

Relationship
development speed
and satisfaction in
married couples
meeting throug...



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Abstract

Swipe-to-match mobile applications have increased in popularity as an avenue to meet romantic partners. Though applications such as Tinder and Bumble have increased in popularity, meeting online nonetheless maintains a stigma that may delay singles in their quest for love. This exploratory study will examine the relationships between online dating, speed of relationship progress, and overall relationship satisfaction between married couples who met online. This study will utilize relationship timeline and detail surveys alongside the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) to determine a baseline for further inquiry on relationship development speed and marital satisfaction. This study is intended to support the idea that, while singles can find love anywhere, the internet is an effective and potentially expeditious method to meeting their future spouse.

Introduction

Internet use has permeated people's lives affecting the avenues through which they meet others, notably in romantic relationships. While some may argue that people are using the internet to meet dates due to degraded social skills, others see internet dating as an easy way to meet likeminded people with whom they would not otherwise cross paths in person. The use of internet dating has been on the rise since the 1990s, as have marriage rates among the 21- to 30-year-old crowd (Bellou, 2014). This suggests a causal relationship between internet dating and marriage. This study is intended to further research the relationship between marriage rates and the

methods in which people meet their spouses, particularly swipe-to-match smartphone applications.

Literature Review

Online dating is fundamentally different than conventional dating with swipe-to-match falling into its own category. Online dating is a unique method through which singles can search by the age, location, and sex of their ideal partner. Swipe-to-match applications require interest from both potential partners before they can contact the other party. This method prevents users from being bombarded with messages from others in whom they have no interest. While this lack of access may come as a disappointment to some users, it decreases the likelihood of hurt feelings and nonresponse to messages. Swipe-to-match applications typically show a photo of the potential partner, their location in proximity to the user, and their job title, their education. Online dating, for the most part, alleviates issues over mutual attraction. Users can choose to talk on the application or move to another method of communication to better get to know one another and potentially schedule dates.

Internet dating is accessible to anyone with a device and internet connection. The use of internet dating has been on the rise since the 1990s, as have marriage rates among the 21- to 30-year-old crowd suggesting a causal relationship between internet access and marriage (Bellou, 2014).

Sociodemographic factors that affect internet access have weak effects on the use of online dating services (Sautter, Tippet, & Morgan, 2010). The

ability to view photos, a written profile, and discuss mutual interest prior to <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-development-speed-and-satisfaction-in-married-couples-meeting-through-swipe-to-match-dating-application/>

meeting improves likeability between potential mates. In a sample of undergraduate students to examine how well they represent their true selves over the Internet, it's found that the "undergraduates liked each other more following an internet compared to a face-to-face initial meeting" (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002). Sautter et. al concludes that "Internet dating is a common mate selection strategy among the highly selective subpopulation of single Internet users and may continue to grow through social networks. Material and virtual elements of the digital divide have direct and indirect effects on Internet dating." Sociodemographic factors that affect internet access have weak effects on the use of online dating services.

Marriage rates among 21 to 30-year-old individuals have increased in relation to Internet diffusion since the 1990s (Bellou, 2014). The author suggests that the internet may replace some traditional meeting venues. The results suggest a causal relationship between the internet and marriage rates. Singles who meet others online are more engaged in dating and romantic relationships than those who meet offline (Bellou, 2014). According to this study, couples who meet online are more likely to break up. This break-up statistic is contradicted by Rosenfeld's 2017 study examining longitudinal data. Rosenfeld's study finds that meeting online is not predictive of break-ups. Couples who meet online, notably through dating websites, actually move from singledom to marriage more quickly within heterosexual couples than couples who meet offline. The data is either positively or neutrally associated between relationships and Internet use.

Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012) examine how the internet has affected individuals intending to meet romantic partners. The internet increases the <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-development-speed-and-satisfaction-in-married-couples-meeting-through-swipe-to-match-dating-application/>

dating pool from friends, friends of friends, and people in the same location to perfect strangers, improving the odds of meeting a partner. The study finds that partnership has increased for same-sex couples due to the internet. Heterosexual rates of coupledness have not been significantly affected. This study also found that 74% of the respondents who met their partner online were perfect strangers (2012). The remaining 26% had some form of offline social tie to their partner prior to their online interaction.

In studying marital satisfaction, researchers have established a link between marital satisfaction and online dating. Cacioppo et. al provides evidence that couples who meet online are “slightly less likely to result in a marital break-up (separation or divorce) and were associated with slightly higher marital satisfaction among those respondents who remained married” (2013). One third of the respondents in this study met online, suggesting a significant number of couples who use the internet as a method for meeting.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study will include 40 married heterosexual couples between the ages of 21 and 35. Participants will be sourced through online marital and wedding planning forums (e. g. TheKnot. com) and online advertising (e. g. Google AdWords). The participants will be cis-gendered individuals of various ethnicities and races. Participants who have been married prior to their current partner whether it be due to annulment, divorce, or the death of a partner will be excluded. There are no other exclusion criteria.

