

Attitudes Towards Online Dating and the Perceived Threat it Poses to the Future of Long Term Relationships

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Abstract

Online dating has become a massive global industry. This study examined the experiences of and attitudes towards online dating of a random sample of the population. A total of 191 participants were split into two groups based on age. The first predicted hypothesis was that an older group of adults would have a more positive attitude towards online dating than a younger group of adults. The second predicted hypothesis was that there would be a concern that online dating threatens the future of long term relationships. The study showed that there are significant differences in attitudes towards online dating between younger and older adults with older adults having a more positive attitude.

Introduction

Traditional methods of dating are changing. The new frontier for meeting potential mate's is the internet. Out of an estimated 5000 online dating sites worldwide its estimated that around 25 have over one million subscribers each. At the same time though, there are still many negative stereotypes attached to people who use online dating and those people face stigmatization for being desperate or "undatable". In Ireland there is very little existing research into online dating but one major dating site has stated that the average age of their subscribers is 32 years old. It appears this 30 plus age profile is consistent around Europe.

Methods

The design of this study was quantitative with a quasi-experimental design; descriptive statistics were used to present the results as well as independent-sample t-tests were used to compare scores and explore the differences in attitudes towards online dating between the two different age groups. A random sample of participants was used for this study. The sample consisted of 191 respondents (89 males and 102 females) currently living in Ireland and aged between 18 and 39 years old. The respondents were split into two age groups; 111 participants were selected from the 18 to 28 age group and 90 participants were selected from the 29 to 39 age group. In this study a questionnaire was administered to all respondents. The questionnaire was made up of 2 sections. Section 1 was series of 7 questions examining people's experiences with online dating. Section 2 was a series of 12 questions examining people's attitudes towards online dating. Section 1 was made up of yes or no answers, whereas section 2 was made up of a 5 stage Likert scale. Each participant was also asked to state their gender and their age. The respondents were told that the purpose of the research was to examine attitudes towards online dating.

Results

A larger percentage of the older group said they had used online dating, had gone on a date with someone they met online and also knew someone who had used online dating. The results showed that the older group had a significantly more positive attitude to online dating than the younger group. The results supported the first hypothesis but did not support the second hypothesis. There was no significant concern that online dating was a threat to the future of long term relationships.

Discussion

The results support the evidence of the previous research in that the typical average age of those people who use online dating is above 30. In addition the results support the research that suggests that the social environmental factors surrounding the different age group has an effect on the likelihood that the responders have used online dating or have a positive attitude towards online dating. For example, young single adults who are surrounded by other young single adults are more likely to have greater exposure to potential partners in the traditional face to face locations such as colleges, bars and events and are less likely to feel the need to seek out partners online. This may, in turn, effect their attitude towards online dating. In conclusion, people who use online dating may face stigmatizations and negative stereotyping. However, as people move into their 30's they may experience more exposure to online dating and this may cause their attitudes towards it to become more positive.

References

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