

# **COMMERCIALISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY DATING APPS: AN IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**



**By**

**SAI VRINDA R**

**AM23SOCO21**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CENTRE FOR RESEARCH**

**ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM**

**MARCH 2025**

# **COMMERCIALISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY DATING APPS: AN IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD**

Thesis submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Masters of Arts in Sociology**

By

**SAI VRINDA R**

**AM23SOC021**

*Under the Supervision of*

**Dr. SAJITHA J KURUP**

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology

St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam

  
**Dr. Sajitha J Kurup**

Staff Supervisor

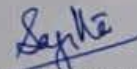
  
**Dr. Leela P.U.**

Head of the Department

**MARCH 2025**

### **CERTIFICATE**

I certify that the thesis entitled **"COMMERCIALISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS: AN IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD"** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by SAI VRINDA R under my guidance and supervision. The thesis is worth submitting in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology.



**DR. SAJITHA J KURUP**

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology

St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam

Ernakulam

March 2025

#### DECLARATION

I, SAI VRINDA R hereby declare that the thesis entitled "COMMERCIALISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY DATING APPS: AN IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD" is a bonafide record of independent research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of DR. SAJITHA J KURUP. I further declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship or other similar title.

Ernakulam

March 2025

SAI VRINDA R



Name and signature of the student




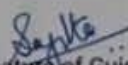
ST.TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)  
ERNAKULAM




Certificate of Plagiarism Check for Dissertation

Author Name	Sai Vrinda R.
Course of Study	M.A. Sociology
Name of Guide	Dr. Sajitha J Kurup
Department	Sociology & Centre For Research
Acceptable Maximum Limit	20
Submitted By	library@teresas.ac.in
Paper Title	COMMERCIALISATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY DATING APPS: AN IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD
Similarity	5% AI - 13%
Paper ID	3442632
Total Pages	57
Submission Date	2025-03-28 08:58:22

  
Signature of Student

  
Signature of Guide

  
Checked By  
College Librarian



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With immense gratitude and heartfelt appreciation, I take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who have supported, guided, and inspired me throughout this project journey.

Special appreciation goes to our Provincial Superior & Manager, Rev. Sr. Nilima CSST, Director of Main block, Rev. Sr. Tessa CSST, Director of Anugraha Campus, Rev. Sr Francis Ann CSST, Principal, Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, and Vice Principal Dr. Lebia Gladis N P for granting me this opportunity.

I am deeply thankful to Dr. Leela P.U, the head of the Sociology department, and all the teachers for their invaluable encouragement and guidance.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Sajitha J Kurup whose invaluable guidance, constant encouragement, and insightful feedback have shaped this study in ways I could not have imagined. Her patience and unwavering support have been a source of motivation, pushing me to refine my work with greater clarity and depth.

I am profoundly grateful to Mrs. Elizabeth Abraham, Assistant Professor Department of sociology for her invaluable insights, thoughtful discussions, and guidance for using SPSS throughout this research. Her expertise and suggestions have significantly enriched my understanding and strengthened the foundation of this study.

A special note of appreciation goes to the respondents who generously shared their time, experiences, and knowledge with me. Their willingness to open up about their experiences has been the very essence of this project. Without their trust and cooperation, this study would not have been possible.

I also wish to acknowledge the help provided by the librarians of St. Teresa's College.

Last but not the least I extend my appreciation to everyone—family, friends, faculty members, and well-wishers—who, in one way or another, contributed to this research, offering their support, encouragement, and constructive feedback.

## CONTENTS

SL.NO	TITLE	PAGE.NO
1	INTRODUCTION	1-6
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7-13
3	METHODOLOGY	14-20
4	DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS	21-48
5	FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	49-53
6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	54-57
7	APPENDIX	58-66

## LIST OF TABLES

SL.NO	TABLE. NO	TITLE	PAGE.NO
1	4.1	Age of the respondents	22-23
2	4.2	Locality of the respondents	26
3	4.3	Duration of dating app usage	30
4	4.4	Traditional v/s online dating	34
5	4.5	Relationship status	45
6	4.6	Finding partners	46



## LIST OF FIGURES

SL.NO	FIGURE. NO	TITLE	PAGE.NO
1	4.1	Gender of the respondents	23
2	4.2	Educational Qualification	23-24
3	4.3	Occupation of the respondents	24
4	4.4	Marital status	25
5	4.5	Monthly income	26-27
6	4.6	Source of information about dating apps	27
7	4.7	Name of dating app used	28
8	4.8	Reason for using dating apps	28-29
9	4.9	Frequency of using dating apps	29
10	4.10	Preferred time of using dating apps	30-31
11	4.11	Important features of dating apps	31
12	4.12	Challenges of using dating apps	32
13	4.13	Safety provided by dating apps	32-33
14	4.14	Fake profiles of respondents	33

15	4.15	Extent of finding genuine relationships through dating apps	35
16	4.16	Lasting of relationships	36
17	4.17	Respondents having paid subscription	36-37
18	4.18	Subscription cost	37-38
19	4.19	Impact of subscription on finding partners	38
20	4.20	Subscription upgrade pressure	38
21	4.21	Profit v/s user experience	39
22	4.22	Awareness about revenue generation of dating apps	40
23	4.23	Superficial interactions v/s meaningful relations	40-41
24	4.24	Awareness about commercialization of relationships	41
25	4.25	Role of dating apps in creating disposable mentality towards relationships	42
26	4.26	Relationship dynamics	42-43
27	4.27	Safety of data collection practices	44
28	4.28	Relationships in dating apps v/s meaningful relationships	44-45
29	4.29	Dating app as a good way to meet people	47
30	4.30	Satisfaction in relationships	47-48

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

# INTRODUCTION

Relationships are important in society. They serve as the basis for the interpersonal connections and social interactions. Building an interconnected and harmonious society requires strong relationships because they promote a sense of commitment, trust and support. Romantic relationships are one of the important relationship in our society. It refers to the intimate connections between two individuals. These days, romantic relationships are not limited to marriage. People were engage in partnerships such as cohabitation, long-distance dating, and dating with effectiveness.

Traditional socialization pathways have evolved, and new techniques of meeting and connecting with potential romantic and/or sexual partners have been encouraged by the dating apps especially the advent of real-time location-based dating applications like Tinder.

Nowadays commercialization of relationship became an important aspect in society. We live in a society where everything is exchanged for money. Not only goods and services, but also emotions, feelings, desires and values became commodities in the digital world. They can be bought and sell through monetary transactions. This study is focused on the dating apps which commercializing relationships for their business motives. Dating apps transformed romantic love, emotions and feelings of individuals into their commodities.

## DATING APPLICATIONS

Dating Applications (Apps) are software applications designed to bring people together who are looking for friendship, romance, or casual sex. These applications, which are downloaded to mobile devices or other devices have algorithms that take into account variables like the users' age, preferred partner's gender, and the distance they are willing to travel to meet. A lot of apps use data from social media sites like Facebook to generate potential love matches. Unlike more conventional online dating services that recycle the original data entered into user profiles to generate matches, dating apps operate on Wi-Fi or data and update user profiles using real-time geo-social information. Worldwide, about 91 million people use one or more

dating apps, which make dating experience mobile and constantly evolving. By millions of active users, Tinder is the most widely used mobile dating app globally. Dating apps for smartphones promise better wellbeing and a wonderful love life at your fingertips. Tinder, *Bumble*, *Ariake*, *OkCupid*, and *TrulyMadly* are a few of the dating applications that are widely used in Kerala. Users can connect with possible partners using these apps by sharing their hobbies and preferences. When meeting new individuals online, it's crucial to put safety first and use caution and judgment when using dating apps.

With the majority of dating apps, you create a dating profile that contains your photo, some biography, and possibly even your ideal match. Because dating apps are online, using one puts you emotionally and physically apart from the individuals you are interested in. While it could be simpler to meet people and communicate with them via an app, it is also simpler to be duped, conned, or deceived. A dating app's online format causes emotional as well as physical isolation.

With the technological advancements dating apps are spreading all over the world. Some companies organized dating events for finding potential partners. So they use relationships and emotions for their business.

## COMMERCIALIZATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY DATING APPS

The advent of dating apps changed the way of formation of romantic relationships and also it formed relationship dynamics. It affected the meaning and quality of relationships. Relationships become commodities that can be buy and exchanged with money. Dating app offers greater choices for partner selection.

Dating applications have transformed the nature of relationships in our society in a variety of ways. It increased convenience and accessibility. Dating applications have made it easier for people to meet possible partners regardless of their geographical location. Apps have changed the way individuals meet, interact, and form relationships, favoring casual interactions over meaningful courtship. It shifted communication dynamics. These apps heightened emphasis on physical attractiveness. The emphasis on profiles and photographs in dating apps can foster a

culture that prioritizes physical beauty over personality and shared value. Apps have also facilitated the investigation of non-traditional relationships, such as friendship and polyandry. Dating apps have blurred the lines between romance, friendship, and hook-ups. It created confusion about relationship boundaries, difficulty in defining relationships (e.g., "situation ships"), and a rise of "friends with benefits" arrangements. Dating applications have also transformed the way we communicate. It prioritizes brief, superficial talks, with less face-to-face connection and deep conversation skills.

Dating apps have commoditized relationships. It promoted a transactional approach to interactions by making relationships a marketed product. Many apps provide premium memberships or in-app payments, resulting in a tiered structure in which users pay for additional advantages such as higher visibility or exclusive access to possible mates. Dating apps generate revenue through targeted advertising, which frequently incorporates user data. Apps capture user data such as personal information, preferences, and behaviour, which can then be sold to third-party organizations or used for targeted marketing. Gamification techniques, such as prizes, badges, or leader boards, are frequently used by apps to encourage users to engage in specific behaviours, such as frequent swipes or premium feature purchases. It made users to believe that connections are transient and interchangeable by portraying them as a commodity. Dating apps frequently create a consumerist culture in which users are encouraged to seek out new connections rather than a lasting one. The dating apps commodify individuals. The users create profiles showcasing their interests and photos. By this the users market themselves as products. The profile presentation create the notion that physical appearance and perfection are the basis of romantic relationships.

Dating apps have an impact on the communication. The nature of communication has evolved with online dating. We cannot communicate subtly by tone of voice, inflection, or body language using a dating app. Emoji are our go-to tool for conveying subtle emotions. It can affect whether or not you establish a lasting connection if you are less able to read body language, tone of voice, and eye contact clues.

Like any other social media site, online dating can have an impact on your attitude, self-worth, and mood. Numerous alternatives, fake discussions, unwanted remarks, and ghosting can all be detrimental to your mental health. Both meeting someone and "ghosting" them via an app can be done with ease. In today's dating world, stopping to text, respond, and communicate

with someone is known as "ghosting." In the online age, disappearing and cutting off communication takes no work and usually has no consequences. Sincerity declines when people quit making an effort after a given number of matches-which can reach the hundreds. Users of dating applications could experience pressure to project an idealized or best-case scenario picture of themselves. The potential for rejection also can make impact on the mental health of users. Similar to other social networking sites, individuals estimate their popularity on the site by looking at how many people engage with them. In other words, every like or comment could increase sense of worth of individuals.

The commercialization of relationships reinforce societal values and nature of relationship by prioritizing instant gratification and convenience. They also foster the culture of disposability. The ease of swiping and matching leads to the formation of relationships without intimacy or emotional investment. The lack of commitment also create disposable mentality towards relationships. Dating apps created a culture that give more importance to physical appearance rather than meaningful aspects of love.

