Undergraduates' Online Dating: Predictive Influence of Age, Gender, Motivation and Computer Efficacy

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Abstract

This study examines age, gender, motivation, and computer efficacy as factors predicting online dating among higher institution students in Oyo State.The study adopted a descriptive survey. The sample consisted of 166 undergraduates of the University of Ibadan. Three scales were used to collect information. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study. Data collected were analysed using multiple regression statistics for data analysis.Results indicated that there is a positive relationship between age and dependent variable (i.e. online dating) (r = 0.307); motivation (r = 0.242) and computer efficacy (r = 0.309). However, gender has no significant relationship with online dating. Research question two indicated that the R^2 value is 0.204 while the adjusted R^2 is 0.184. This translated into 18.4% of the total variance. This implies that the influence of the independent factors on online dating were not due to chance factor. The F value ratio of 10.292 further corroborated this. This showed that there is significant combined effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants. The research question three explained the relative influence of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants. Age (Beta = .282; t = 3.982) is the most potent contributor to online dating. This is followed by computer efficacy (Beta = .248; t = 3.267) and motivation (Beta = .181; t = 2.450). The least factor is gender (Beta = .077; t = 1.040).The findings from this study showed that online dating is real and has come to stay. Computer efficacy, motivation, age and gender are central to the dating activities of the university undergraduates, hence counselling psychologists must brace up to the challenges this new behaviour poses to stable and lasting relationship.

Keywords: Age, Computer Efficacy, Gender, Motivation, Online Dating

Introduction

Online relationships may be formed and operate in unique ways, but there is an important connection between online dating and the face to face interaction that follows. Online dating sites emerged in the 1980s and are increasing in popularity (Whitty & Carr, 2006). In 2001 online dating was a $40 million business and in 2008 it was expected to have made $600 million (Epstein, 2007; Online Dating Magazine Centre, 2008). While similar to newspaper personals, online dating sites are much more in-depth and interactive. Users construct profiles often containing pictures or videos, make contact with persons of interest, discern if those persons would also like contact, and then meet face-to-face. As conceptualized in this study, online dating is the act of utilizing online dating services to meet potential dating partners.   Online dating is therefore a precursor to face to face dating which plays an important role in setting expectations for the initial face to face interaction. Increasingly, human interactions are being communicated by means of electronic, Internet based Medias. Readily available programs and websites facilitate easy transference of messages, thus rendering space and time irrelevant.

The quick, efficient manner of Internet-based Medias allows for easy access to users who want to examine a lot of content in an organized format within a short amount of time. This concept is ideal for facilitating online dating networks where users seek to explore many users with the same intimate-based goals for using the community. Online dating communities are a growing industry, like social networking sites, and are similar in that they both provide interpersonal communication with others over the Internet. In contrast to social networking sites, online dating communities are tailored specifically to users who are looking for a romantic partner, connection, or encounter.

Internet use among young individuals includes email use, web sites visiting, instant messaging, chat rooms visit, blogging and online social networking which may include dating (Oluwole, 2009). In Nigeria today, with about $7 billion investments in four major submarine cables including MainOne, Glo1, SAT3 and WACS carrying over 7.78 terabytes bandwidth capacity, the Internet penetration remains abysmally low. Out of World Bank's estimated population of about 160 million Nigerians, about 45 millions presently have access to the Internet (Adepetun, 2013).

Figure 1: A mimic of a man and woman romantic interaction online

Source: Raghuvanshi, S. How advisable is Online Dating? http://musenmotivation.wordpress.com

Researchers, theorists and academics are still pondering the nature of online dating. Two opposing schools of thought seem to have emerged: those deeming online relations as superficial, distant, unemotional and unsocial, and others classifying online relations as personal, unconventional, and a new alternative (Parks & Floyd, 1996). For example, online dating has been referred to as an audition for a real date (Barnes, 2001) and a relevant platform for relationship formation, although insubstantial for online relations (Civin, 2000; Hardey, 2002; Hills & Argyle, 2003; Utz, 2000). It is clear that the significance of online relationships is queried rather than the formation of online relationships. Evidence supporting such claims seems marginal. Opposing such claims, some researchers regard online relationships as interpersonal (Barnes, 2001; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Sherman, 2001; Walther, 1995), more significant (Parks & Floyd, 1996; Wallace, 1999; Yum & Hara, 2005), exciting (Gwinnell, 1998) and real (Houran, 2006; Houran & Lange, 2004; Yum & Hara, 2005). Furthermore, online relationships are described as solid (Sherman, 2001) in which trust and commitment are commonly shared (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Whitty & Gavin, 2001). Subsequently, one can assume that interpersonal online relationships are interactive and personal relations between two individuals. Research suggests that online relationships are mostly heterogeneous with a romantic or friendship-like nature (Hardey, 2004; Parks & Roberts, 1998; Whitty & Gavin, 2002; Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2002; Yum & Hara, 2005). Furthermore, online relationships typically progress to other environments such as telephone and face-to-face contact (McKenna et al., 2002; Parks et al., 1996; Sveningsson, 2002).

