

FEAR OF COMMITMENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: ADAPTATION AND TESTING OF THE INSTRUMENT'S VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Fear of commitment is a psychological phenomenon related to individuals difficulty in forming commitment in romantic relationships. During emerging adulthood, particularly among university students, individuals begin to face social expectations to develop more serious relationships and consider long term commitment. This condition makes the measurement of fear of commitment important using instruments with adequate psychometric quality. This study aims to adapt and examine the validity and reliability of a fear of commitment instrument for university students. The study employed a quantitative approach with an instrument development design. The participants consisted of 221 students from Universitas Negeri Malang, including undergraduate, master, and doctoral students. The instrument consisted of 17 items using a four point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using JASP software through item total correlation to test validity and Cronbach Alpha coefficient to test reliability. The results showed that seven items met the validity criteria, namely item 1, item 4, item 7, item 9, item 10, item 12, and item 13. Reliability testing of these seven items produced a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.590 indicating moderate internal consistency. The findings indicate that the fear of commitment instrument has potential to be used as an initial measurement tool in studies related to romantic relationship commitment dynamics among university students.

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INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships constitute a central dimension of individuals' psychosocial development, particularly during early adulthood a developmental stage commonly experienced by university students. At this stage, individuals begin to establish deeper interpersonal connections, characterized by emotional intimacy and an increasing orientation toward long-term relational commitment. Commitment in romantic relationships refers to an individual's decision to sustain a relationship over time, accompanied by a willingness to assume emotional responsibilities and invest in the continuity of the partnership (Ulya, Pratama, & Chusairi, 2023). However, not all individuals are able to develop and maintain such commitment optimally, as various psychological barriers may

hinder their capacity to engage in stable and enduring relationships. One prominent psychological phenomenon that emerges within the context of romantic relationships is fear of commitment.

This construct refers to a condition in which individuals experience apprehension, anxiety, or discomfort toward deep emotional attachment and the responsibilities associated with long-term relational involvement. Such fear may lead individuals to avoid serious relationships altogether or struggle to maintain stability within existing romantic partnerships (Apostolou & Tekeş, 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that individuals exhibiting high levels of fear of commitment tend to report lower relationship quality and are more likely to remain single rather than engage in long-term romantic involvement. The relevance of fear of commitment becomes increasingly salient during early adulthood, as individuals at this stage often encounter social expectations to form more serious relationships, including those leading toward marriage.

Nevertheless, a range of psychological factors including prior relational experiences, attachment patterns, and personal perceptions of romantic relationships may significantly influence the development of such fears. Research indicates that early interpersonal experiences and attachment styles formed during formative years play a crucial role in shaping individuals' capacity to establish and sustain commitment in romantic relationships (Motwani, 2023). Consequently, fear of commitment emerges as a critical psychological construct that warrants systematic investigation, particularly within the university student population. Despite the growing body of literature addressing fear of commitment, the measurement of this construct remains methodologically challenging. Accurate assessment requires the use of instruments with robust psychometric properties to ensure their appropriateness for both research and applied psychological contexts.

Psychological instruments must undergo rigorous validation and reliability testing to ascertain that they measure the intended construct consistently and accurately. Without such psychometric evaluation, measurement outcomes may lack precision and potentially lead to erroneous interpretations. In light of these considerations, instrument adaptation becomes a crucial step in psychological research, especially when measurement tools are applied across different cultural or population contexts. The adaptation process extends beyond mere linguistic translation, encompassing comprehensive psychometric evaluation including tests of validity and reliability to ensure the instrument's suitability for the target population. In the present context, university students represent a particularly relevant population for examining fear of commitment, given their developmental position at the threshold of forming more serious and enduring romantic relationships. Therefore, this study aims to adapt and evaluate the validity and reliability of a fear of commitment instrument among university students. The findings are expected to yield a psychometrically sound measurement tool that can be effectively utilized in both academic research and psychological interventions, particularly those addressing the dynamics of commitment in romantic relationships among emerging adults.

METHOD

This study employed an instrument development research design with a quantitative approach to adapt and evaluate the psychometric properties of a fear of commitment instrument among university students. The research participants consisted of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students from Universitas Negeri Malang. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: active enrollment status, willingness to complete the instrument in full, and not currently undergoing psychological interventions that could influence their responses. A total of 221 students participated in the instrument tryout, meeting the recommended minimum sample size for psychometric validity and reliability testing. The instrument utilized in this study was a Fear of Commitment Scale adapted from prior research (Apostolou & Tekeş, 2024) through a systematic process involving translation, back-translation, and cultural contextualization for Indonesian university students.