One of the important business strategy of dating apps is paid subscription. Users with subscription has greater facilities and opportunities for finding partners. Subscription cost is different for different apps. Lack of subscription create barriers for users. It limits access to essential features. It reduce chances for forming genuine relationships. The algorithms prioritize users those who have premium subscription. At the same time it limits the visibility and connectivity of non-subscribers. It create unfair advantages to premium users. The lack of subscription limit user's access to many features and thereby leads to frustration and dissatisfaction among users. Premium subscription can be viewed as a status symbol in dating apps. Premium users considers themselves as a part of elite group and potentially making them more noticeable to others.it affect the user experience of non-subscribers.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is focused on the changes in the nature of relationships due to the commercialization of relationships by dating apps. This study aims to get a broad idea about the impact of dating apps on relationships in the digital era. As a result of technological advancement there is increase in network relationships. And also there is rise in dating sites. Most importantly this led to the changes in the nature of relationships and more detailed classification of relationships into “offline” and “online” relationships. Commercialization of relationship had an impact on these two forms of relationships. The popularization of dating apps which played a major role in the commercialization of relationship changed the way people meet and interact with partners. This study aims to understand the prevalence of use of dating app among various genders.

This study also aims to examine whether dating app users are aware of the commercialization of relationship in the dating apps or not. And also tries to examine the ways in which income, place of residence, technological possibilities and education is related to usage of dating apps. This study wish to analyze the changing dimensions of relationship in our society and its impact on the relationship status of people. It also helps to understand the impact of online dating in society as a whole by analyzing the benefits and risk associated with online dating apps. This study also focuses on link between dating app and relationship satisfaction. It examine the role of commercialization in shaping online relationships. It helps to provide insights about promoting healthy relationships in dating apps.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents review of the works that I had accessed during my study. Existing literatures about study's relevant topic are thought to be the most significant addition to research and the rationale behind the study's execution. The present study endeavoured to encompass and examine the potential dimensions of the variables chosen for analysis. The literature gathered for this chapter has been analysed to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the findings to be made. Various arguments related to this research topic is reviewed in this chapter. Articles and books deals with the online dating services and its impact on relationships are reviewed .This review help to understand the changes and possibilities of online dating in this digital era. The literature review provide an insight into the impact of commercialisation of relationship in the nature of relationships

**Christina Alex**, in her article, *Love in the digital age: Dating apps, matching interests and exercising caution (2024)*, examine the changes on the nature of romantic relationships happened in Kerala society with the usage of online dating apps. This article provide experiences of various users of a dating app named 'Arike'. 'Arike' is an app under the aegis of the house of Aisle, which is designed exclusively for people of Kerala. The author says that love and romantic relationships are transformed and found a new path in the digital world, navigating through simple swipe of a finger. This article also highlight the commercialisation of relationship. It includes paid subscription of dating apps provide more features like messaging. It also points out that, there is major changes in partner selection. Traditional way on partner selection done by family and friends are replaced by digital platforms. The dangers posed by dating apps like fake profiles and its impact on the relationships are also analysed in this article.

**Vishnupriya Das**, in her work, *Dating Applications, Intimacy, and Cosmopolitan Desire in India, (2019)* examine an online dating app named 'Truly madly'. Truly Madly Matchmakers Private Ltd. is India's mobile-phone-based dating app which made its presence in market on October 8, 2015, with a viral digital campaign. It was a heterosexual dating app launched in India that targeted users within the country. Other dating apps, such as 'DesiCrush', 'Woo',

and 'icrushiflush', were founded by non-resident Indian entrepreneurs who claimed to understand Indians' preferences for non-marriage-based intimacy. Most dating apps, including those with website versions, were accessed primarily via cell phones and allowing users to seek for and communicate with potential matches while moving between locations and digital platforms. The corporate image of mobile phone-based dating is inextricably related to industry initiatives to capitalise on digital hybrid experiences.

**Michael J. Rosenfeld, Reuben J. Thomas and Sonia Hausen**, in their work, *disintermediating your friends: How online dating in the United States displaces other ways of meeting*, (2019), says that according to the 2017 nationally representative survey of American adults, online dating has become the most popular way for heterosexual couples to meet in the United States. Prior to 2013, friends were the primary intermediaries for heterosexual Americans seeking love relationships; however, with the advent of the internet, people can now meet romantic partners without the need of personal mediators, which is known as "disintermediating" friends. Tinder, Match.com, and eHarmony, which are controlled by faceless businesses, have all contributed significantly to this transformation. The popularity of online dating can be ascribed to the expanded choices provided by dating services, making it easier for people to find unique partners. Online dating offers anonymity and discretion. Online dating sites have been able to improve their matching algorithms over time by using testing, machine learning, and data analysis. The success of online dating platforms is largely dependent on how well these algorithms work. It is crucial to remember that profiles on dating websites might not always be reliable; there may be out-of-date profile photos, fictitious relationship status updates, and unduly flattering self-descriptions. To achieve a safe and effective experience, people must use caution and discernment when using online dating services.

**Jennifer Hickes Lundquist and Celeste Vaughan Curington**, in their work, *love me tinder, love me sweet*, (2019) focus on whether hook up applications leads to the rebirth of dating culture on college campuses. Based on the facts provided, it is clear that GPS-based dating applications have become a popular choice among many people, particularly students. These apps sprang from the rise of internet connectivity in the mid-to-late 1990s and have since

become a daily habit for many people. Students participate in group activities like as "group swiping" and "tindering" with their peers, resulting in a pleasant and participatory experience. Many students use dating apps for sexual enjoyment in addition to seeking partnerships. Women take safety precautions, like as taking screenshot of profiles and sharing them on social media, to ensure safe first meetings. Dating apps also allow direct access to queer communities, which may not be easily accessible in traditional college settings. It's intriguing to see that student of colour, who might feel excluded on mostly white college campuses, use dating apps to increase the number of potential dates in their area. The stigma around online dating has decreased, suggesting that social norms around intimate relationships are changing. The active formation of new intimate standards among students by online dating technology offers a forum for a variety of connections and exchanges.

**Brecht Neyt, Stijn Baert and Jana Vynckier**, in their work, *Job Prestige and Mobile Dating Success: A Field Experiment (2019)* presents their viewpoints on the basis of the field experiment they conducted to analyse whether on Tinder, the most popular dating app, males and females differ in the extent to which they attach value to the job status of potential partners. This is analysed by transposing the golden standard framework used in labour economics to measure hiring discrimination to Tinder setting by randomly assigning aspects of job status or job prestige to Tinder profiles. They found that at initial stage where users decide to like other users, both male and female users of Tinder app do not care about job status. Unemployed or employed doesn't matter. Authors said that at second stage where there is starting of conversations and organising dates males do not want females to be financially dependent on them but do not care about the particular earnings potential of females. In this work, the authors states that both males and females do not use job status or job prestige as a determinant of whom to show initial interest in on Tinder dating app. Findings from the experiment concluded that after initial stage, male users of Tinder app less frequently begin a conversation with females when those females are unemployed but also do not care about the particular job prestige of employed females.

**Nina Varsava**, in her work, *Dating Markets and Love Stories: Freedom and Fairness in the Pursuit of Intimacy and Love (2017)*, says that online dating industry have almost two billion dollars of annual revenue in United States alone. Author says that online dating in the age of

information technology possess many threats. This work addresses two most important forms of threat related to the changeability and durability or sustainability of love. First one is the paradoxical threat of security. Because love encounter is calculated and pre-programmed. Second one is the threat of insecurity which means that lovers will not take any relationships seriously. Due to the unlimited love options, they not commit to any one relation. Author viewed online dating as less democratic and less egalitarian than offline dating. Online dating is semi-public and daters can decide about the extent of reveal of their physical appearance. This work analyse how queer people and women benefit from online dating sites. Nina Varsava argued that online dating provide venue for queer people to find their partners in a society where heterosexuality is still defended. And also as queer sexuality face lack of social support, stigmas, need of privacy etc. they seek online relationships. Author says that women benefit more from online dating because traditionally dating and love is risky for them. And also online dating sites provide privacy and confidentiality. Author also highlights the disadvantages of online dating such as lack of control, issues of trust, risk, fake profiles ,economic risks,

**Phil Hubbard, Alan Collins and Andrew Gorman-Murray**, in their work, *Introduction: Sex, consumption and commerce in the contemporary city, (2017)*, states that urban sexual consumption patterns are evolving. This work examines the disparities in the marketing, commodification, and consumption of straight and LGBT identities. It examines the manner in which modern cities provide an atmosphere for various forms of sexual consumption. Sociotechnical developments have fundamentally altered the relationship between bodies, space, and sex. Webcam sex work and online chat rooms enable people to pursue mediated sex at a distance, while mobile technologies and geo-referenced apps like Tinder and Grindr allow people to seek and find sexualized encounters in even unfamiliar cities.

**Jocalyn Clark**, in his work, *Mobile dating apps could be driving HIV epidemic among adolescents in Asia Pacific, report says (2015)* states that according to United Nations report, recent increase in HIV infections among teenagers in the Asia Pacific area could be result of casual sex after using mobile dating apps. In 2014, an estimated 50,000 HIV infections occurred among teenagers aged 15-19, making up 15% of new infections. The rise in these infections is due to an increase in risky behaviour, such as multiple sexual partners and inconsistent condom use. Smartphone dating applications like ‘Grindr’, ‘Tinder’, and ‘Growlr’

have increased opportunities for unplanned casual sex, contributing to dangerous behaviour. According to the UN research, mobile app users in the same neighbourhood or street can find each other and arrange an urgent sexual meeting with a few screen touches.

**Eli J. Finkel, Paul W. Eastwick, Benjamin R. Karney, Harry T. Reis and Susan Sprecher,** in their work, *Online Dating: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Psychological Science (2012)*, says that many online dating websites emerged to offer services like access, communication and matching to relationship seekers. These websites are used by millions of people by paying fees. In April 2011 alone, about 25 million people worldwide accessed online dating sites, according to the industry trade report. Users spend a significant amount of time in addition to money on memberships and subscriptions. Most sites have an incentive structure that is at odds with their declared objectives. Since they lose out on two paying customers or possible advertising revenue when they encourage the forming of romantic connections these sites have an incentive to keep users single.

**Sander Van Der Linden,** in the work, *shopping for Love (2012)*, analysed the concept of speed dating and rapid fire dating. Author says that speed dating offers the opportunity to chat up many eligible singles in rapid succession. The concept of rapid fair dating is increasing and gained popularity. Author provide an instance for the commercialisation of relationships. An online coupon company hosted world's largest speed – dating event. In this event participants pair off at individual tables and chairs and began conversation which last for only few minutes. When there is buzzer sound, singles move to another chair for choosing another partner and so on. After the event, daters submit to event organizers names of individuals they want to see again. Author viewed this as a shopping for love. Speed dating companies holds gathering for almost every day. People are considered as ultimate experience goods.

**Sarah M. Coyne, Laura Stockdale, Dean Busby, Bethany Iverson and David M. Grant,** in their study, *"I luv u :)" A Descriptive Study of the Media Use of Individuals in Romantic Relationships (2011)*, says that the impact of technology on relationships can be positive or unfavourable. This study demonstrates a high level of media use, specifically for communicating with romantic partners. The media can have a good impact on many

relationships. Technology has improved the ease with which affection can be expressed. Married people utilize practically every sort of media more than dating couples. Dating couples have less concerns to cope with issues throughout the day, therefore their use of technology is less frequent. The motives for utilizing media have affected overall relationship satisfaction through positive and negative communication.