More recently, Wright (2004) identified two types of online relationships, namely primarily Internet-based relationships, that is relationships that are initiated in a face-to-face setting and maintained online, and exclusively Internet-based relationships, referring to relationships initiated and maintained entirely online. Online relationships may migrate to other environments or remain and develop online. This may be an important consideration in investigating the online persona.

Ben-Ze'ev (2004) explains the nature of online relations as contradictory, firstly because of the geographical distance between those involved versus the immediacy of online communication. Secondly, online communication is rich in meaning because of the high level of self-disclosure, but impoverished in terms of a lack of visual cues. Thirdly, despite the higher level of self-disclosure, participants stay anonymous. Fourthly, online relations are emotionally continuous and discontinuous because communication takes place with intervals at any time. Lastly, the intellectual and emotional input by far surpasses the physical effort. In summary, the broad characteristics of online relations include, but are not necessarily limited to, anonymity, self-disclosure and attraction, which include proximity and similarity. An understanding of these characteristics is needed to comprehend the online persona, which follows later. Because two people disclose and share personal information, build trust and interdependence, and develop emotional closeness prior to physical attraction, these online relationships seem interpersonal. Therefore, in uncovering the online dating persona it is important to consider online relationships, specifically their formation, maintenance and success. Subsequently, the discussion turns its focus to online relationship formation.

Online dating is increasingly popular and expected to continue to increase due to the changes in culture. Online daters are part of the online dating process and as such, the nature of the way people relate is being changed. This study will show how age, gender, internet efficacy, and motivation predict internet dating among undergraduate.

Within social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1982; 1997) self-efficacy is a form of self-evaluation that influences decisions about what behaviours to undertake, the amount of effort and persistence put forth when faced with obstacles, and finally, the mastery of the behaviour. Self-efficacy is not a measure of skill; rather, it reflects what individuals believe they can do with the skills they possess. For example, in discussing computer self-efficacy, Compeau and Higgins (1995) distinguished between component skills such as formatting disks and booting up the computer and behaviours individuals can accomplish with such skills, such as using software to analyze data.

Thus, computer self-efficacy focuses on what a person believes he or she can accomplish online now or in the future. It does not refer to a person's skill at performing specific Internet-related tasks, such as writing HTML, using a browser, or transferring files, for example. Instead, it assesses a person's judgment of his or her ability to apply computer skills in a more encompassing mode, such as finding information or troubleshooting search problems. The relationship between self-efficacy and personal computer use is perhaps intuitively obvious. Personal computers represent a complex and somewhat troublesome technology, requiring considerable skill and extensive training to operate successfully. Self-efficacy is essential to overcome the fear many novice users experience. Compeau and Higgins (1995) empirically verified the relationship between computer self-efficacy and computer use.

McKenna (2007) explained this process effectively: Once a potential partner has passed the physical appearance test and been placed into the larger pool of "possibles" the user then begins to narrow the contact options based on self-provided information about income and occupation, hobbies, previous marital status, and so forth. If all of these factors seem to be "good", the participant will send off an introductory email and wait to see if he or she, in turn, passes the other person's "shopping list" of acceptable criteria and is contacted in return.

The Internet requires development of a further set of skills that, to the novice user, at least, may be daunting. These include establishing and maintaining a stable Internet connection, learning how to navigate on the Internet, and searching it for relevant information. Internet self-efficacy may be distinguished from computer self-efficacy as the belief that one can successfully perform a distinct set of behaviours required to establish, maintain and utilize effectively the Internet over and above basic personal computer skills. Social cognitive theory offers an alternative to socio-economic explanations of the Digital Divide (e.g., Hoffman, et al., 2000; NTIA, 1999). The formation of positive outcome expectations in social cognitive terms, occurs only if Internet use persists long enough for the benefits to become apparent. For that to happen, self-efficacy beliefs must first be established.