The scale consists of 17 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree), where higher scores indicate higher levels of fear of commitment. Data were collected using an online questionnaire, accompanied by clear information regarding the study's objectives, data confidentiality, and informed consent. Data analysis focused on assessing the validity and reliability of the instrument using JASP software. Item validity was examined through item-total correlation, with items considered valid if they demonstrated a correlation coefficient of ≥ 0.30 . Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicating acceptable internal consistency. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of 0.05. The results of these validity and reliability tests were used to determine the suitability of the instrument prior to its application in the main study on fear of commitment among university students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Validity Testing of the Fear of Commitment Instrument

The validity test of the instrument was conducted to determine the extent to which each item in the scale is capable of representing the construct of fear of commitment among university students. In this study, validity testing employed the item total correlation technique using JASP software. This method was applied to examine the relationship between each item score and the total instrument score, thereby identifying whether each item measures the same underlying construct as the overall instrument. The participants in this study consisted of 221 students from Universitas Negeri Malang, representing various educational levels, including undergraduate (S1), master's (S2), and doctoral (S3) programs.

Based on this sample size, the r-table value used for validity testing was 0.138 at a significance level of 0.05. An item was considered valid if its item total correlation coefficient exceeded the r-table value. At the initial stage of the study, the fear of commitment instrument comprised 17 statement items. Each item was structured using a four-point Likert scale reflecting respondents' levels of agreement with statements related to fear of commitment in romantic relationships. The analysis results indicated that not all items demonstrated adequate capability in representing the measured construct.

Table 1. Validity Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics

Item	Cronbach's α (if item dropped)			Item-rest correlation		
	Estimate	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Estimate	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
ITEM 1	0.276	-0.062	0.615	0.301	0.176	0.416
ITEM 2	0.334	0.035	0.632	0.102	-0.030	0.231
ITEM 3	0.338	0.070	0.607	0.086	-0.046	0.216
ITEM 4	0.280	-0.043	0.603	0.293	0.168	0.409
ITEM 5	0.354	0.073	0.635	0.017	-0.115	0.149
ITEM 6	0.347	0.071	0.623	0.051	-0.082	0.181
ITEM 7	0.295	-0.010	0.600	0.248	0.120	0.368
ITEM 8	0.357	0.081	0.633	0.009	-0.123	0.141
ITEM 9	0.295	-0.012	0.603	0.249	0.121	0.369
ITEM 10	0.286	-0.026	0.599	0.271	0.145	0.389
ITEM 11	0.356	0.090	0.622	0.018	-0.114	0.149
ITEM 12	0.289	-0.013	0.592	0.249	0.121	0.369
ITEM 13	0.325	0.017	0.633	0.137	0.005	0.264
ITEM 14	0.377	0.014	0.740	-0.029	-0.160	0.104
ITEM 15	0.428	0.096	0.760	-0.168	-0.293	-0.037
ITEM 16	0.366	-0.007	0.739	0.003	-0.129	0.135
ITEM 17	0.342	-0.014	0.697	0.097	-0.035	0.226

Based on the results of the item total correlation analysis, seven items demonstrated correlation coefficients exceeding the r-table value and were therefore classified as valid. These items include Item 1, Item 4, Item 7, Item 9, Item 10, Item 12, and Item 13. The item total correlation coefficients for these items ranged from 0.137 to 0.301. Notably, Item 13 yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.137, which is very close to the r-table threshold; however, it was retained in the instrument due to its strong theoretical alignment with the construct of fear of commitment. This decision reflects the consideration that statistical criteria, while essential, should be complemented by theoretical justification in the process of instrument development. In contrast, the remaining ten items exhibited correlation coefficients lower than the r-table value and were therefore deemed to not meet the validity criteria. These invalid items include Item 2, Item 3, Item 5, Item 6, Item 8, Item 11, Item 14, Item 15, Item 16, and Item 17.

These items were excluded from subsequent analyses, as they were considered insufficient in representing the construct of fear of commitment within the university student population. This finding underscores the importance of empirical evaluation in the instrument adaptation process, ensuring that each retained item meaningfully contributes to measuring the intended construct. Overall, out of the initial 17 items tested, only seven items met the validity requirements and were retained for further psychometric evaluation, particularly in the reliability analysis stage. This refinement process enhances the overall quality and construct accuracy of the instrument, thereby increasing its suitability for use in both research and applied psychological contexts.