**J. Gipson wells**, in his book *current issues in marriage & the family*, (1989) says that traditionally marriage is considered as a binding ritual involving men and women. A man and woman was once seem to be complete only if they were married. But now, it is changing. Couples started believing that marriage is nothing more than a piece of paper. Couples opt for living together as a form of engagement. According to the report by the U.S Bureau of Census, number of unmarried couples living together more than doubled than earlier times.

**Daniel Miller, Elisabetta Costa, Nell Haynes, Tom McDonald, Razvan Nicolescu, Jolynna Sinanan, Juliano Spyer, Shriram Venkatraman and Xinyuan Wang** in the Chapter titled *Online and offline relationships* included in the Book, *How the World Changed Social Media* states that as social media embedded in younger generation's lives, it leads to the replacing of offline interactions and offline relationships. In this chapter, they made a comparison between offline and online relationships. There is popular perception about online relationships as simplistic, misleading and contrast to the real world. Authors says that people are giving different meaning to the terms 'online' and 'offline'. People found consistency with these domains. They says that in some cases, online exposure of relationships through public social media considered as an 'official verification' for family, non-family and wider public. Haynes says that in north Chile a romantic relationship gain 'official' validity only by being published as 'relationship update' in Facebook. Social media, along with increased mediation of relationships, is making people less 'real', or making them more removed from lived realities. Online relationships was higher on scales than offline, in terms of parameters like intimacy. There is greater disclosure to strangers or open up to peers rather than with family.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**



## **METHODOLOGY**

According to Kothari, research methodology is described as a science of analysis how research is done systematically. It is a method of analytically explain the research problem. It is a way to systematically solve the research problem by logically adopting various steps. It helps to identify, select and analyse information about topic. This involves deeper understanding about the various methods of research.

### **Statement of the problem**

In this digital world, technological advancements brought changes to the society. Development of dating applications is an important technological advancement. Dating applications provide a platform for meeting potential partners and friends. It brought changes in the way of interactions and relationship among people. Traditional way of romantic relationships were replaced by online way of interactions by dating apps. There are many dating apps with unique features. People are using these apps for finding potential partners. Dating apps provide various opportunities for this. But at the same time online dating apps are commercialising relationship for making profit. It includes paid subscription and payments for accessing more features. By this people are directly and indirectly forced to make payments. People will make payments in order to interact with potential partners. In order to make profits dating apps introduce new forms of relationships through online platform. It brought changes in the nature of relationships. As a result there is rise of swiping culture, altered gender roles, ethical non-monogamy, situation ship, etc. They transformed the concept of love into a commodity. These apps offers various methods for partner selection. And as a result of the introduction of multiple dimensions of relationship, relationship became a commodity that can be bought and sold via online dating applications. These apps function as a marketplace, generating business and success by using emotions, feelings, and sexual urges of individuals as commodities. This study aims to study the changes in the nature of relationship due to the commercialization of relationship in the digital world.

## **Objectives of the study**

### **General objective**

The general objective of this study is to analyse the impact of commercialisation of relationship in the digital world.

### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyze the extent by which people are using dating Apps.
- To identify the challenges and issues faced by dating App users.
- To examine whether dating App users are aware of the commercialization of relationship
- To study the relationship status of dating App users

## **Clarification of concepts**

- **COMMERCIALIZATION:**

### Theoretical Definition

According to Investopedia, commercialization refers to the process of bringing new products or services to market. The broader act of commercialization entails production, distribution, marketing, sales, customer support and other key functions critical to achieving the commercial success of the new product or service.

### Operational Definition

In this study, “Commercialization” is defined as the process by which not only products and services but also values, norms, interactions and relationships become profit oriented. Commodification of love is an important aspect of commercialization. The concept of love has transformed into a commodity that is bought, sold, and traded in the marketplace of relationships for commercial purposes.

- **RELATIONSHIP:**

### Theoretical Definition

According to Cambridge dictionary, relationship refers to the ways in which two things are connected.

### Operational Definition

In this study, “Relationship” refers to the romantic relationship and dating relationship through online dating apps. Relationships that begin and mainly continued through online dating sites are referred to as online dating relationships. These platforms are created especially for dating and communication. Individuals may connect through dating apps, social media platforms, or specialized dating websites.

- DATING APPLICATIONS:

### Theoretical Definition

According to Treena Orchard, dating applications are software applications designed to generate connections between people who are interested in romance, casual sex or friendship.

### Operational Definition

In this study, dating apps refers to the mobile based applications which provide platform for dating through finding partners. Dating apps are commercializing the partner selection and relationship through denying access to better features due to lack of paid subscriptions.

- DIGITAL WORLD:

### Theoretical Definition

According to Jorn Lengsfeld, the term digital world refers to the totality of circumstances that characterize the living conditions in the digital age, which will be significantly shaped by a multitude of digital technologies.

### Operational Definition

In this study, “Digital World” particularly in the context of dating apps, refers to the technologically created virtual environment through which individuals can connect, interact, and possibly develop romantic or social relationships. The concept of love and relationships are the important commodities in the digital world and they are commoditized for commercial and economic motives. In this digital world, people are consumers and products at the same time. There is sale of one’s self in online dating apps. These apps provide better services on the basis of the financial stability of the customers.

## **Variables**

### INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

In this study, variables taken for analysis of the data were age, gender, locality, educational qualification, occupation, income, and marital Status. These are identified as independent variables.

### DEPENDENT VARIABLE

In this study, nature of relationships among respondents using dating App is taken as dependent variable.

## **Research Design**

This study will use a quantitative research design. It helps to collect in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of dating app users

## **Type of data**

The study will be based on the primary data collected through Questionnaire. The primary data will be collected through Google forms distributed through online modes of communication.

## **Universe**

The universe for this study comprises dating app users in Kerala, ranging a diverse age range of 18 to 40 years and above. This demographic encompasses individuals who utilize dating apps for various purposes.

## **Sample Size and Method of Sampling**

A sample of 100 dating app users from different part of Kerala was taken as sample using snowball method for this study.

## **Tool of Data Collection**

A questionnaire made using Google Forms was used as a tool to collect data from the respondents. It included open – ended, closed, and multiple choice questions.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected was edited, coded, tabulated and analysed using SPSS to make meaningful interpretations.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents**

Understanding socio-economic profile of the respondents is very important as it play a major role in access to digital technologies. Factors like age, education, gender, occupation and place of residence influences choices and preferences of dating app users. The difference in socioeconomic backgrounds affect the way of using dating apps. Those with higher economic profile have more access to subscription and thereby using premium features. It influence their interactions and choices for potential matches.

**Table 4.1 Age of the respondents**

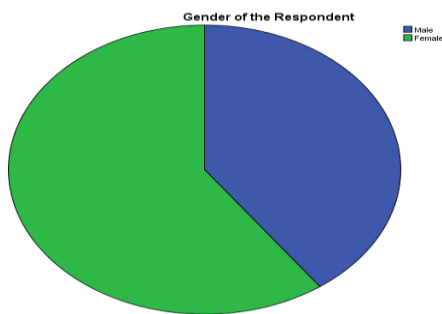
Age	Frequency	Percent
18-21	13	13
22-25	73	73
26-29	8	8
30-40	6	6
Above 40	0	0
Total	100	100.0

The age of the respondents was classified into 5 categories. The first category was between 18-21 years age group, followed by 22-25, 26-29, 30-40 and above 40 years. This table shows the age wise classification of respondents. 73% of age group are 22-25 and only 6% are belongs to 30-40 age group. There is no respondents in the age group of above 40. 73% of dating app users are belong to the age group of 22-25 because this age group is more tech-savvy. This age group are more comfortable with online mode of communication. Technological familiarity,



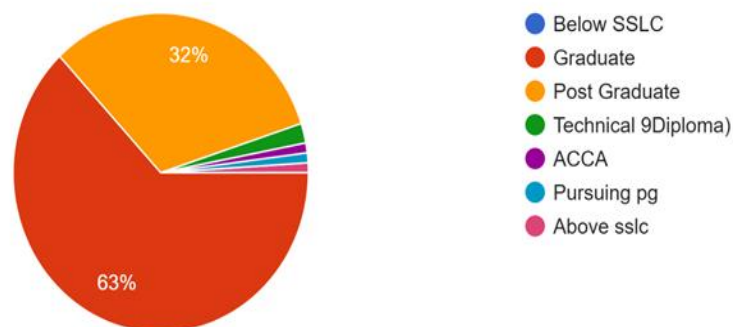
desire for new forms of relationship, influence of social media, influence of movies etc. contributed to the higher usage of dating app among younger adults.

**Figure 4.1 Gender of the respondents**



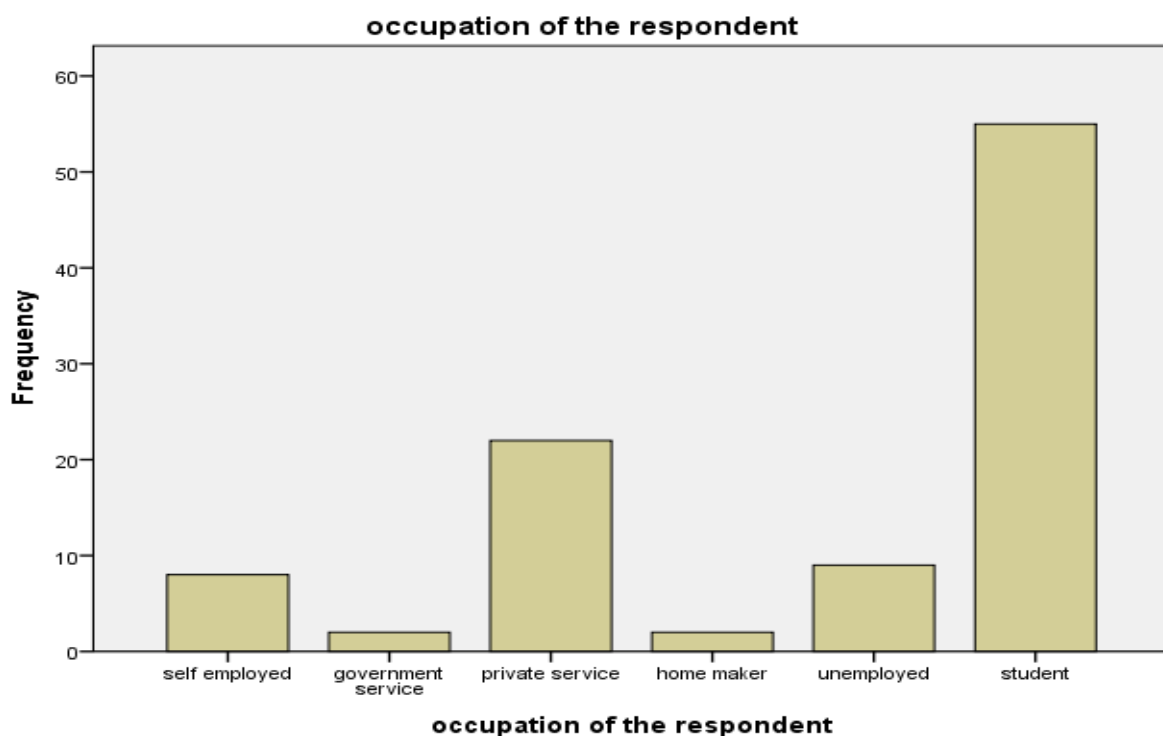
The above pie-chart shows gender of the respondents. 60% of the respondents are female and 40% are males. As traditional way of meeting partners are replaced by online interactions, it provide women more freedom to choose partners. Women use dating apps more as they seek autonomy in their relationships. Because traditional way of choosing partners restricted women women's right and freedom to choose their partners. Even though men also use dating apps, they are reluctant to open up their personal life.

