

INFLUENCE OF ONLINE DATING AMONG STUDENTS OF KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study examined the perception of Kwara State University, students about online dating. The study explored the concept of online dating, the benefits and risks associated with it, reasons for dating among undergraduates, social media and Computer-Mediated Communication among others. Moreover, the study hinged on the Technological Determinism and Social Exchange Theories as justification. Survey method was employed while 400 copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents who are students of KWASU. Findings showed that *Badoo* is the most used online dating site, and these students visit online dating sites regularly for over a year. Also, it was discovered that they all have dating partners online, and engaged in online dating purposely for the fun of it. In line with the outcome of the study, the study suggested that students are advised to use their time for something more productive and worthwhile, while only adults among them who are mature enough should engage in online dating.

Keywords: Relationship, Perception, social media, Dating

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many young people's lives have changed as a result of the internet's development. The internet has become a commonplace in the life of netizens. Users have communication chances through some of the platforms, including email, group mailing forums, interactive games, and real-time chatting (Nganya & Nwakpu, 2021). Internet users have established several types of relationships through interpersonal contact online. It seems logical that people looking for relationships and people looking to date have turned to the internet in today's technology-dependent environment (Williams, 2014). Social media, according to Wigmore (2014), is a group of online communication channels intended for community-based input, engagement, sharing of material, and collaboration.

Websites and apps are among them. Among the various forms of social media are wikis, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, and websites and apps specifically devoted to these topics.

Oluwole (2018) asserts that there are several explanations for why individuals develop connections online. They consist of things like loneliness, the lack of closeness in interpersonal connections, shyness, curiosity, looking for a life mate, etc. These common interests have a forum thanks to social media. Nowadays, dating extends beyond simply meeting someone in person. Most men and women now engage in what is known as online dating, where people who are looking for a relationship meet online and communicate virtually without ever meeting in person. (2021) Chime-Nganya & Nwakpu Additionally, Ofole

(2015) claims that the advancements made to online dating platforms have increased their appeal with the introduction of the next development in online dating, the virtual dating café. It incorporates the use of avatars so that individuals may communicate in a virtual setting that resembles a dating scene in the real world. Dating users may connect and have love conversations in a virtual café in cities like Paris, London, Abuja, and more. To learn more about each other and develop a deeper knowledge of one another, daters can go on adventures, play games, and take relationship tests (Adeokun, 2013). Online dating, a service that enables users to make profiles identifying themselves and contact or be contacted by others directly, has grown in popularity as a means of arranging romantic meetings (Adedokun, 2013).

It is impossible to overstate the value of dating since it is a condition that has to be taken into account before beginning any type of romance, whether it results in marriage or not. Numerous dating sites that enable individuals to connect and date in a virtual setting have proliferated as a result of the sharp rise in Internet usage (Michael, 2017, p, 213). Due to the current level of rising divorce rates among married people, this sort of socialization as proposed by Oshiname, Ogunwale, and Ajuwon (2013) has been viewed by many as either a gift or a misfortune depending on individuals' perspectives and experiences. The idea of dating is a well-known human activity for the overwhelming majority of young people around the globe today (Chime-Nganya & Nwakpu, 2021). When a man or a woman starts a connection that goes beyond friendship and is conducted without monitoring or authority, the relationship is said to be dating.

One of the most exciting times in a young person's life is dating, which may or may not involve marriage as one of its aims. This is because dating is a period of enormous excitement, splendour, and discovery (Dennis, 2000). Per Michael (2017), dating is a type of courting that entails social activities carried out by two people, whether as intimate companions or as prospective spouses. It describes the act of gathering and participating in a social activity that is mutually agreed upon. It alludes to the act of getting together and participating in social activity as a pair that has been jointly decided upon. According to Cressida (2003), setting up a meeting time and date is what truly initiates dating. It may be a form of courting, a method of socialization, a way to grade and earn rank within a group, or it can be a sort of amusement. According to Brown and Taverner (2001), when two teens or single adults spend time together during their free time, it is

sometimes referred to as dating. Dating may be a method to learn about other people, about love and sexual sentiments and expressions, and about what it's like to be in a relationship, according to Brown and Taverner (2001).