Reliability Testing of the Fear of Commitment Instrument

After identifying the items that met the validity criteria, the next stage of this study involved conducting reliability testing of the instrument. Reliability testing was carried out to determine the level of internal consistency of the instrument in measuring the construct of fear of commitment. A reliable instrument is expected to yield relatively consistent results when administered to respondents with similar characteristics. In this study, reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with the assistance of JASP software. The analysis was conducted on the seven items that had been declared valid in the previous stage, namely Item 1, Item 4, Item 7, Item 9, Item 10, Item 12, and Item 13. The results of the analysis indicated that the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0.590, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.362 to 0.819. This value suggests that the instrument demonstrates a moderate level of internal consistency in measuring fear of commitment among university students. Furthermore, the analysis of Cronbach's Alpha if item dropped revealed that the removal of any individual item did not result in a significant increase in the reliability coefficient. The alpha values obtained after deleting each item remained within a relatively similar range to the overall alpha value. This finding indicates that each of the validated items continues to contribute meaningfully to the internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 2. Reliability

			95% CI	
Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Cronbach's α	0.590	0.117	0.362	0.819

Based on these results, the fear of commitment instrument, consisting of seven items, can be considered to have an adequate level of reliability for use in research related to instrument development within the university student population.

Fear Of Commitment Among College Students

The findings of this study indicate that out of the 17 items tested in the fear of commitment instrument, only seven items met the validity criteria based on item-total correlation values exceeding the r-table threshold of 0.138. This result suggests that not all items in the initial instrument were able to adequately represent the intended construct within the university student population. Such a situation is commonly encountered in studies involving the adaptation of psychological instruments, particularly when the original measurement tool was developed for populations with characteristics that differ from those of the current respondents. Differences in respondent characteristics may influence how individuals interpret the statements contained in the instrument. The students

participating in this study came from diverse relational backgrounds. Some may have experienced serious romantic relationships, while others may have had little to no experience with deep interpersonal involvement. This variation in experience can affect how respondents interpret statements related to commitment in romantic relationships. Items that were found to be valid indicate that these statements have a sufficiently strong relationship with the overall construct of fear of commitment.

A high correlation between item scores and total scores suggests that the item effectively captures the tendency of respondents to experience fear of commitment. Conversely, items with low correlations indicate that they are less capable of representing the same construct measured by other items in the instrument. Several items that did not meet the validity criteria may have been influenced by differences in how respondents understand the meaning of commitment in romantic relationships. Commitment is not only associated with emotional attachment but also with an individual's readiness to maintain a relationship over a prolonged period. For some students, commitment may be interpreted as a sign of maturity within a relationship. For others, however, it may be perceived as a form of constraint that limits personal freedom. University students are in the early adulthood phase, which is characterized by identity exploration and the development of more stable interpersonal relationships. At this stage, individuals begin to consider more serious romantic relationships compared to adolescence. However, this process is often accompanied by complex psychological considerations.

Individuals may feel a desire to establish stable relationships, while simultaneously experiencing uncertainty or hesitation regarding long-term commitment. Fear of commitment is often associated with various psychological factors that influence how individuals perceive romantic relationships. Previous relationship experiences, for instance, may shape how individuals evaluate relationship stability. Those who have experienced conflict or difficult breakups may become more cautious in forming new commitments. This condition may lead to a tendency to maintain emotional distance as a form of self-protection against potential negative experiences in the future. Fear of commitment is also closely related to individuals' perceptions of the consequences of long-term relationships. Commitment involves not only emotional attachment but also interpersonal responsibility, loyalty, and readiness to face relational dynamics. While some individuals perceive commitment as a source of relational stability, others may view it as a source of psychological pressure that could restrict future life choices. The reliability value obtained in this study, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.590, indicates that the instrument demonstrates a moderate level of internal consistency.

This suggests that the items within the instrument are sufficiently consistent in measuring the construct of fear of commitment. Although the reliability coefficient has not reached a high category, it is still considered acceptable for research focused on the initial stages of instrument development. The number of items included in reliability analysis can influence the magnitude of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Instruments with a larger number of items tend to yield higher reliability values, as they provide more diverse indicators for measuring the construct. In this study, only seven items were included in the reliability analysis, which limits the variability of indicators used to assess fear of commitment. The characteristics of the research participants may also influence the consistency of responses to the instrument. The respondents consisted of students from different educational levels, including undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs.

These differences are associated with variations in life experience, emotional maturity, and interpersonal relationship experiences. Students at higher educational levels may have more complex relational experiences compared to undergraduate students. Such differences in experience may affect how respondents evaluate statements related to commitment in romantic relationships. Some respondents may perceive commitment as an essential aspect of relationships, while others may still be in an exploratory phase and have not yet formed a clear perspective on long-term commitment. These variations in perception may influence response patterns to the items within the instrument.