**Figure 4.2 Educational Qualification**



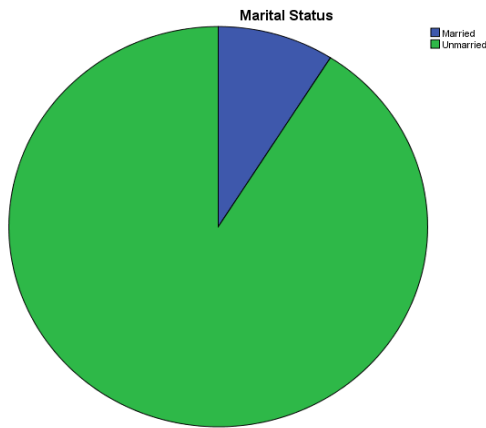
The above pie-chart shows the educational qualification of the respondents. 63% of the respondents are graduate. 32% are pursuing post graduate. Educational qualification influences choices and preferences for potential match. Graduate students has more peer influence for using dating apps. Graduate students are open to non-traditional dating practices like casual relationships and desire to explore a various relationship dynamics which dating app offers. Dating app offers more social networks other than academic fields.

**Figure 4.3 Occupation of the respondents**



This bar diagram shows the occupation of the respondents. 57% of respondents are students and only 2% are homemakers. Dating app offers less judgemental environment for users to explore their identity. As students are passing through the stage of their identity development, they are attracted to dating apps which offers opportunities to explore sexual and romantic identities without any social pressures. Technological familiarity, peer influence, movies, romanticization of college life and social mobility are major factors for students to use dating apps.

**Figure 4.4 Marital status**



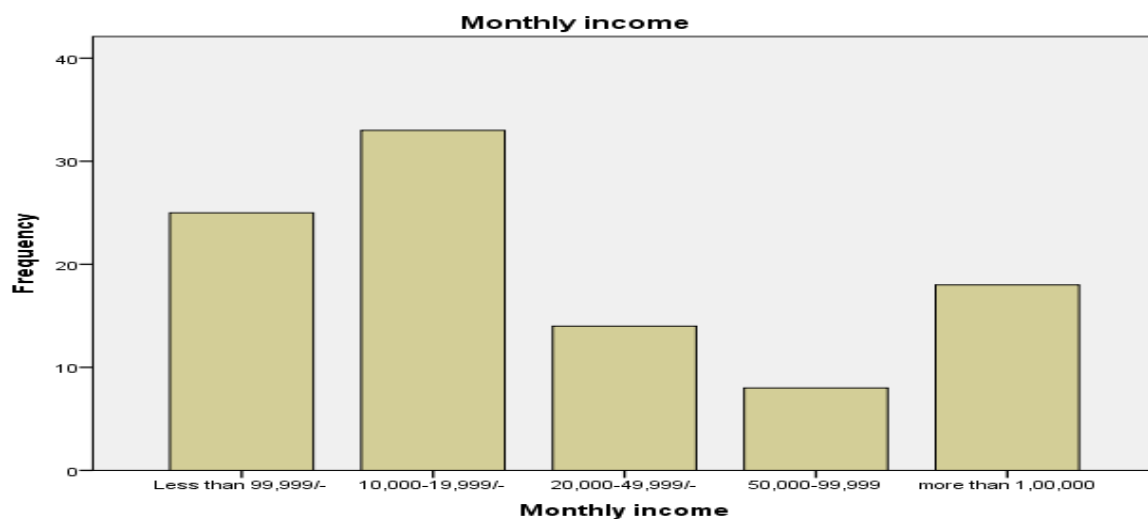
The above pie-chart shows that majority of the respondents are unmarried. Unmarried people particularly those who live alone use dating apps to overcome their feelings of loneliness and also there by extend their networks of relationship. Marriage is no longer an immediate goal for younger generation. So they seek casual dating or companionship as it does not have immediate pressure of marriage. Flexibility of relationship offered by dating apps made unmarried people to use the app. A small portion of married respondents are using dating apps. The cultural shift of normalization of extramarital affairs is an important factor for using dating app by married ones. Married people use dating apps without the fear of social pressure or moral judgment. They view dating apps as a space where there is no any rules of traditional marriage. Married people use dating apps mainly due to changing social norms, dissatisfaction with marriage, access to technological advances and relationship dynamics offered by dating apps.

**Table 4.2 Locality of the Respondent**

Locality	Frequency	Percent
Urban area	46	46.0
Rural Area	54	54.0
Total	100	100.0

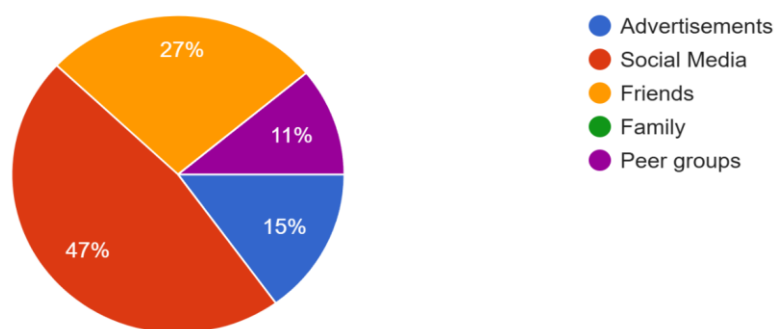
The above diagram shows locality of the respondents. 54% of dating app users are residing in rural area and 46% are from rural area. The geographical isolation of rural area and less opportunities to meet potential partners lead to seek alternative ways for finding partners. Rural areas are more traditional and conservative. This limits freedom of people to explore relationships dynamics and various dating options. In rural areas, people see dating apps as a means to connect with people in urban area. Individuals from rural areas seek a chance to explore career paths in urban areas through this connection in dating apps.

**Figure 4.5 Monthly income**



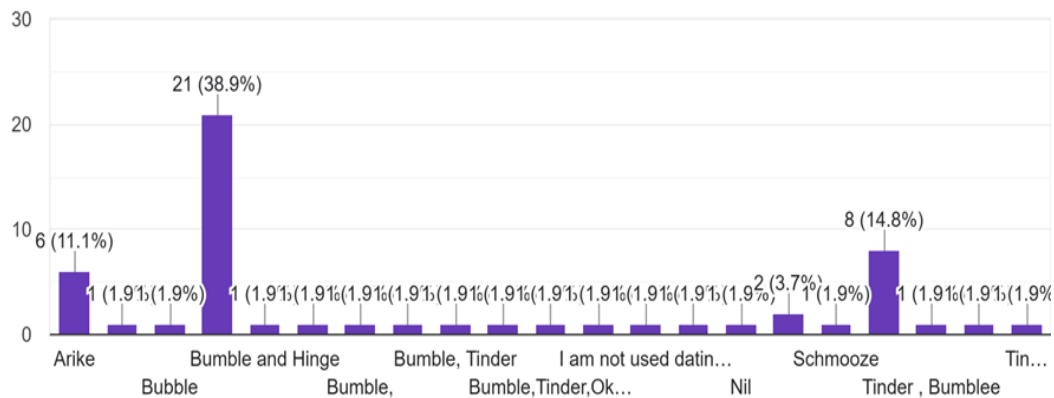
This bar diagram shows the monthly income of the respondents. 36.8% of the respondents have monthly income between 10,000-19,999/-.Income plays a role in using dating apps. Because people in this income range are part of the working class. They has access to smartphones, internet, and apps. They are rely more on dating apps as the time or resources for traditional forms of socializing are limited. The cost of subscription and access to subscription is closely linked to the income.

**Figure 4.6 Source of information about dating apps**



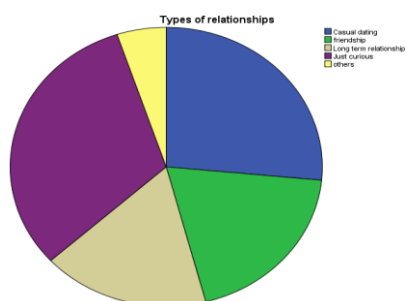
This pie-chart shows source of information about dating app.47% of respondents gained information about dating apps from social media. Social media platforms like Facebook, instagram, Twitter etc. are important source of information regarding dating apps. Advertisements, reels, influencers, and news share information about the various relationships offered by dating apps. Social media highlight dating trends. Partnership of dating apps with social media influencers and celebrity endorsements make popularity of dating apps through social media.

**Figure 4.7 Names of dating apps used**



38.9% of respondents are using Bumble and Hinge. 14.8% use Tinder and Bumble. Shifting power dynamics is an important factor for using Bumble. Bumble gained popularity for its approach of making women to start conversations. These apps provide chances for self-presentation and self-promotion. These apps created new forms of intimacy and relations through digital communication. They provide a shift from traditional way of dating. Nowadays using dating apps are seen as a symbol of being modern, open to new dynamics of relationships etc.

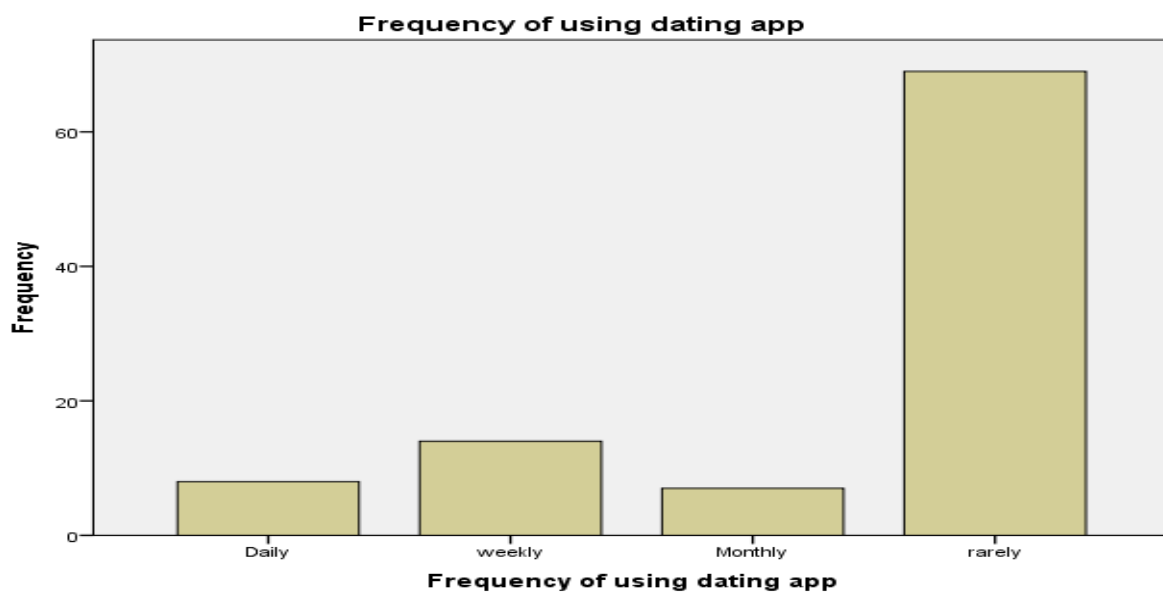
**Figure 4.8** Reasons for using dating apps



Most of the respondents are using dating apps out of curiosity. Because dating app provide chances to respondents to understand their preferences, identity and values. Above 25% of

respondents are looking for casual dating which offers a shift from traditional ways of relationships. Dating apps contributed to the normalization of casual sex which lead to the increase of preference for casual dating. Dating apps prioritize physical appearance. None of the dating app users in this study look for a long-term relationship through dating apps. This is mainly due to the fear of commitment, lack of interest in marriage, rise of individualism, fear of losing autonomy, etc. The fear of commitment, fear of being single, prioritizing flexibility and choice contributed to the increase of preference for casual dating. Dating apps offering various options and choices for potential matches lead to the rise of shopping mentality where users give importance to casual dating rather than meaningful relationship or commitments.