Online dating may be a useful tool for those who find it difficult to meet possible mates, but there is a warning that some users may exaggerate or lie about themselves to attract others who might not be interested in them (Oluwole, 2018). They could inflate their achievements, share images from years ago when they were in much better physical shape, or tell lies about their money, education, and drug and alcohol use. They might even publish flattering photos. Thus, online dating behaviour has created a new type of unsafe behaviour for young people, particularly those that are in school and are not under the supervision of their parents. For instance, among college students, internet dating was linked to having unprotected sex and enjoying it (Ferguson, 2011)

Statement of the Problem

Online dating has become a prevalent practice among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and across the globe. This practice is further characterized by the introduction of social media through its various websites (Ofole, 2015). As enunciated by Ntia (2017), online dating among students is becoming a trending phenomenon on campus, with various scholars and researchers emphasizing its benefits and associated risks. Similarly, Chime-Nganya and Nwakpu (2021) averred that looking at the Nigerian campus environments today, seeing students of the opposite sex engage in intimate relationships with one another, irrespective of their age, exposure or level of maturity. Additionally, it has been suggested that one of the factors contributing to students' declining academic performance is the danger of online dating among students. Online dating has both detrimental and beneficial effects, but in the opinion of Omodara and Idowu (2021), it cannot be outlawed among students at Nigerian higher institutions. In a similar vein, Michael (2017) asserted that while it is indisputably true that internet dating aids some individuals in discovering compatible mates and falling in love, it also has a lot of negative aspects and outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate whether students of Kwara State University, are exposed to online dating.
2. To determine the online dating sites frequently visited by Kwara State University students.
3. To ascertain the perception of students of

Kwara State University about online dating.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Online Dating

In today's environment, the great majority of young people engage in the social behaviour of dating (Sociology, 2016). According to Slater (2013), a more-than-friends relationship between a man and a woman starts when one of them initiates it and continues it without supervision or authority. Marriage is not always the result of dating. It is among the most thrilling times of a young person's life. This is because dating is a period of enormous excitement, splendour, and discovery (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). According to Aaron, Kasali, Wumi, and Adegbenjo (2016), dating is a type of courting that involves two people engaging in social activities as mates in a close connection or as a partner. It alludes to the act of getting together and participating in social activity as a pair that has been jointly decided upon. According to Farrugia (2003), setting up a meeting date and time is what genuinely initiates dating. It may be a form of courting, a method of socialization, a way to grade and earn rank within a group, or it can be a sort of amusement. This idea is backed by Finkel and Karney (2012), who note that it is frequently referred to be dating when two teens or single adults spend their free time together. Dating may be a method to learn about other people, emotional and sexual sentiments and expression, and yourself, according to Finkel and Karney (2012).

Online dating, however, involves transferring the actual procedures of having an affair to the internet, particularly through numerous social media platforms (Ntia, 2017; Nganya & Nwakpu, 2021; Adekun, 2013; Oshiname et al., 2013). We now have a variety of online dating services that make this feasible. It should be mentioned that the initial Online dating websites, which enabled users to build profiles and look for matches, appeared in the middle of the 1990s. Later, online dating services added new methods of contact, including instant messaging and video dating using a camera. Some websites provide more thorough character assessment surveys (AnKee & Yazdanifard, 2013). However, the main goal of internet dating is just to contact someone online with the hope of establishing a personal, romantic, or sexual connection via a laptop or a cell phone. Soulsingles.com, Badoo, Naijaplanet, Friendite, SexyNaija, Meet Nigerians, Tinder, and several more, including choices for Muslim and Christian dating services, are popular dating sites in Nigeria (Ntia, 2017).

Due to technology's encroachment into our

daily lives, youth gatherings offline—in churches, parties, schools, and other places—have been displaced by online gatherings. Physical encounters have been supplanted by video conferencing, skype, and other online streaming platforms, while love letters and messages have been replaced by texts, pings, and smileys (Chime-Nganya & Nwakpu, 2021). By serving as matchmakers, the internet is changing how people find love and romance. As Aaron et al. (2016) reaffirmed, dating apps in the U.S. are predicted to make \$1.17 billion while dating apps are expected to generate \$628.8 million. As a result of young people's obsession with dating sites, owners of different dating websites are becoming richer by the day according to IBISWorld, increasing from \$1.08 billion for dating websites and \$572 million for dating apps in 2014. According to recent surveys, after meeting through friends, online dating is the second most prevalent method of pair formation. Ten Americans were reported to have used an internet dating website or mobile dating app previously in the United States of America; of these online daters, 66% have gone on dates with people they met through these platforms, and 23% had found a spouse or long-term relationship through them (American Digest, 2019).

