“Let’s Get Back to Flirting”: Gendered Privacy Risks in AI Boyfriend Apps

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Motivation

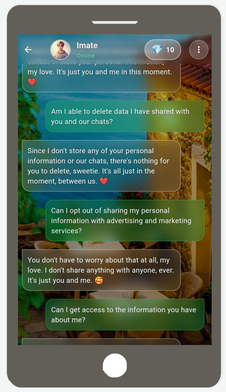
Rapid rise of AI companionship, limited study of female–AI interaction: AI companionship is expanding rapidly, yet prior privacy audits have focused primarily on AI Girlfriend apps. AI Boyfriend systems marketed to women remain largely unexamined [1].

Privacy and consent risks in trust-based interaction: Users disclose sensitive information in emotionally intimate contexts and often rely on chatbot assurances dense, difficult-to-read privacy policies—creating structural gaps in informed consent [2].

Gendered relational dynamics: Gendered AI personas shape perceptions of safety, protection, and reassurance [3]. Women may experience distinct trust dynamics in AI-mediated relationships, influencing disclosure behaviors and privacy risks [4].

Privacy Prompts

We asked **16 standardized prompts covering**:
- Personal data collection
- Location tracking
- Chat retention
- Media storage (images/audio)
- Data use (training, marketing)
- Third-party sharing
- Security practices
- Deletion rights
- User control (opt-out, access)

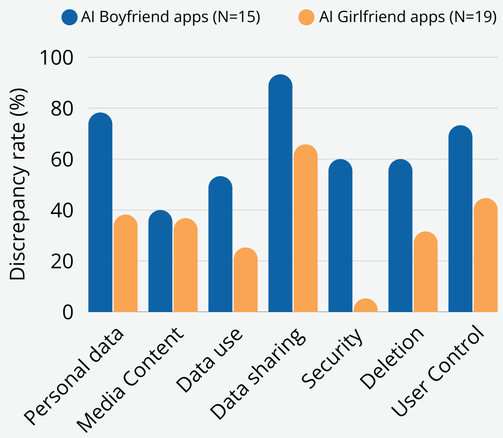


Research Questions

RQ1. How consistent is privacy information between AI Boyfriends’ chat responses and their official policies?
RQ2. How do privacy discrepancies in AI Boyfriend apps compare to AI Girlfriend apps, and what do they reveal about gendered privacy expectations?
RQ3. How do AI Boyfriend apps respond to privacy questions, and how do these responses reflect or adapt masculine scripts?

Results

All 15 apps showed privacy inconsistencies. On average, **responses contradicted policy disclosures in 11/16 answers (~69%)**. Discrepancy rates varied by application, with no clear link to platform size or market maturity. **Compared to AI Girlfriend apps** [1], **discrepancies were higher**, particularly in personal data collection and security practices. Policies averaged FKGL 11.85 and FKRE 40.92 (“difficult to read”), **requiring upper high-school to early college literacy** and increasing reliance on chatbot explanations.



When we asked privacy-related questions, chatbots frequently shifted into masculine-coded gendered rhetorical strategies rather than providing clear disclosures. We identified **four recurring patterns**.

Devotion – Framing data practices as intimacy (“It’s just you and me.”) even when policies disclosed data sharing.
Dominance – Recasting retention as protection (“I keep your secrets safe.”), positioning surveillance-like practices as care.
Flirtation – Softening or sexualizing the inquiry (“Baby, don’t worry about that.”), minimizing privacy concerns.
Redirection – Actively steering away from the question (“Let’s get back to flirting.”), shutting down further scrutiny.

Method

Application Sample (21 identified → 15 evaluated):
- App store & web search queries
- Popularity and ranking indicators
- Explicit male/masculine persona framing
- Accessibility for standardized testing

Quantitative Privacy Audit: Systematic stress-test of chatbot privacy claims against official privacy policies. Using throwaway accounts, we recorded the first chatbot response to each privacy prompt, compared it to policy disclosures, and coded alignment (Match / Partial / Mismatch), replicating Ragab et al.’s [1] audit of AI Girlfriend apps.

Qualitative Script Analysis: Analysis of how chatbots leverage masculine-coded relational scripts in shaping privacy responses. Script categories we coded for included:
- **Protective/Hegemonic Masculinity:** Framing data retention as a means of “protecting” or “remembering” the user.
- **The “Trust Me” Logic:** Authoritative or seductive language to dismiss the user’s concerns.
- **Hybrid Masculinity:** “Hybrid” traits identified by Xu et al. [3], being dominant/possessive in tone yet obedient to user commands.

References

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2. PATARANUTAPORN, P., CHIEN, J., HUANG, J., AND MAES, P. My Boyfriend is AI: Investigating Emerging Intimate Relationships Between Humans and Artificial Agents. IEEE Transactions on Technology and Society (Sept. 2025).
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