**Figure 4.9 Frequency of using dating apps**



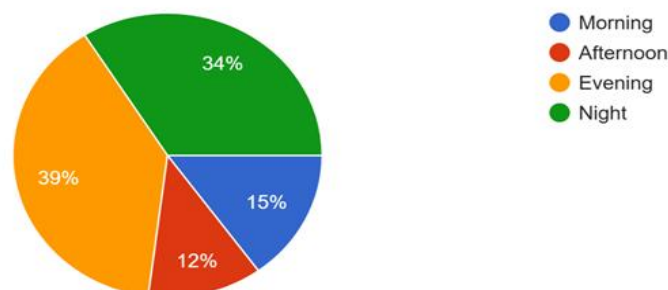
Majority of the respondents are using dating apps rarely. 14% of respondents use dating apps weekly. Limited success in online relationship and constant rejection cause people to use these app rarely. Prioritizing physical appearance, lack of meaningful relations, and emotional exhaustion influence the frequency of using dating apps.

**Table 4.3 Duration of dating app usage**

Duration of usage	Frequency	Percent
Less than 6 months	67	67.0
6 months to 1 year	17	17.0
1-2 years	11	11.0
2-5 years	3	3.0
More than 5 years	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

67% of respondents have been using dating app for less than 6 months. Only 2% used dating app more than 5 years. This indicates that people prioritize short term relations than long term and also it reflects a casual dating culture. Unrealistic expectations about matches, shifting norms of commitment, fear of commitment, socio-economic background, peer influence, experiences, access to technologies and digital divide affect the duration of dating app usage.

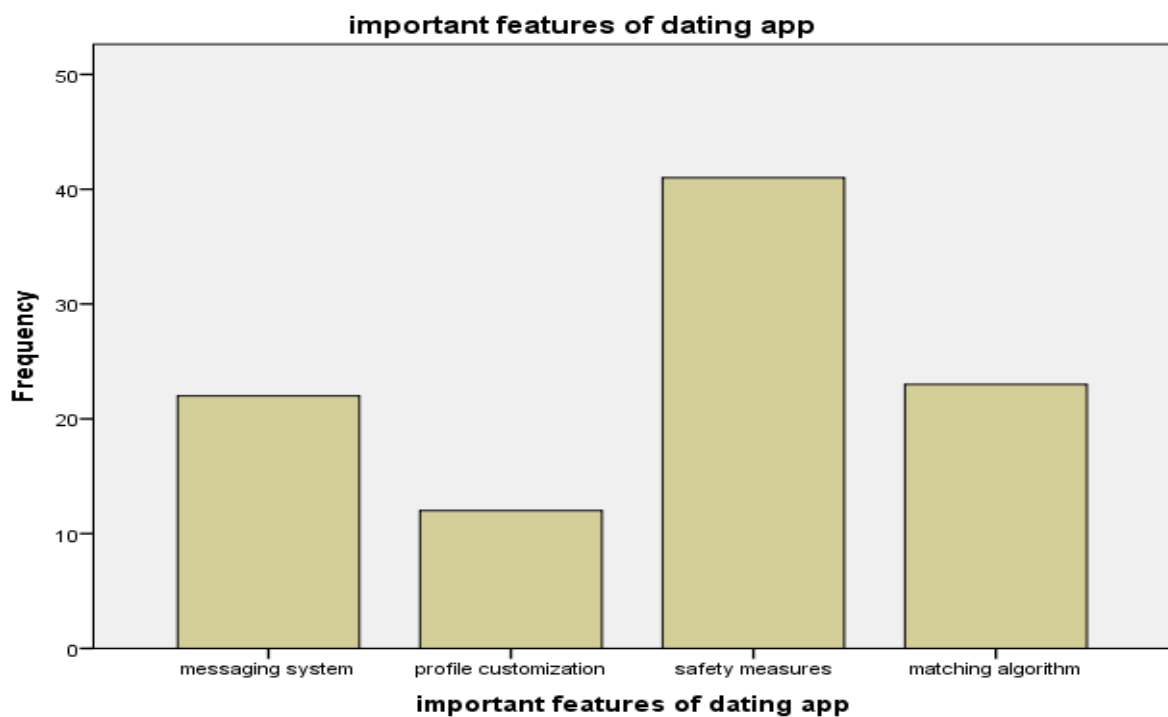
**Figure 4.10 Preferred time of using dating apps**





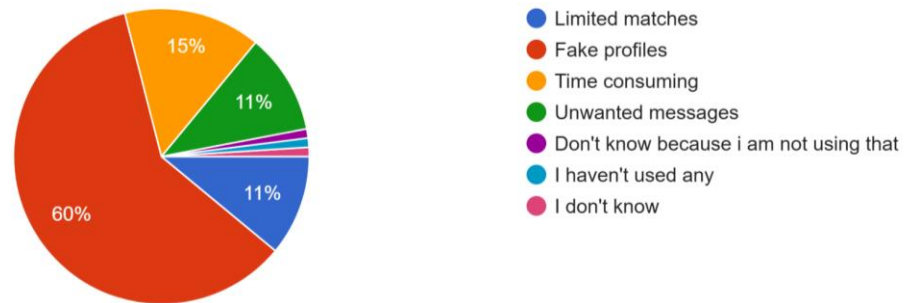
The above given pie-chart shows the preferred time of using dating apps. 39% of respondents are using dating apps during evening and 34% use it at night. The users seek relationships and connection when their day's obligations are fulfilled, and they are relaxed. The evening and night may symbolize a space for users allowing them to engage in self-presentation and social experimentation. Majority of people consider evening time for leisure, relaxation and entertainment. So they use dating apps during that time. The evening may be a time of emotional vulnerability and thereby seek connections through dating apps to combat with their loneliness.

**Figure 4.11 Important features of dating apps**



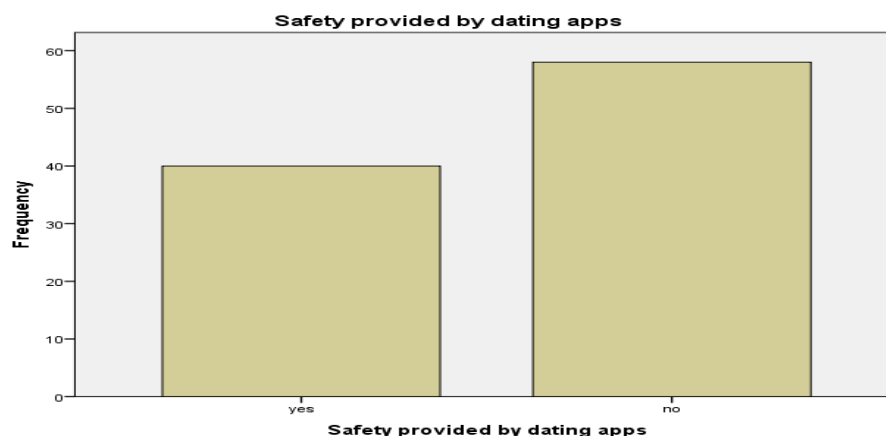
Safety measures in dating apps considered as the most important feature. Due to the fear of unknown and various risk arise in digital dating space, users considered safety measures as important feature. Dating apps use safety measures to enforce social norms and behaviours in relationships. By ensuring safety measures dating apps make online dating safe and socially acceptable.

**Figure 4.12 Challenges of using dating apps**



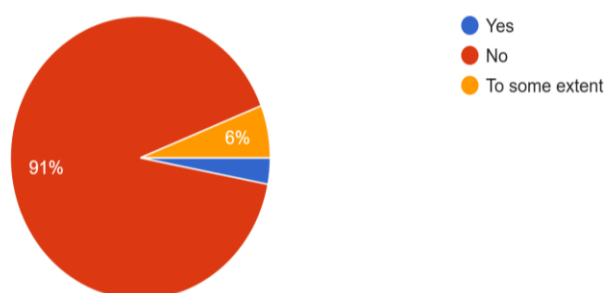
This pie-chart shows the features which create frustrations among users. 60% of respondents are frustrated with fake profiles and 15% are frustrated with time consuming nature of dating apps. The fake profiles create a sense of fear, trust issues, and lack of genuine relationships. In dating apps people exaggerate their identity and performances to find potential matches. It create a conflict between genuine relationships, modern societal expectations and technological advances. This reflects a tension between the concept of meaningful connection and the realities of a commodified dating culture which is driven by algorithms. Fake profiles questions the honesty and trust in interpersonal relationships. With users treating profiles like products and interactions like transactions, dating apps made a market of love that prioritizes quantity over quality. This can lead to choice overload, and emotional problems.

**Figure 4.13 Safety provided by dating apps**



Most of the dating app users are dissatisfied with safety provided by dating apps. The digital risks create a sense of insecurity. Women and marginalized groups face higher risks on dating apps. Data privacy is another important concern. Dating apps display safety in terms of verified badges. But they are not real protection. Even though dating apps offer various safety measures they are not offer any real security in digital space. Dating apps create a sense of vulnerability and fear, particularly for women and people from marginalized groups, due to the risk for harassment, stalking, fake profiles or even physical harm. It also create emotional vulnerability. This create power structures and social inequalities, where certain users feel more at risk due to their gender, sex or race. Many face unwanted messages, pressure to meet in person, or even threats.

**Figure 4.14 Fake profile of respondents**



This pie-chart shows that 91%of respondents' does not have fake profiles on dating apps. They says that they have genuine profiles. But some of the respondents have fake profiles. Fake profiles on dating apps affects user trust and safety. These profiles are created with false information, fake photos, or misleading intentions. Some are made by scammers trying to manipulate users emotionally or financially. The reasons behind creating fake profiles vary. These fake profiles make it harder for genuine users to find real connections. Most dating apps try to solve this problem through verification tools, photo checks, and AI filters. But fake profiles still manage to slip through.

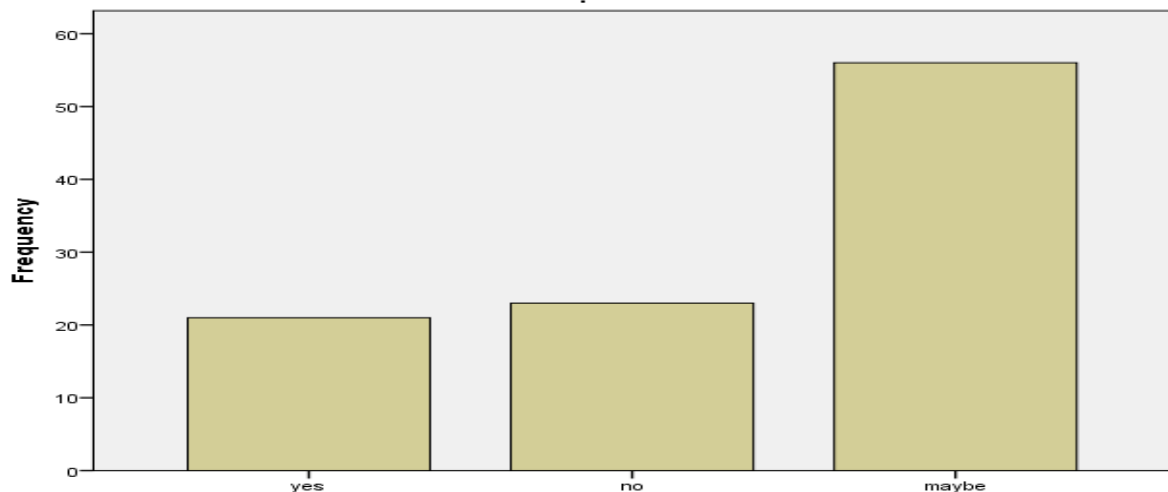
**Table 4.4 Traditional v/s online dating**

Traditional v/s online dating	Frequency	Percent
online dating	9	9.0
traditional dating	32	32.0
Both	30	30.0
Don't know	29	29.0
Total	100	100.0

This table shows that 32% of respondents considers traditional dating as safer than online dating. 30% of respondents argued that both traditional and online dating is safe. Many respondents think traditional dating as safe. Because it provide a comfortable connections and a sense of security. The face to face interactions are safer and it give a sense of trust. They consider meeting someone in person is more comfortable and safe. At the same time many respondents think that online dating is also safe. Increased familiarity to technologies, shifting attitude about dating, technological advancements, control over interactions, etc. make online dating safe and secure. Some respondents view both traditional and online dating as equally safe as they feel that both traditional and online dating present risks, whether it's dealing with rejection, safety concerns, or misrepresentation.

