the statistical characteristics in the actual trial of each item for the purpose of item selection in order to select items that meet the requirements for inclusion in the final form of the test. This involves deciding whether an item can be directly included in the final form of the test, needs to be revised and retested before being included, or should be removed because its statistical characteristics are too far from those required. According to Kline (Supratiknya, 2014), the purpose of item analysis is to select items that form a homogeneous scale and have good discrimination ability. The most commonly used method is to correlate

each item with the total score and calculate the proportion of the complete sample that provides the desired response. By selecting items that have a high correlation with the total score and a level of support between 80% and 20%, a homogeneous and discriminatory test can be produced.

The final step in item analysis is to select items based on various parameters that have been obtained, especially the item difficulty level (p_i) and item-total correlation (r_{it}) as an index of item discrimination power. Item-total correlation is the main parameter; the higher the item-total correlation, the better. Ideally, each item should have an item-total correlation coefficient of more than 0.20 (Supratiknya, 2014). So researchers use the criterion limit $r_{ix} \geq 0.25$ as the item-total correlation to determine whether the item is declared passed or "retained." Thus, items that have an item-total correlation coefficient $r_{ix} < 0.25$ (less than 0.25) should be considered to be retained or dropped.

Based on the results of item testing, there are several items that have a Corrected Item-Total Correlation below 0.25. These items are items number 7, 8, 21, 25, 26, 31, 40, 43, 44, 46, 53, and 56. So with that, items number 7, 8, 21, 25, 26, 31, 40, 43, 44, 46, 53, and 56 which have a total item correlation coefficient $r_{ix} < 0.25$ (less than 0.25) must be considered by being maintained or dropped.

Measuring Instrument After Validity and Reliability Test

After analyzing and selecting items on the actual trial results, here is a blueprint of the situationship measuring instrument with information on the items that are retained and considered. There are several items that have a Corrected Item-Total Correlation below 0.250. These items are items number 7, 8, 21, 25, 26, 31, 40, 43, 44, 46, 53, and 56. Thus, these items have a total item correlation coefficient $r_{ix} < 0.25$ (less than 0.25) must be considered by being retained or dropped.

Then the blueprint of the measuring instrument is produced as follows, with the construction of the measuring instrument using Indonesian:

Table 2. Measuring instrument blueprint in Indonesian

Component	Item	Item		Corrected Item-Total Correlation
		Favourable	Unfavourable	
<i>Ambiguity of relationship</i>	Saya merasanyaman dengan hubungan saya saat ini.	7		0.108
	Saya akan tetap bertahan dalam hubungan ini meskipun adaorang lain yang mengajak saya ke hubungan yang lebih serius.	8		0.112
<i>Emotional Distress</i>	Saya percaya diri untuk berinteraksi dengan pasangan.		21	0.203
	Saya menolak ajakan orang lain untuk menjalin hubungan romantis.	25		0.233
	Saya selalu menjaga jarak dengan lawan jenis.	26		0.213
<i>Cognitive Distress</i>	Saya yakin dengan hubungan saat ini agar kami mempersiapkan hubungan yang lebih matang kedepannya.		31	0.182
	Saya merasa tidak nyaman ketika pasangan mencoba untuk mendekati saya.		40	0.228
	Saya merasa bergairah ketika berada didekat pasangan.	43		0.226

	Saya tidak pernah memikirkan hal - hal yang bersifat seksual bersama pasangan.	44	0.128
	Saya sering mengkomunikasikan masalah yang sedang saya hadapi dengan pasangan.	46	0.240
<i>Individual preferences</i>	Saya mengetahui keinginan – keinginan pasangan mengenai hubungan yang dijalani.	53	0.244
	Saya tidak nyaman menjalani hubungan tanpa status.	56	0.191
Total		7	5

Measuring Instrument Norms

Norms are criteria that have been set based on the distribution of scores from representative samples and represent the population targeted by the test (Supratiknya, 2014). In norming there is a categorization, which is divided into 3 categories, namely low, medium, and high (Azwar, 2021).

Table 3. Measuring instrument norms

Formula	Category
$X < (M - 0.75 \text{ SD})$	Low
$(M - 0.75 \text{ SD}) \leq X < (M + 0.75 \text{ SD})$	Medium
$(M + 0.75 \text{ SD}) \leq X$	High

Description:

X : Total number of raw scores of the subject

M : Mean

SD : Standard Deviation

In determining the categorization of the Situationship Scale (SHTS) measuring instrument, hypothetical average and standard deviation values are required. Based on the data obtained from the measurement subjects, the maximum value, minimum value, mean, and standard deviation values are obtained as shown in the table below:

Table 4. Descriptive Hypothetical Score

Max	Min	Mean	SD
280	56	168	37.33

Based on the average value and standard deviation that have been obtained as in the table above, the measurement subjects can be grouped into three categories, namely high, medium, and low. The following is the categorization of the Situationship scale (SHTS):

Table 5. Data Based Scale Categorization

Formula	Category	Interpretation
$X < 140$	Low	The subject has a low level of statusless relationships. This means that the subject is not yet trapped in a statusless relationship.