Motivation is the common thread across many researchers' attempts to answer the question, "Why do we perform as we do?" In one's daily routine, rarely are motives or drives questioned. Apparently, as time has progressed, the link between motives and action has become clouded. The lack of this motive to behaviour connection seems contrary to basic human evolution, where primate beings could operate on drives for hunger or safety, similar to many levels of the animal kingdom, (Goodenough, McGuire & Wallace, 2001).

An issue that frequently emerges in discussions of online relationships is the individual's motivation to form an online relationship. Documented in the literature are numerous motives for Forming online relationships. This is not surprising given that each individual is unique. It is important that the motive for relationship formation is a voluntary, conscious and realistic decision (Barnes, 2001), rather than idealistic (Houran & Lange, 2004). This discussion differentiates between motives of an interpersonal and intrapersonal nature.

Despite the myriad of motivations mentioned above, central motives that continuously re-emerge are a person's future expectations and the relative anonymity of online relationships. However, both the interpersonal and intrapersonal motives for online relationship formation should be considered because both appear to have a significant effect on the maintenance and success of the online relationship. Thus, one can assume that positive and honest perceptions and expectations may foster successful online relationships whilst negative attitudes and intentions are more likely to result in their failure. The discussion to follow pertains to the maintenance and success of online relationships.

Age is a significant factor in online dating. Dating can happen for people in most age groups with the possible exception of children. Teenagers and tweens have been described as dating; according to one report by the CDC, three-quarters of eighth and ninth graders in the United States described themselves as "dating", although it is unclear what is exactly meant by this term. Young persons are exposed to many in their high schools or secondary schools or college or universities. There is anecdotal evidence that traditional dating—one-on-one public outings—has declined rapidly among the younger generation in the United States in favour of less intimate sexual encounters sometimes known as hookups (slang), described as brief sexual experiences with "no strings attached", although exactly what is meant by the term hookup varies considerably. Dating is being bypassed and is seen as archaic, and relationships are sometimes seen as "greedy" by taking time away from other activities, although exclusive relationships form later. Some college newspapers have decried the lack of dating on campuses after a 2001 study was published, and conservative groups have promoted "traditional" dating. When young people are in school, they have a lot of access to people their own age, and don't need tools

such as online websites or dating services. Chinese writer Lao Wai, writing to homeland Chinese about America, considered that the college years were the "golden age of dating" for Americans, when Americans dated more than at any other time in their life. "Once they are way past school, it's harder to find a partner," according to dating coach Evan Marc Katz, who urges singles to go online. There are indications people in their twenties are less focused on marriage but on careers; according to National Public Radio, "marriage is often the last thing on the minds of young people leaving college today."

People over thirty, lacking the recency of a college experience, have better luck online finding partners. Economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett in 2002 found that 55% of 35-year-old career women were childless, while 19% of male corporate executives were, and concluded that "the rule of thumb seems to be that the more successful the woman, the less likely it is she will find a husband."

Based on literature reviewed above, the following research questions were raised.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship among the four independent variables (motivation, computer self-efficacy, age and gender) and online dating?
2. What are the composite effect of computer self- efficacy, motivation, age and gender on online dating?
3. What is the relative effect of each of computer efficacy, motivation, age and gender on online dating?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because the variable were not manipulated but described as they naturally occur among the respondents.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The targeted population are the University of Ibadan Undergraduates. The participants were made up of undergraduate students from the University of Ibadan in Oyo State. A sample size of one hundred and sixty six (166) students who are into online dating volunteered to participate in the study consisting of 76 male and 90 female undergraduates. Therefore, the sampling technique used for the study is snowball method.

Research Instruments

Motivation Rating Scale: The short form of the Ray (1970, 1974, and 1975) motivation scale was adopted and used. It was a seven item short form of the Ray Achievement Motivation scale. When tested on seven samples from Sydney, London, Glasgow and Johannesburg it showed reliabilities of over .70 when applied to English speakers. It is also balanced against acquiescent response set and has validities well comparable with other longer scales. General population norms obtained in the four countries revealed the English, Scots and Australians to have similar levels of achievement motivation with South Africans significantly higher. Response options are "Yes", (scored 3), "?" (scored 2), "No" (scored 1). Items marked "R" are to be reverse-scored (e.g. "1" becomes "3") before addition to get the overall score. For the current study, a pilot study was carried in order to tropicalise it for use, a high reliability was found using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .68$).