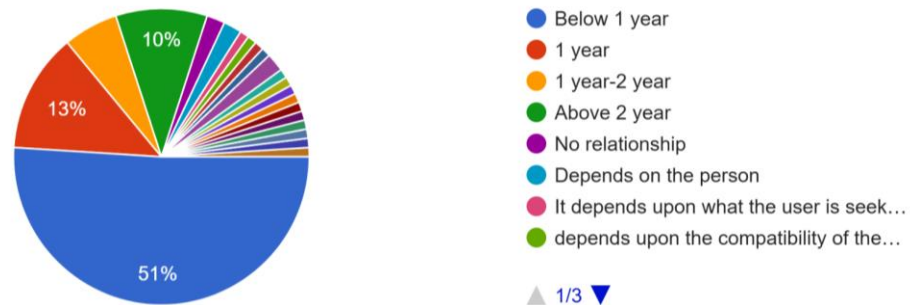
Many respondents think that traditional dating is more secure because it involves meeting through social circles, such as friends, family, or shared communities. This provides a sense of familiarity which can reduce the chances of unsafe situations. In traditional dating settings people have more opportunities to observe each other's behaviour in real-life contexts. It create a sense of trustworthiness. In online dating anonymity and the lack of physical presence can lead to misrepresentation, emotional manipulation and lack of commitment.

**Figure 4.15 Extent of finding genuine relationships through dating apps**



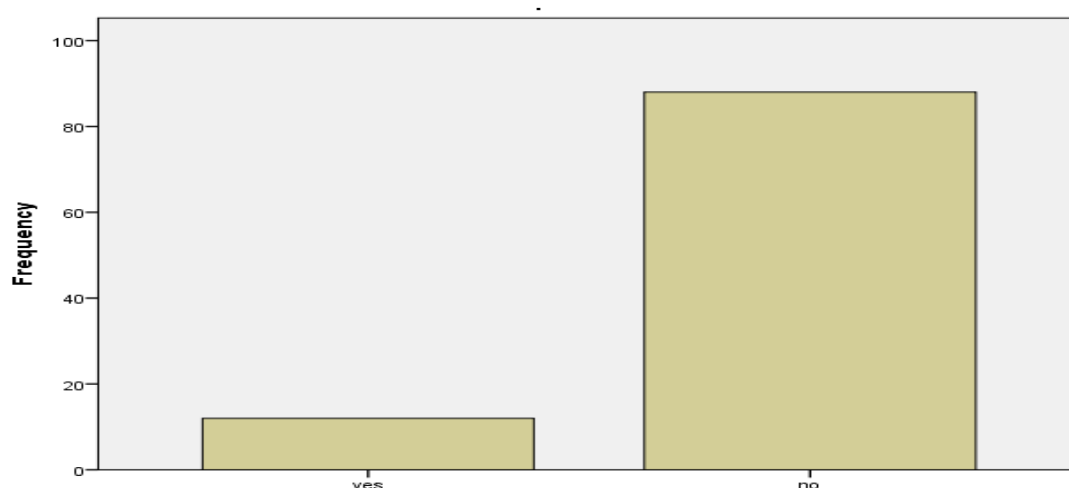
Majority of respondents expressed optimism about finding genuine relationship through dating apps. Traditional ways of finding partners are changed and people are open to explore various new forms of relationships. It also altered the nature of intimacy and relationships. The autonomy and freedom to choose partners and availability of various options elevate the possibility of finding genuine relationships through digital space. Some respondents believe that genuine relationships can be found through dating apps. They think that dating apps help individuals to connect with others who have similar interests and goals. Many dating apps provide deeper insights into a person's interests through detailed profiles and promote more meaningful conversations. The large choices for potential matches increases the chances of finding someone truly compatible. It might not happen as easily in traditional social settings. Because in traditional settings, opportunities for connection are more limited. Many users says that the opportunity to interact and communicate online before meeting in person helps them to feel more comfortable and secure. It allows them to build a connection without the pressure of face-to-face interaction. The online mode of communication create more conversations than in the traditional dating scenarios.

**Figure 4.16 Lasting of relationships**



This pie-chart shows lasting of relationship formed through dating apps. 51% of respondents argued that relationship formed through dating apps are lasted below one year .Dating app prioritize physical appearance. It give less importance to interests and values. This will affect the relationships. The dating apps create unrealistic expectations and instant satisfaction culture of relationships. But when the relationships do not meet these expectations, users will abandon the relationship and thereby shorter relationship duration. This create a disposable mentality towards relationships.

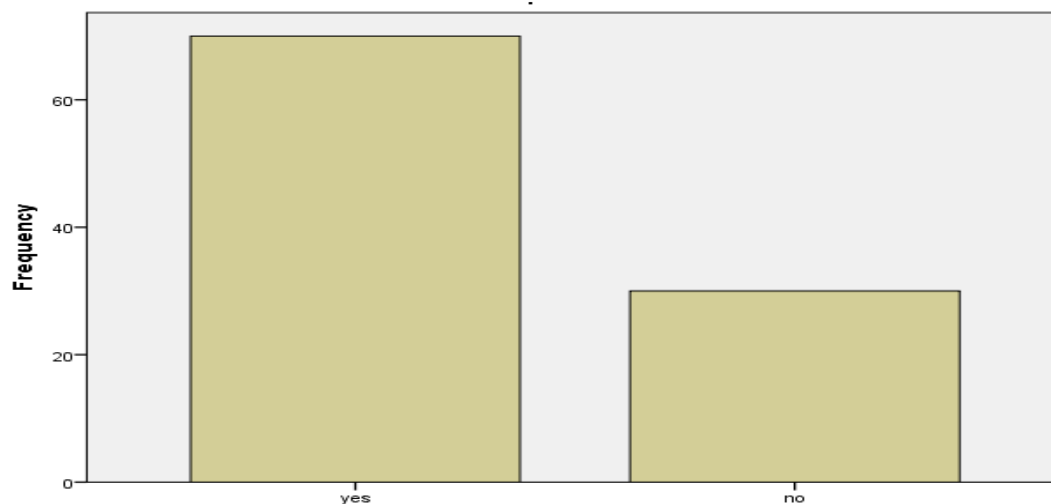
**Figure 4.17 Respondents having paid subscription**



Majority of dating app users lack paid subscription. They may not see any value or benefit in paying for premium features .Users are hesitant to invest money in romantic relationships

because they are not sure about the outcome. Some users considers paid subscription as embarrassing. The socio-economic profiles of users also influence the decision for paid subscription. The subscription cost is varies for various apps. For Tinder plus subscription costs starts at 249 /- per month. And for Hinge premium starts at 2600/-per month.

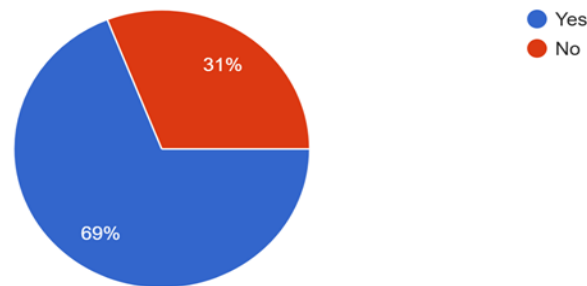
**Figure 4.18 Subscription cost**



This bar diagram shows that subscription cost is very higher. Many dating apps target affluent people who have more income and willing to pay for premium features. Many dating app offers additional features and services only to users who has paid subscription. Dating app generate revenue from subscription and thus they encourage to take subscription by limiting access to meet potential partners. Dating apps provide more benefits for paying members, such as unlimited swipes, increased visibility, and advanced search filters. The costs also support the app's operational needs, such as maintaining the platform, developing better matchmaking algorithms, and providing customer support. Premium memberships with advanced features such as seeing who has liked you, boosting your profile for greater visibility, and accessing more compatible matches through refined algorithms make users to pay for subscription. Dating apps says that these features help users to find partners faster and it justifies the cost for those serious about dating. In reality it is their business strategy and most of the users are fell into this business strategy of dating apps. Some users view premium membership as a status symbol. They consider themselves as a part of an elite group. But most of the respondents says

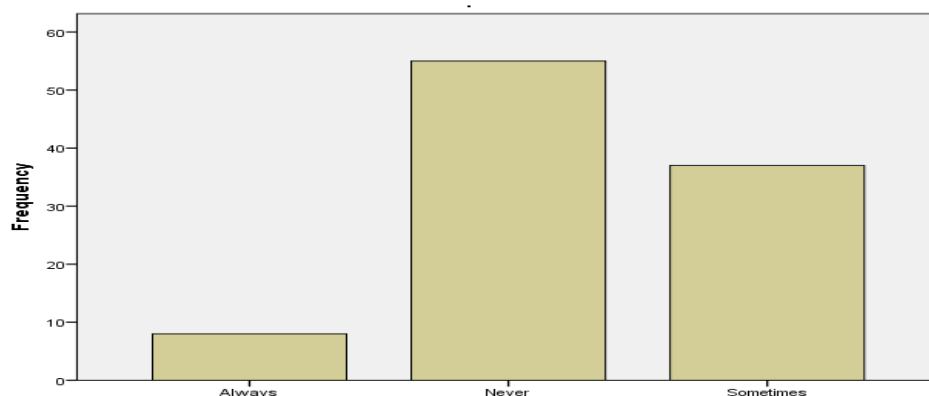
that there is no any advantage of subscription for finding partners. It give access to many features but not help to find genuine relationships.

**Figure 4.19 Impact of subscription on finding partners**



The pie-chart shows that 69% of respondents think that subscription enhances chances for finding partners. Subscription provide access to premium features. It provide profile visibility and also lend credibility to profile. When others paid for subscription it lead other users to trust the app and thereby enhances chances for finding partners .paying for subscription foster users belief of finding partners .31% argues that subscription does not enhances chances for finding partners. Subscription based services focus on demographic factors rather than personality and values. Subscription may not encourage genuine relationship or eliminate fake profiles. It also create superficial or unrealistic expectations about finding perfect partner through subscription.