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Measures

Couples will individually complete surveys detailing their meet and progression methodology. The survey will function to determine more detailed demographics among the participants, offering the potential for expanded correlational data. The survey will include questions including their method of meeting, their intentions when joining a dating application, whether they used multiple applications, whether they had mutual friends or knew of their partner from an offline encounter, and first date venue. A selection of responses will be provided for participant convenience with an additional option to input a response. A question about the method of meeting will include options such as Tinder, Bumble, Coffee Meets Bagel, OkCupid, Badoo, JSwipe, and an option to input another method.

Quantitative will include the length of interaction with their partner prior to meeting in person, and timeline progression to exclusivity, engagement, cohabitation, and marriage. The quantitative questions will provide a range of time periods.

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) (Funk, 2007)The CSI is a self-reporting survey consisting of 32 items including 16 item evaluations on a Likert scale, nine questions about the relationship on a Likert scale, and seven semantic differential scales. The Likert scale ranges from 0-5, but participants will see empty bubbles to be filled as opposed to the numbers used for scoring purposes. The scale may be used at a 32-, 16-, or 4-item scale dependent upon the data needs. The items will be rated for either satisfaction or frequency level. The nine questions in the CSI include “ How often do you

wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?" and "How often do you and your partner have fun together?"

The CSI will be scored using the sum of the responses across the items. CSI-32 scores can range from 0 to 161. Higher scores indicate high levels of relationship satisfaction. For CSI-32, scores below 104.5 suggest significant dissatisfaction within the relationship (Funk & Rogge, 2007). For CSI-16, scores range from 0-81. Scores below 51.5 are considered in the distressed range with those scoring around 24 typically seeking divorce (Heavey & Malamuth, 1995).

Procedure

Testing will occur within a reasonably distraction-free classroom environment. Couples will individually complete consent forms and be informed that they were free to leave the study at any time, even if their partner chose to continue. Couples will be asked about their methods of meeting, the length of their dating relationship prior to engagement, and the length of their engagement prior to marriage. Participants will then receive both oral and written instructions explaining the CSI survey. Participants will complete the CSI individually out of their partner's sight.

Discussion

Internet use has undeniably increased over the years, notably within the dating world. The intention behind internet dating differs from the ways in which couples may meet in person. Users of dating websites and applications join the sites for the purpose of interacting with a far wider pool of potential

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partners who are also looking to interact in a more-than-platonic manner. Whether they join with the intent to enjoy one-night stands, casual dating, or serious relationships, the majority of users intend to have some form of romantic or sexual human interaction. Couples who meet online are expected to have transitioned more quickly to marriage as compared to those who meet in person. This study is exploratory, so marital satisfaction levels of the participants will be standalone.

Comparative and correlational interpretations require future studies encompassing a variety of meet methods. Study strengths include the use of the validated Marital Satisfaction Index (MSI) and confidentiality between partners for taking the MSI due to supervised administration. Expanded criteria of meet-methodology for participants will be useful for determining whether couples find themselves more or less satisfied with their relationships. While applications such as Tinder and Bumble offer paid subscriptions, many people prefer not to pay for online dating at all. Inclusion of a financial investment measure could offer further information on users' dedication to finding a mate.

This study is examining only married couples who met online, but it could be expanded to include a variety of married couples for same-study comparative measure. Limitations include external validity due to using a small study size of those residing in the US. There are no currently published studies examining the satisfaction levels of couples who met on swipe-to-match applications, so the study would benefit from repetition, participant number, and criteria expansion for validation purposes. Problems of this study may include the locations in which the surveys are administered. To <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-development-speed-and-satisfaction-in-married-couples-meeting-through-swipe-to-match-dating-application/>

perform this study on a greater scale, the MSI could be administered through an online survey.

An ideal study would include thousands of self-reporting participants, geographical survey, and further questions regarding intent when joining online dating services, length of time spent using dating services prior to meeting marital partners, and frequency of meeting people off of the services. It would be interesting to survey first date activities (alcoholic drinks, coffee, concerts, hikes, etc.) to see if there is any correlation between date type and success.

Additionally, couples could be interviewed individually, complete the CSI, then be interviewed as a couple to compare memories of first dates and progression timing. If the study is conducted at an in-person venue or through a video method, researchers can observe couples' interactions when they disagree on a response. The manner in which disagreements are held may be related to the overall marital satisfaction results. It may also be compared to the couples' results for the particular CSI statement, " I really feel like part of a team with my partner." For a desktop or mobile survey, a private review of answers by each participant could address whether they agree with the couple survey response, if they would like to correct their answer for the initial survey, or if they are confident that their initial response was correct. Men are stereotypically more forgetful of the beginning details such as location and length of time, so this could be explored further. While the human memory does falter in both men and women, the mutual responses within the final survey may be deferred to the more dominant or emotionally sensitive partner to avoid argument.

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This study is important due to the changing dating culture. Swipe applications on mobile devices have become increasingly popular. By delving into the efficacy of swipe-to-match applications for marital partners, online daters may be able to make more educated choices on how they choose to dip their toes into the dating pool. Online dating unfortunately holds a stigma of desperate users who cannot find partners in real life, so further studies could dissuade this judgmental outlook. If the stigma of online dating for marriage is decreased, singles may be more open to an avenue in their search for “the one”.

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