Computer Self-efficacy Scale: The computer self efficacy was measured using Competency in Computer Use Measure designed by Olalere (2005). The instrument was adapted from the 1991 Simmons and Wild survey instrument. The scale contained Sub-section A-C that consisted of 13 items divided into: (a) experience of using computer; (b) levels of proficiency in basic computer operations; and (c) competency in using software. The reliability of the instrument was determined by internal consistency, that is, alpha co-efficient. The results of the co-efficient of reliability for this study were 0.92, 0.78, 0.80, and 0.83 for experience of using computers, level of proficiency in basic computer operations, competency in using computer software, and total score, respectively.

Online Dating Scale: Online Dating is measured using a self report questionnaire designed by Oluwole (2012). Despite myriads of research on online dating there is no scale to measure the tendency and frequency of online dating individuals. The 16-item scale covers the desire for physical contact as well as emotional satisfaction the respondents may anticipate deriving from such online interaction. It has an alpha coefficient of 0.73.

Procedure for Data Collection

The administration of the questionnaire took place on different days in the various institutions used for the study. The institutions are: University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University. All are in the South-West Nigeria.

The class representatives of the students in the schools used for the study administered the questionnaires. The process facilitated confidentiality, easy collection of the questionnaires thereby minimising the difficulty in data administration. The questionnaire was administered bearing in mind all the principles of test administration.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship among the independent variables (i.e., age, gender, motivation and computer self-efficacy) and online dating among the participants?

Table 1: Intercorrelation matrices showing relationships among the independent variables and online dating

Variables	NO	1	2	3	3	4
Online dating	166	1.000				
Gender	166	.044	1.000			
Age	166	.307	.061	1.000		
Motivation	166	.242	.184	.016	1.000	
Computer efficacy	166	.309	.284	.109	.284	1.000
Mean	166	24.83	1.52	22.69	22.07	80.84
SD	166	3.74	.500	4.011	4.22	13.441

Table 1 showed a positive relationship between online dating and age (r = 0.307); motivation (r = 0.242) and computer efficacy (r = 0.309). However, gender has no significant relationship with online dating.

Research question 2: What is composite effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy online dating among the participants?

Table 2: Multiple Regression on online dating

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	S.E
.451[a]	.204	.184	3.37973

ANOVA[b]					
Sources	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	470.237	4	117.559	10.292	.000[a]
Residual	1839.040	161	11.423		
Total	2309.277	165			

Results from Table 2 indicated that the R^2 value is 0.204 while the adjusted R^2 is 0.184. This translated into 18.4% of the total variance. This implies that the influence of the independent factors on online dating were not due to chance factor. The F value ratio of 10.292 further corroborated this. This showed that there is significant combined effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants.

Research question 3: What is relative effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy online dating among the participants?

Table 3: Standard regression weight table showing the contribution patterns of the independent variables on online dating among the participants

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.616	2.311		4.593	.000
Gender	-.574	.552	-.077	-1.040	NS
Age	.263	.066	.282	3.982	S*
Motivation	.160	.065	.181	2.450	S*
Computer Efficacy	.069	.021	.248	3.267	S*

The results in Table 3 explained the relative influence of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants. Age (Beta = .282; t = 3.982) is the most potent contributor to online dating. This is followed by computer efficacy (Beta = .248; t = 3.267) and motivation (Beta = .181; t = 2.450). The least factor is gender (Beta = .077; t = 1.040).

Discussion

The first research question explained the Intercorrelation matrices showing relationships among the independent

variables and online dating. The results showed a positive relationship between age, motivation and computer efficacy and online dating. However, gender has no significant relationship with online dating. This implies that both male and female individuals are seeking for new relationships online.

The likely reason may be that youths with similar intent want mates that are kind, reliable, outgoing and smart (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997). However, there are also notable differences in the mate preferences of men and women. Owing to the differences in men and women's parental investment, human mate selection is one of female choice (Darwin, 1871). This is illustrated by the gender difference in the proportion of men and women who get approached through their online dating profiles. Specifically, men approach women through online dating sites more than women approach men. For instance, once study of online daters reported that 57% of men vs. 23% of women never got a single email from a prospective date (Hitsch et al., 2009). Moreover, contact from prospective dates varied as a function of the content of participants' profiles in a manner predicted by the evolutionary psychological framework on mate selection (Buss, 1989; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990). In the profiles of actual online daters, Hitsch et al. (2009) reported that for men, income – an indicator of status – was most predictive of getting approached by potential daters through the website, with higher earners getting more emails. For women, physical appearance – an indicator of fertility – garnered the most emails from potential suitors. Both short men and overweight women were the least likely to get emails through the dating site. These data are consistent with the deceptive self-presentational practices of men and women reviewed above (Toma et al., 2008). Men and women who are searching for a mate are aware of what potential mates consider attractive and the evidence indicates that they will alter their profiles to reflect these characteristics.