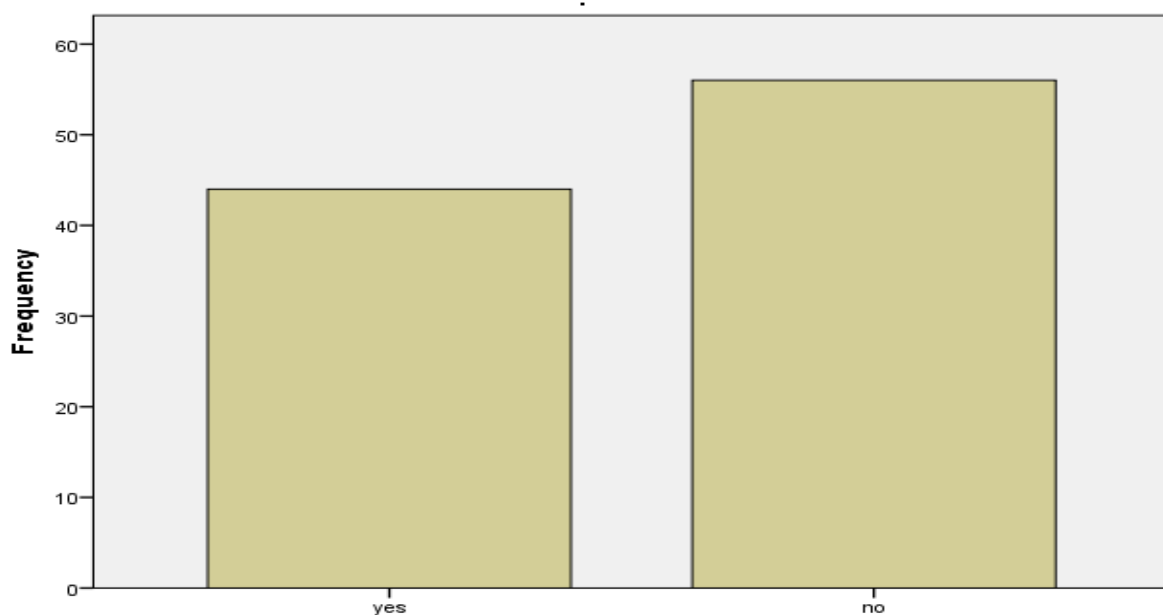
**Figure 4.20 Subscription upgrade pressure**





Majority of the respondents were pressured to upgrade to subscription. Limited features, limits on likes, limited swipes, lack of ability to see who liked, and restricting access to popular features etc. display reminders to upgrade. Dating apps displaying success stories or benefits of subscription, creating a sense of exclusivity, etc. also make pressure to upgrade. Dating app offering time limited discounts, offers and special deals for subscription, notifications, and messages, to persuade users to upgrade. Highlighting subscription based users with premium badges and sending notification to upgrade to subscription in-order to find potential matches make users pressured to upgrade to subscription.

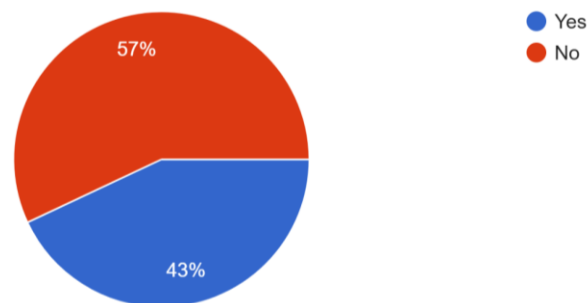
**Figure 4.21 Profit v/s user experience**



This bar diagram shows that 59% of respondents think that dating apps does not prioritize profit over user experience. Some dating apps provide free features without subscription and also incorporate certain features that enhances genuine relationships.

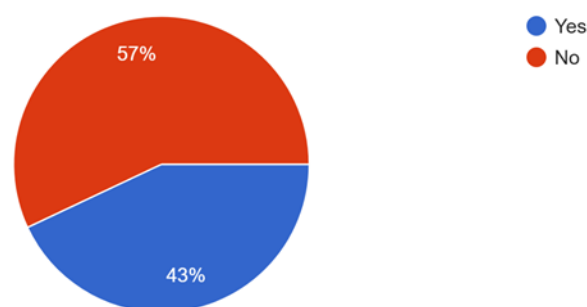
But 41% of dating users argued that Dating apps prioritize profit over user experience. Premium subscriptions and advertisements compromise user experience. Some manipulative design patterns such as notifications are used to generate profit by keeping users engaged.

**Figure 4.22 Awareness about revenue generation of dating apps**



This pie-chart shows that 57% of respondents are unaware about how dating apps generate revenue. Whereas 43% are aware about how dating apps generate revenue. Subscriptions, advertisements, personal data shared and keeping users engaged are the main ways of generating revenue. The personal data we share can be used for advertisement or any other purposes to generate revenue. Without understanding this, users share their data. Manipulative design patterns used by dating apps keep users more engaged for generating revenue. Without realizing the revenue generating process users pay for premium or subscriptions.

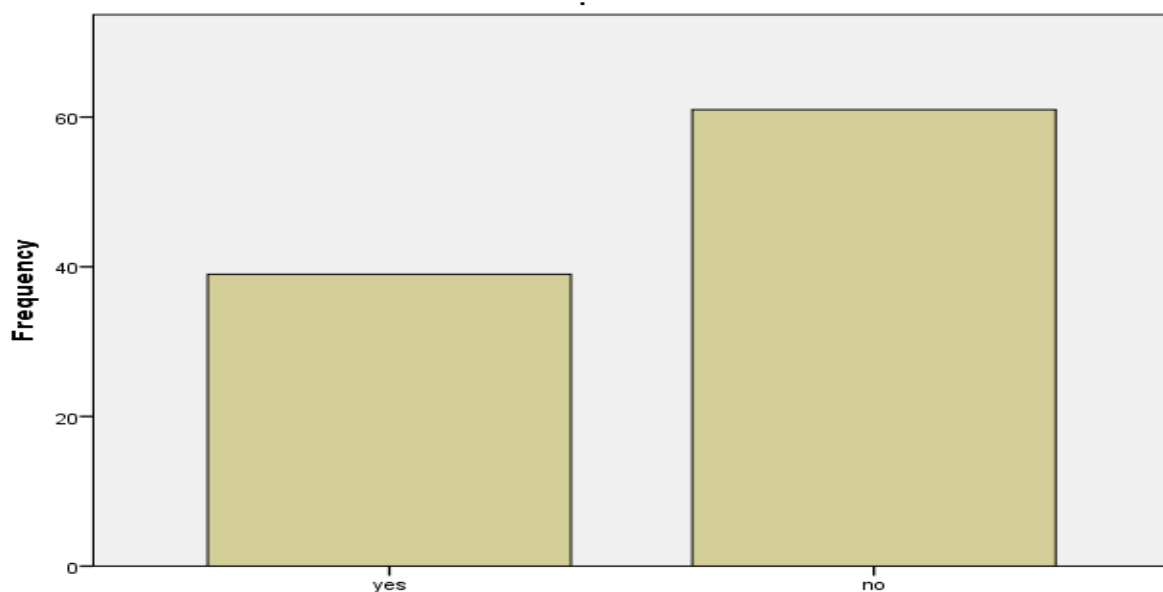
**Figure 4.23 Superficial interactions v/s meaningful relations**



This diagram shows that 57% of respondents does not think that dating app encourage superficial interactions rather than meaningful one. Dating app provide chances for connection between people who may not have met otherwise. Filter preferences and evolution of new features enhances meaningful relations,

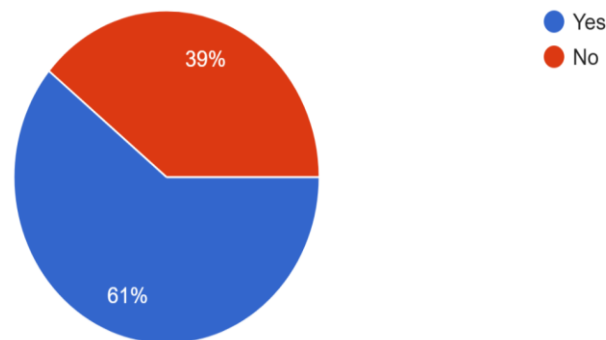
43% of respondent says that dating app encourage superficial interactions. Dating app gave over emphasize on physical appearance. It leads to superficial connections. Some dating apps use algorithms which emphasize superficial characteristics. When users have plenty of options, users browse, compare and evaluate partners on the basis of superficial criteria, create a shopping mentality towards relationships.

**Figure 4.24 Awareness about commercialisation of relationships**



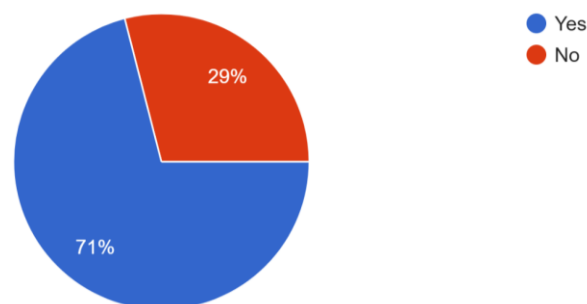
This diagram shows that 61% of respondents said that dating app does not make profit out of relationships, dating apps cannot directly make profit from relationships. And 41% of dating app users said that the dating apps make profit out of relationship. They keep people always engaged and pressurized to upgrade to premium are ways for generating profit. The subscriptions, advertisements, in-app purchases, collaboration, partnership, events, sponsored content and premium services are ways for making profit out of relationships.

**Figure 4.25 Role of dating apps in creating disposable mentality towards relationships**



This pie-chart shows that 61% of dating app users said that dating apps promote a disposable mentality towards relationships. In dating app, the user's swipe, select and discard matches. It is similar to selecting commodities. Swiping and discard lead to lack of emotional feelings and commitment in romantic relationship. Thus it make easier to dispose the relationships when they are unable to meet the expectations and lack instant satisfaction which are fostered by dating apps. The rise of casual dating and non-monogamy contribute towards the disposable mentality towards relationships.

**Figure 4.26 Relationship dynamics**



71% of respondents said that dating apps are shaping relationship dynamics as part of their business motives. Dating apps operate in a capitalist framework where relationship become commodities that can be buy and sold using money. The app provide endless choices and

options for relationships and thereby maximizing the profit through continuous engagement of users. Dating apps create hyper-real expectations about relationships. They are shaping different forms of relationship in order to meet their market driven goals. Dating app contributed to the development of various relationship including casual dating, hook up culture, one night stand etc.as part of their business motive.

Many users are looking for non-committed interactions like short-term dating, hook-ups, or friends with benefits. People using dating apps like Tinder or Bumble may be looking for fun and easy connections. They lacks a long-term commitment.

Some dating apps users mainly use these apps to make new friends or expand their social circle.

Situation ship is a relationship offered by dating apps that doesn't have commitments but have emotional and physical intimacy.

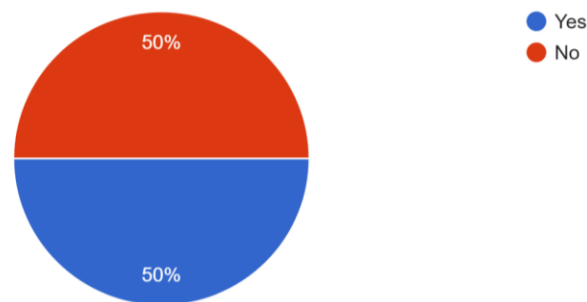
Dating apps provide opportunities to find multiple partners either for an open relationship and also make emotional or sexual connections with more than one person.