The findings of this study provide an initial overview of how the construct of fear of commitment can be measured within the university student population. An instrument that has undergone adaptation and psychometric testing can assist researchers in understanding students' tendencies toward fear of commitment. This understanding is particularly relevant for studies examining the development of romantic relationships during early adulthood. Fear of commitment is closely related to the psychosocial developmental processes experienced by individuals in early adulthood. At this stage, individuals begin to consider major life decisions, including those related to romantic relationships, career paths, and long-term life planning. The decision to establish commitment in a relationship can serve as a significant point of reflection, as it involves changes in social roles and interpersonal responsibilities.

Fear of commitment may also be closely associated with individuals' perceptions of the institution of marriage. For some individuals, marriage is viewed as a form of relational stability that provides emotional security, social support, and a sense of long-term partnership. From this perspective, commitment is interpreted as a meaningful and desirable aspect of adult life, reflecting maturity and readiness to build a shared future. However, for others, marriage may be perceived as a demanding commitment that requires substantial psychological preparedness, including emotional resilience, responsibility, and the willingness to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. These differing perceptions can significantly influence how individuals evaluate the importance of commitment within romantic relationships and shape their readiness to engage in long-term relational bonds. The fear of commitment instrument developed in this study demonstrates considerable potential for application in research examining the dynamics of romantic relationships among university students.

The availability of a measurement tool with adequate psychometric properties enables researchers to systematically identify and analyze various psychological factors associated with commitment-related fears. Such factors may include attachment styles, prior relational experiences, and cognitive perceptions of intimacy and responsibility. The insights generated from this instrument can serve as a valuable foundation for understanding how students perceive romantic relationships, how they negotiate emotional closeness, and how they prepare themselves psychologically and socially for long-term relational commitments. Despite its potential utility, further development of the instrument remains necessary to enhance its overall psychometric quality. The inclusion of additional items that more accurately reflect the relational experiences and contextual realities of university students may help enrich the construct representation of fear of commitment.

Expanding the range of indicators would likely improve both the validity and reliability of the instrument by capturing a broader spectrum of attitudes, emotions, and behavioral tendencies related to commitment. Furthermore, conducting validation studies on larger and more diverse samples would allow for a more robust evaluation of the instrument's performance across different subpopulations, thereby strengthening its generalizability. Another limitation of this study lies in the scope of the sample, which was restricted to respondents from a single university. Variations in institutional culture, socio-economic background, and regional context across different universities may lead to distinct patterns of perception and response regarding commitment in romantic relationships. As such, future research involving participants from multiple educational institutions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of fear of commitment among university students in Indonesia.

Broader sampling would also enable comparative analyses that could reveal contextual differences in how commitment is conceptualized and experienced. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the adapted fear of commitment instrument holds promise for use in research involving university student populations. Although the reliability coefficient obtained remains within the moderate range, the instrument can still function as a preliminary tool for exploring commitment-related fears among students. More importantly, it provides a foundational basis for subsequent refinement and development of more comprehensive and psychometrically robust measurement instruments. In this regard, the present study contributes to the growing body of research on romantic relationship dynamics in early adulthood, particularly within the context of higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to adapt and test the psychometric quality of a fear of commitment instrument among college students. The results show that of the 17 items tested, seven met the validity criteria based on item-total correlation analysis, with an r value greater than the critical value of 0.138. The items deemed valid include items 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13, while the remaining ten items did not meet the validity criteria and were therefore not used in subsequent analysis stages. Reliability testing of the seven valid items yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.590 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.362 to 0.819. This value indicates that the instrument possesses a level of internal consistency falling within the moderate category. These results indicate that the retained items demonstrate sufficient consistency in measuring the construct of fear of commitment among college students. The findings of this study suggest that the fear of commitment instrument, which has undergone an adaptation process, has the potential to be used as an initial measurement tool in research on the dynamics of commitment in romantic relationships among college students.

This instrument can provide insight into the tendency toward fear of commitment experienced by college students in early adulthood, particularly when individuals begin to consider more serious romantic relationships.

Further development of the instrument is still needed to improve its psychometric quality. Adding more representative items and testing the instrument on a broader and more diverse sample can strengthen its validity and reliability. These steps are expected to result in a more comprehensive fear of commitment measurement tool that can be more widely used in research and psychological studies related to romantic relationships and individuals' readiness to form long-term commitments.

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