The second research question explained the composite effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants. The results in Table 2 describe combined contribution of the four independent variables (age, gender, motivation, and computer efficacy) to online dating. This implies that the influence of the independent variables on online dating were not due to chance factor. This showed that there is a significant combined effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants.

For instance, intrinsic motivation is a second motivational component described by Schultz (1993). Intrinsic motivation has to do with an internal drive to succeed at a task exclusive of external rewards (Marchant, 1991). Individuals feel free to go online to date because they can meet more people that are not even in their region, which even make them widen their horizons. It is similar to the need for achievement, in that it is "a relatively stable feature of personality, reflecting the desire to do things well and to compete against a standard of excellence. Individuals who are high in the achievement motive appear to be interested in excellence for its own sake rather than for the rewards it brings (Berry & Asamen, 1989). Also known as "drive motivation", it is "a force within individuals that impels them to engage in a particular behaviour" (Brunsma, et al., 1996, p. 10). An undergraduate may persistently go to internet for date since there is always a reply from individual they tag online. Hence the drive is always there to go back online over and over because he or she gets a reply from his/her partners online which is reward. This individual is "likely to be more interested and to put forth more effort than a fellow who is performing the internet task for some external reward such as approval from friends (Marchant, 1991). Dating literature acknowledges that dating is a changing concept within a society impacted largely by social constraints and expectations (Bailey, 1988; Ingoldsby, 2003; Merskin & Huberlie, 1996). The advent of online dating represents a current change in the nature of dating.

The third research question explained the relative effect of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy online dating among the participants. The results in Table 3 explained the relative influence of age, gender, motivation and computer efficacy on online dating among the participants. Age is the most potent contributor to online dating. This is followed by computer efficacy and motivation. The least factor is gender. The probable reason for this may be that most undergraduate students are in the bracket of 18 and 30 years of age. Apart from being sexually precocious, they are actively searching for relationships from those of opposite sex.

Interpersonal motives for forming online relationships refer to the perceptions and expectations of those dating online. These motives include future expectation of online relationship migration to traditional environments, for example, the face-to-face environment (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Walther, 1995). Additional motives include perceived control over the online relationship, the sense of excitement, romantic desire and lack of commitment (Lawson & Leck, 2006). Lastly, Utz (2000) believes that not everyone who communicates online does so with the intent to form online relationships. Instead, she proposes that those who are motivated and hold a positive attitude towards online communication and online relationships will form online relations. Intrapersonal motives for online relationship formation include the relative anonymity people experience within online relationships (Barnes, 2001; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003; Scharlott & Christ, 1995). Other intrapersonal motives include the growing absence of romantic interpersonal relations formed in the work place, the increasing number and mobility of single individuals, changing lifestyles in terms longer hours spent in the workplace (Brym & Lenton, 2001), the safety that the

Internet offers (McKenna & Bargh, 2000) and the lesser degree of stereotype roles present (Lawson & Leck, 2006).

Findings relating to the motivation for online dating relational development suggest that the perceptions of control and increased choices of future partners are the predominant motivational indicators. This may be due to the relative anonymity that people experience online, which result in a feeling of control in the relationship. It seems likely that since the Internet transcends the boundaries of space, people who date online have a greater choice of potential partners. Some participants report lifestyle and inquisitiveness as their motivation for participating in online dating. According to Brym and Lenton (2001), lifestyle changes have occurred since people spend longer hours in the workplace. This area of investigation found no substantiation for the literature finding that online dating participants are lonely and shy (Barnes, 2001; Bonebrake, 2002; Joinson, 2003; McKenna et al., 2002; Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Scharlott & Christ, 1995). Instead, shyness and loneliness were the least reported motivational indicators for online dating. Although this finding may be ascribed to participants faking good, or conversely that the Internet has fewer gating features (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; McKenna et al., 2002; Scharlott & Christ, 1995).