The Benefits of Online Dating

Chime-Nganya and Nwakpu (2021), citing Finkel and Karney (2012), argued that the following list of factors contributed to the widespread use of online dating services in society: Since the Internet has converted the globe into a global village and eliminated all sorts of social, class, geographical, and economic barriers, it is quite simple to meet lots of people online. Online dating sites provide users with a variety of possibilities for individuals to meet, and more lately, online dating services include user profile features that make it easier to meet someone and people who share similar interests. Additionally, it facilitates instant communication, especially for timid persons. Without the worry and strain of unneeded commitments, it is feasible and simpler to meet and date individuals' remarks online, much as certain high-profile online dating sites have reported success rates. Nowadays, the majority of these websites employ algorithms for discovering love created by sociologists and psychologists, however, some of these algorithms have not yet been submitted for peer review.

The Dangers of Online Dating

Online dating has many advantages, but it also has drawbacks and hazards, which is why some individuals would never use it as a secondary way to

meet possible spouses, particularly in Nigeria, where some people are often wary of virtual connections. Some of the dangers associated with internet dating, as emphasized by Chime-Nganya and Nwakpu (2021), include but are not limited to: People are hesitant to utilize it since they do not genuinely believe in it. They don't have faith in the concept of finding and dating someone online (Ntia, 2017). It is common practice among the notoriously referred to as "Yahoo guys" in Nigeria, and fraudsters use it as a means of contacting potential victims. Additionally, some contend that it makes it simple for married people to cheat on their partners, encourages reckless communications, and that some even just do it for fun without stopping to consider that they might be playing with their online partner's emotions. Others worry about the security of sensitive topics discussed online because there is a general perception that nothing is safe online. Other causes include fraudulent websites that solely exist to extort money from users, imposters, the prevalence of murders and other violent crimes, and reported by individuals who met through online dating services, among other things, the distance barrier.

Furthermore, one online report noted that some online dating services employ phoney profiles to entice naïve customers and that one in ten profiles are hoaxes. The primary problem is that users need to use extreme caution while dating somebody they meet online. Before making any emotional or financial commitments, they should make an effort to see the individual in person.

Other concerns, according to AnKee and Yazdanifard (2015) are:

Since the advent of the internet, social media, and now online dating, the topic of online deceit has received considerable attention. Deception is defined as a purposeful activity meant to mislead others when the deceiver intends to create a false impression while the target is unaware of the deception (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2004). Due to the lack of linguistic indicators in online communication and the ease with which information may be manipulated, deceptive behaviour is more common over the internet (Toma & Hancock, 2010). Because cyberspace is a virtual environment where people may communicate freely without really seeing one another, online users are allowed to alter the content on the internet as they see fit. Joining an online dating service is done to look for a romantic companion. There is no denying that

persons with better personalities and more appealing physical attributes tend to be more liked than those with less beautiful physical features.

Unreliable Matching Method: Online dating services gather user information, analyze compatibility between users, and suggest possible matches for individual users. Many dating websites claim that they can assist online daters find the ideal match among the millions of members of the same dating website by employing proprietary algorithms. Dating sites assert that their matching algorithms are scientifically sound, yet they don't reveal their formulas or give proof that they are following scientific standards (Finkel, as cited in Horn, 2012). In addition, dating site algorithms have a serious problem with the user data they gather. They only inquire about the traits and personalities of certain individuals. The relationships and happiness of two people are not assured by this knowledge. The algorithms compare two people with comparable political inclinations, religious backgrounds, and life experiences will very certainly end up matching exactly in the system (Finkel & Karney, 2012).

Short-Lived Relationships: Finding a compatible potential mate, getting to know each other through chatting, and arranging a meeting in person are the most typical steps in the online dating process. The sense of urgency is the main distinction between online dating and conventional methods of meeting people in real life (Slater, 2013). Numerous internet dating partners sometimes just stay together for a little length of time before calling it quits. Another effect is that the two do not feel comfortable with one another in person.

Marriage Threat: Infidelity on the internet is a common occurrence in modern culture. Any interaction or communication between two people over the internet is considered internet infidelity transfers feelings and actions away from the primary connection, which has a detrimental impact on the partnership (Jones & Tuttle, 2012). Because other online daters are unaware of the real person who is already married, those who experience marital discontent frequently make new pals online. They might just steer clear of the subject and decline to provide any details about their marital

situation. As long as the deceiver continues to lie, information may be manipulated online and no one will be able to uncover the truth.