$140 \leq X < 196$	Medium	The subject has a medium level of statusless relationships. This means that the subject has started to be trapped in a statusless relationship.
$196 \leq X$	High	The subject has a high level of statusless relationships. This means that the subject is already trapped in a statusless relationship

Discussion

This study was conducted in order to develop a measuring instrument and test the reliability and validity of the Situationship Scale (SHTS) used to measure statusless relationships. The results obtained indicate that this measuring instrument has very good reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.913, as well as fairly good content validity based on high Aiken's *v*. However, several items on this measuring instrument have low Corrected Item-Total Correlation, which need to be corrected or removed.

The high reliability results indicate that the Situationship Scale is a reliable measuring instrument for measuring the statusless relationship construct. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.80 indicates that this instrument has good internal consistency and can be used in various further studies (Azwar, 2016). This is in line with previous research showing that high reliability on the interpersonal relationship measurement scale increases confidence in the data produced (Hayes & Coutts, 2020).

In addition, good content validity, with Aiken's *v* of 0.81, indicates that the items on this instrument are relevant and in accordance with the construct being measured. This high content validity is consistent with the findings of Aiken (1985), who emphasized the importance of agreement between experts in determining the relevance of items to the construct being measured. Previous research by Cresswell and Cresswell in Weyant (2022) also supports the importance of content validity in the development of psychological measurement instruments, especially in measuring complex constructs such as statusless relationships. However, although the reliability and content validity showed good results, there were several items with low Corrected Item-Total Correlation, which was below 0.25. This indicates that some items are not effective enough in distinguishing the level of individual involvement in statusless relationships. This is in line with the results of research by Delatorre and wagner (2020) which also found that certain items in the interpersonal relationship scale often cannot distinguish well between individuals who are involved in the relationship or not. This poses a challenge in developing an instrument that can accurately measure the more subtle dimensions of statusless relationships. From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the understanding of statusless relationships, which are increasingly becoming a focus of psychological research. Situationship Scale, which has good reliability and validity, has the potential to be used in further research to explore the psychological impact of statusless relationships on individuals.

In practice, the development and use of this measurement tool can help psychology practitioners in designing interventions for individuals trapped in statusless relationships, which often carry emotional and psychological uncertainty. This is in line with the findings of research by Mirsu-Paun and Oliver (2017), which states that statusless relationships have the potential to increase anxiety and stress, so that more targeted interventions can be designed using valid and reliable measurement tools such as the Situationship Scale.

The main limitation of this study is the use of a sample limited to a college student population, which may not fully reflect the dynamics of statusless relationships among other age groups or backgrounds. Therefore, the results obtained may not be fully generalizable to a wider population. Future studies are recommended to involve more diverse samples, including individuals of different ages and backgrounds, to improve the external validity of this instrument. In addition, there is potential bias in the expert judgment used in the content validity testing. Although the testing process has been carried out systematically, subjective judgments can still affect the results. Further research can consider the use of other validation methods, such as construct validation using a factor approach or empirical data-based analysis, to improve the validity of the instrument.

Conclusion

Researchers created a situation scale measuring instrument to measure the level of situational or statusless relationships in a person. This scale was developed using psychometric techniques such as validity

tests, reliability tests, and data analysis to evaluate the right items. The test results showed that this measuring instrument has good validity and reliability according to norms. Overall, the situationship scale has good validity and reliability, although item analysis indicates the need for further revision. Overall, the Situation Scale shows good potential as a measuring instrument to identify and measure situationship. This instrument has good reliability and validity, although there are some items that need to be improved. Further development of this instrument, by improving less effective items, can improve the ability of this measuring instrument to measure the phenomenon of statusless relationships more accurately. However, researchers would like to provide some suggestions that can be useful in further research. The suggestion submitted for further research is to revise the test items in order to obtain test items that can represent aspects of this variable. In addition, further research is advised to look for readings or references related to situationship in order to gain a clearer and deeper understanding of the variable.

Author contribution statement

Each researcher contributed greatly to this research. Even this research was also directly supervised by reliable practitioners. Each researcher also reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. This statement reflects the substantial contribution of all authors to the research and ensures accountability and transparency in the research process.

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