Computer efficacy plays significant role in online dating success. Early research on Internet/computer self-efficacy focused on the performance of specific tasks such as entering World-Wide Web addresses, creating folders and bookmarks, mailing pages, using File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and telnet, constructing a hypertext index, and moving bookmarks (Nahl, 1996, 1997). Ren (1999) reported a measure of self-efficacy specific to searching for government information sources. Results were consistent with previous self-efficacy literature, with self-efficacy perceptions positively related to task performance (Nahl, 1996, 1997) and the amount of use (Ren, 1999). The prior studies did not yield a measure of self-efficacy suitable for studying overall Internet usage, and reported no information about reliability and validity. In Nahl (1997), scale items confounded distinct behaviours; a single item asked about e-mail, hypertext mark-up language (HTML) scripting, telnet, and file transfer protocol. Nahl's measure referred to specific subsidiary tasks (e.g., creating bookmarks) instead of overall attainments (e.g., obtaining useful information) and thus did not properly reflect the constructive definition of self-efficacy.

Ren (1999) operationalized self-efficacy in a manner more consistent with its conceptual definition (e.g., search the Internet by yourself), but a single item measure was employed so its reliability could not be determined. Ren's measure applied to a specific behavioural domain (i.e., seeking government information) rather than overall Internet use, limiting its future application. In an effort to further understand psychological aspects of the Digital Divide, the present study builds on past research to develop a new measure of computer self-efficacy. It assesses reliability and analyzes the construct validity of Internet self-efficacy by comparing it to measures of other constructs thought to be positively related, negative related or unrelated on theoretical grounds (Anastasi, 1988).

Although gender is not a significant predictor of online dating, yet likely that women who date online may be better able than men to recognise and communicate nonverbal emotions and actively evaluate and think about their own and others' emotions. It seems therefore that female online dating participants may be more emotionally intelligent than their male counterparts. Schuttle et. al., (1998); Austin et al., (2005); Zeng and Miller (2003) noted that since female online dating participants seem to be more extraverted and confident, one can assume a higher level of confidence in their emotional intelligence abilities.

Implications of the findings and conclusion

There seems to be a good deal of distrust attached to the practice of online dating potentially as a reflection of dating norms which traditionally held that people would find dating partners through a more trusted network of friends and family. There needs to be more research on online dating as it compares/contrasts to more traditional face to face dating. Understanding just what is lost and gained by engaging in a new way of dating may lessen the scepticism surrounding online dating.

This study supports the idea that online dating is a unique process as well as a process that reflects dating in general. Online dating is unique because the medium is unique. The Internet allows single people the ability to seek out eligible partners in a way that suits modern life. They can find potential partners without having to lean on friends, school, family, and other traditional institutions like churches. The process can be liberating in that they become the master of their own romantic destiny. There is the flexibility of being able to browse profiles late at night before going to bed or over lunch, the ability to follow what interests you in a partner rather than relying on the judgment of someone else, and the potential to be exposed to people who are outside what is available to you. If someone wants to search nationwide, they have that ability.

Online dating reflects the technological changes of the current time. The technology isn't going to go away as more and more people are supplementing their face to face interactions with online ones. The reluctance to accept online dating as legitimate and the willingness to cling to the idea that there is something suspicious about the system and the people who use it will lessen over time as people come to realize that there is not much lost, but much gained in the practice.

Counselling psychologists should remember that online daters are of diverse group. The goal of online dating is to eventually meet face-to-face, but users must navigate through the profiles and other processes before meeting to reduce the risk of faking or deception. Behaviour change experts should be ready to manage fallouts from the online relationships as they come in contacts with clients who may have been emotionally hurt from this venture.

Conclusion

The goal of the study was to empirically explain and understand concept of age, gender, motivation, and computer self efficacy as predictors of online dating. Age was the most potent, people date online in respective of their age, gender was the least among the variables both male and female are involved in dating online.

The study examines the relationship between general computer self-efficacy and online dating among higher institution students, also the study confirmed that computer efficacy contributed to the shape of an individual's online dating. The result also showed a significant relationship between online dating and usage of computer.

Additionally, the study examined the relationships between internet efficacy and online dating and behavioural intention, and actual usage of a computer and internet, the present study confirmed that attitude toward the computer efficacy and usage was the major determinant of online dating. The sheer number of student who date online and the popularity of the sites showed that almost all the students population used were involved in dating online.

In other words, this study may be applicable to contexts and dating situations. This is moreso because the goal in all of the sites is finding a date, sex, their motivation for a long-term partner. It may also apply to other mediated contexts yet to be determined. Researching a larger variety of online daters such as those who use dating sites for very casual encounters, arranged relationships, and daters who have a variety of backgrounds will offer different points of view as well.

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