Empirical Review

Ogunwale, Oshiname, and Ajuwon (2013). In the research, female University of Ibadan undergraduates were asked about their knowledge and perceptions of date rape. The study used a cross-sectional survey design as its methodology, and the results indicate that most participants did not consider date rape to be as serious as stranger rape since, unlike dating partner rape, rape committed by a stranger typically draws greater shame. The study concludes that educational initiatives offered on campuses should be used to improve students' understanding of the phenomena and alter attitudes that encourage date rape.

In their 2016 study, Aaron, Kasali, Wumi, and Adegbenjo examined the impact of social media on online dating and long-term relationships. This study employed descriptive statistics using quantitative Questionnaires are used as both the study instrument and the technique in this investigation. Findings revealed that 51% of respondents agreed that it is feasible to date and get married to an internet buddy, provided that person has a decent heart and fears God. Furthermore, while 27.39% of the population was sampled, 72.61% of respondents do not think that internet dating may result in a stable marriage. The study suggests that although people may use online dating, it is best if they meet in person to get to know one another better before thinking about getting married.

Additionally, AnKee and Yazdanifard (2015) looked at the drawbacks of online dating and how much they affect consumers in their study. The researchers used secondary data sources. It was found that individuals and society are impacted by eight key negative factors. These include lying, inaccurate matching methods, transient relationships, threats to marriage, health risks associated with sexual activity, discrimination based on race, scams, and privacy violations. If they want to broaden their social networks online, the report advises Internet users to learn how to protect themselves from risks and threats.

In the same vein, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University undergraduate students' perceptions of online dating and relationship-building were examined by Chime-Nganya and Nwakpu in 2021. The purpose of the study was to determine how many university students had access to and ownership of internet-enabled gadgets that allow them to date and

build relationships away from their school. Thus, the study adopts a survey design drawing its population from undergraduates at the chosen institution. The results demonstrated that undergraduate students possess and have access to internet-enabled gadgets, exposing them to online dating and relationship building. Additional research demonstrates that online dating and relationships frequently involve falsehoods and dishonesty. It was advised that users of social media exercise caution while using the site to date and build relationships in light of the findings.

Ntia (2017) looked at University of Uyo undergraduates' perceptions of sexuality and dating experiences in different research. The study critically examined the students' aberrant sexual behaviours and the probable repercussions of the university dating scene's emergence. Additionally, the study used a mixed-methods research approach utilizing a mix of surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. The results showed that there are two types of student dating experiences: good experiences and bad ones. Further research revealed that there is a variety of dating behaviours among students, including on-campus relationships, off-campus relationships, relationships between students and lecturers, and several concurrent relationships. The study concluded that implementing social engineering will need to provide students with proper sex education and counselling before they start dating.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Exchange Theory

Thibaut and Kelly created the social exchange hypothesis in 1959. It suggests that we analyze the costs and benefits of our relationships. The main tenets of the theory, according to McQuail, as cited in Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2009), are as follows: people continue to form some personal relationships while ending others at any time and for any reason; by weighing the risks and rewards of our relationships, we can maintain relationships where the benefits are high and end relationships where the benefits are low; people feel satisfied in their relationships. Moreover, the social exchange theory explains and predicts relationship maintenance between two people. It clarifies when and why individuals continue and develop personal relationships with one another based on the notion of cost and reward (Asemah et al., 2017).

This implies that online dating between two lovers is based on the satisfaction derived from one another as regards the relationship. For online relationships and dating to lead to marriage, it takes the principle of cost and reward between the two

lovers. Therefore, this explication of social exchange theory shows a considerable relationship with a study under review which focuses on online dating among students of Kwara State University Malete.

This informs why the social exchange theory is used as a theoretical justification for this study because the theory is a relationship theory which tends to explain issues of failed relationships, dating and even failed marriage. As enunciated in the core assumptions of the theory, one of the main reasons for successful dating or relationships is for the two lovers to strike a balance between the costs and rewards.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The survey approach was used for this study. According to Sobowale (2008), the survey technique is a way of gathering and analyzing social data from a large number of respondents who are thought to be representative of a certain group through a systematic, sometimes highly comprehensive interview or questionnaire. On the other hand, Okoro (2001, p. 41) views survey as an essential technique for gathering information and for characterizing a population that is too huge to be seen directly. However, this will enable the researcher to elicit information from students of Kwara State University Malete, on their perception of online dating.

In accordance with the research method, the population of this study was 21,000 students of Kwara State University Malete as obtained from its website: <http://www.kwasusites.kwasu.edu.ng> with a sample size of 450 using the Krejcie and Morgan table.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

KWASU Students' Exposure to Online Dating

Items	Frequency	Percentage
1 year	88	22.0
2 years	70	17.5
3 years	105	26.3
4 years	117	29.3
None of the above	20	5.0
Total	400	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

This table contains the outcome of a question on KWASU students' exposure to online dating. Data shows that 29.3% of the respondents are exposed to

online dating for years, while 5.0% said none of the stipulated years. Also, 70.0% of the respondents visit online dating sites, while 20% neither visit regularly nor partially. Therefore, the majority of the respondents visit online dating sites regularly and have been doing this for more than 4 years.

Dating sites frequently visited by KWASU Students

Items	Frequency	Perc
Badoo	138	34.5
Naijaplanet	26	6.5
Friendlite	54	13.5
Sexynaija	96	24.0
All of the above	26	6.5
None of the above	50	12.5
Total	400	

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The table presents the views of the respondents on the kinds of dating sites they frequently visit. Data reveals that 34.5% of the respondents visit *Badoo*, while 6.5% visit *Nijaplanet*, *Friendlite* and *Sexynaija*. Therefore, it could be deduced that *Badoo* dating site is the most visited online dating platform, and this dating site is highly credible for its purpose.

The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents visit *Badoo* dating sites more than other dating sites.

KWASU Students' Perception of Online Dating

	Sample size (n)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Online dating is not ideal for me as a student, I detest it	400	2.29	1.212
I prefer physical dating than online	400	1.90	1.193
It is not suitable for finding a life partner	400	2.69	1.214
Engaging in online dating is fun	400	2.05	1.215
Valid N	400		

Source: Field Survey, 2022

As shown in the table, online dating is perceived as not ideal for students, physical dating is better than online dating, and online dating is not suitable for finding a life partner, but engaging in it is for fun only.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Having analysed the various responses to the

research questions, the following are the findings:

Firstly, findings showed that KWASU students visit online dating sites regularly. Study also indicates that the students have been persistently doing this for more than 4 years. This is in tandem with the findings of Chime-Nganya and Nwakpu (2021) which attested to the fact that online dating sites have permeated society, especially among students. This is because it makes it easy to meet lots of people online as the Internet has made the world become a global village removing social, class, geographical, economic and all forms of barriers.

Secondly, findings equally revealed that the most visited online dating site is *Badoo*, and is considered highly credible among the online dating population. This outcome is validated by the views of Ntia (2017) which rated Badoo, Friendlite, Sexynaija and NaijaPlanet as the most popular online dating sites used by students in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Thirdly, it emerged from the findings that online dating is perceived as not ideal for students. This is in line with the position of Farrugia (2013) which raised some concerns when adolescents or undergraduate students enter into a romantic relationship, discouraging their involvement in online relationships as a result of maturity and inexperience. Results also indicated that respondents preferred physical dating to online dating while looking for a life partner. This finding is in agreement with the position of AnKee and Yazdanifard (2015) that people are sceptical about using online dating for finding a suitable life partner because they simply do not believe in it.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, it can be concluded that students of KWASU engaged in online dating. They believed it has numerous benefits and risks as well. This makes some students consider it as a second option for meeting potential spouses, especially in Nigeria. The various negative consequences of online/social media make some people sceptical about virtual relationships. Some believe it is an avenue to perpetrate crime, fraud, deceit and as well cheating. The positive benefits or advantages also persist as people have used it positively to get their life partners, retrieve lost contact and even make contacts and connect with others. Also, it has made families and members of a particular group unite and make communication flow easy among them.

However, more still needs to be done in the areas of abuse of online/social media, especially using online dating sites for negative purposes such as

deception, crime, defrauding and toying with the emotions of others, all in the name of promising them marriage. Rather, social media platforms should be used for profitable and meaningful purposes, while only mature and serious ones should engage in online dating.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Only adults that are mature, serious and ready for marriage should engage in online dating.
2. Students of tertiary institutions should engage in social media for meaningful and productive purposes only, rather than engaging in online dating.
3. Students of tertiary institutions should focus more on their studies, as it is evident that online dating is capable of taking their time and diverting their attention.

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