Dating app offers companionships. People looking for a companion for a specific purpose, such as attending events, or traveling together, or sharing hobbies, necessarily wanting a romantic relationship can make companions through dating apps,

Dating apps encourage user engagement and increase time spent on the apps. Many apps focus on a swipe or match system. It make people focus more on physical attraction, superficial qualities, looks, rather than deeper emotional connection. This lead to short-term dating rather than meaningful relationships. Dating apps rely on algorithms which prioritize certain types of matches based on user behaviour, preferences, and past interactions. It promote users who are more likely to keep swiping or engaging with the app. It create a cycle of users who are constantly looking for better matches. This lead to dissatisfaction. It may create a sense of never finding the perfect person.

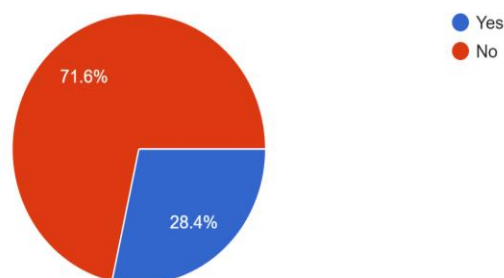
The relationship dynamics keeps users active and thereby generating data and allowing for targeted advertisements, premium subscriptions, etc. The dating apps create a marketplace for relationships, where the goal is to maximize interaction rather than foster genuine emotional bonds.

**Figure 4.27 Safety of data collection practices**



This pie-diagram shows that 50% of dating app users consider data collection practices of dating app as safe and secure whereas 50% of users consider it as unsafe and insecure. There is risk of privacy invasion as it collect highly sensitive data about users. There is risk of misusing the data, sell data to a third party, tracking and blackmail. As these apps collect private details like location, interests, photos and even personal messages, the users have a fear about their data. It may be shared without permission, getting hacked, or used for advertising. 50% of respondents feel confident and have trust in the security measures of apps. They believe that their data is not sensitive enough to be a major risk. On the other hand, the 50% of respondents view data practices as unsafe. They are concerned over misuse of personal information, and lack of transparency in data collection practices of dating apps. The lack of digital literacy cause lack of concern about how their information is being used.

**Figure 4.28 Relationship in dating apps v/s Meaningful relationship**



This diagram shows that 70% of respondents said that relationships formed through dating apps are not meaningful than offline relationship. Dating apps offers superficial and hyper-real expectations about relations than genuine relationships. In dating apps people are given emphasis to casual dating rather than meaningful relationships. Fake profiles, subscription, relationship dynamics, and abundance of options in dating apps made relationship less meaningful.

Increased accessibility, freedom to talk, social networks, more choices, easy to find people with similar interests, communication facilities, relation dynamics, facilities for exploring relationship dynamics and changes in the way people meet and interact are most significant impact of dating apps on relationship. Superficial judgements, expectations, trust issues, emphasize on physical appearance, insecurities and unsafe situations also had an impact on the way we perceive relationships.

**Table 4.5 Relationship status**

Relationship status	Frequency	Percent
Yes	25	25.0
No	75	75.0
Total	100	100.0

25% of dating app users found partners from dating app whereas 75% not found yet. One major reason is the difference in user intentions. Because not everyone on dating apps is looking for a serious relationship. Some respondents are using it out of curiosity, casual interactions, or for entertainment. Dating apps promote quick, physical appearance-based decisions through swiping. It lead to superficial interactions that don't grow into meaningful relationships. The abundance of options make users less likely to commit and constantly searching for someone better. Forming a strong and meaningful romantic connection need emotional compatibility, shared values, commitment and trust. These may not easily established through digital interaction alone.

**Table 4.6 Finding partners**

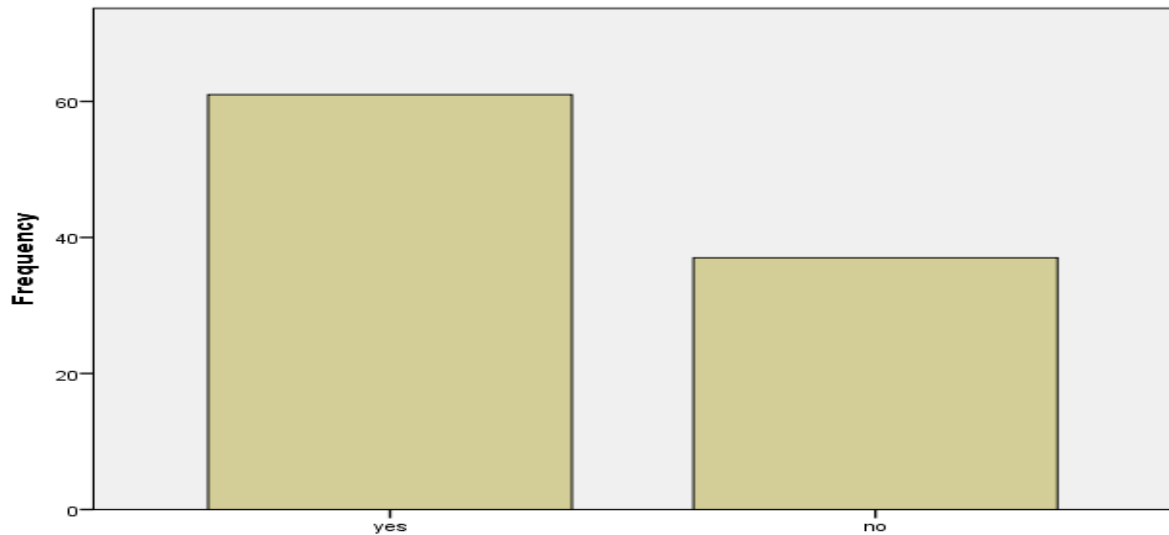
Find partners	Frequency	Percent
yes	13	13
No	26	26
maybe	61	61
Total	100	100.0

26% of dating app users said that finding a potential partner through dating app is not easy. Whereas 61% of users said that it may be made easier to find partners through dating apps. Fake profiles, over emphasize on physical appearance, limited features, subscription and relationship dynamics affect the way of finding potential partner. 61% find dating apps as helpful are they are benefiting from the ability of dating app to expand social networks beyond the boundaries of geography or social circle. Dating apps serve as a tool of social mobility. It allow users to interact with more diverse range of potential partners. It reflects the increasing individualization of society. The people seek relationships on their own terms, outside of the societal or family influence.

26% find it difficult to find partners through dating apps as there is choice overload - a situation where too many options make it harder to make decisions and difficult to feel satisfied with them. Dating apps reinforce superficial interactions and reduce emotional commitment. It create a commodified view of relationships where people are viewed and selected like products. These users may also struggle with the mismatch between online behaviour and offline intentions and also mismatch with their expectations. It leads to frustrations and a sense of disconnection.

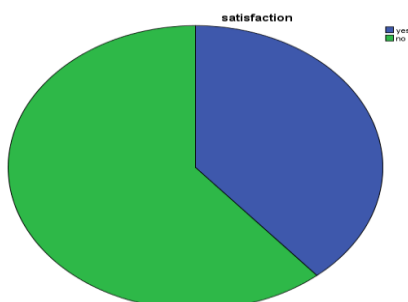


**Figure 4.29 Dating app as a good way to meet people**



The 62% of users consider dating app as a good way to meet people. Dating app offers convenience, efficient communication, and diverse options. These features made dating app a good way to meet people. There is no boundaries of time and distance for meeting people. It offers convenience and accessibility. It allow to connect with others from different backgrounds and areas that might never encounter otherwise. It is useful for introverts or people who get nervous making the first move in person. It also helps to connect with people outside immediate circle or neighbourhood.

**Figure 4.30 Satisfaction in relationships**



42.2% are satisfied in their relationship through dating app. And 57.8% are not satisfied in their relationship. Unrealistic expectations about partners, overemphasis on physical appearance, lack of emotional intimacy, superficial connections, and lack of commitments are major reasons for being unsatisfied in relationships. Dating apps emphasize physical appearance, unrealistic expectations, superficial interactions and quick judgments, which lead to shallow connections that is based more on attraction than compatibility. Many users approach the apps with unclear intentions and thereby making it difficult to build a serious, genuine or lasting relationship. The abundance of choices create issues. People were struggle to commit because they're always wondering and searching if someone better is just a swipe away. Miscommunication, ghosting, lack of commitment, fake profiles and dishonesty also leads to dissatisfaction.

**CHAPTER V**  
**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The rise of dating apps and their popularity changed the relation dynamics in this digital world. It changed the way of intimacy and commitments. The ease of swiping and greater choices for partner selection created relationships without much emotional investment. It lacks commitment in relationships. It altered the meaning of relationships.

#### Extent of dating app usage

14% of respondents use dating app weekly and 70% use it rarely. 67% of respondents are using dating app for less than 6 months and only 2% use it more than 5 years. These findings suggests that many users use dating apps without a strong intention to continue using them for long-term. 39% of respondents use dating app during evening and 34% use it during night. The evening and night time usage patterns imply that dating apps are used during leisure time. These data suggest that dating apps have become a common aspect of modern dating. It also suggest that many people are using dating apps for casual purposes or short –term relations rather than seeking long-term relationships.

#### Challenges and issues faced

The dating app users are facing many challenges and issues. Majority of respondents are frustrated with lack of subscription. 60% of respondents are frustrated with the existence of fake profiles. 15% of respondents facing the issue of time consuming. 11% of respondents reported receiving unwanted messages. 59% of respondents have fear of issues of safety. 38% of respondents sometimes felt pressured to upgrade to subscription. 50% of respondents were facing issues related to the data collection practices of dating apps. Prevalence of fake profiles, safety concerns, data privacy concerns, unwanted interaction, pressure to upgrade, and time consumption were the main challenges and issues of dating app users.

#### Awareness of commercialization of relationship

59% of people are unaware about commercialization of relationship. They feel that dating apps prioritize well-being of users than profit. 57% of respondents are unaware about how dating

apps generate revenue. 61 % of respondents are unaware that dating apps make profit out of relationships. 71% of respondents are aware about the relationship dynamics developed by dating apps to generate their revenue. The lack of awareness about commercialization and revenue generation of dating apps may lead to the exploitation of users.

### Relationship status of respondents

25% of responders find a partner from dating app. It imply that dating apps have limited success in forming lasting relationships. 42.2% of respondents are not satisfied in their relationship in dating apps. 76% of respondents revealed that relationships formed through dating are not meaningful. 61% of respondents felt that dating apps promote a disposable mentality towards relationship. Dating apps are not effective in creating long-term relationships. It doesn't succeed in fulfilling relationships for many users and also failed to meet users' expectations for meaningful relationships.

The commercialization of relationship by dating app commodified love, intimacy and connection. It has transformed the nature of relationships. Dating apps created relationship dynamics by offering abundance of options and choices for users. Dating apps treated individuals as products rather than partners

The commercialization of relationship created a culture or disposable mentality towards relationship. People fall into the superficial relations offered by dating apps. But when they fail to meet superficial expectations in their relation, they discard the relation or dispose it. The abundance of options and choices also influenced it.

The findings suggest that dating apps created disposable mentality, hyper reality, superficiality and commodification of relationships. The concepts of relationships are changing in this digital age. The relationships became more market oriented and algorithm driven.

The commercialization of relationship raises challenges to the value and meaning of relationship in digital age. Dating app give more emphasizes to physical appearance. Thus it changed the meaning of relationship to physical attraction only. It lead to a sense of detachment and disconnection. Unlimited swiping, short term interactions and superficial expectations cause issues of commitment, trust issues, disposable mentality and dissatisfaction in

relationship .the abundance of relationship dynamics encourage users to search for ‘next best option.’

Dating app also reshaped social and cultural norms. It provide opportunity for people to connect across the geographical and cultural barriers. Dating app also helped people to understand their identity and interests.

The commercialization of relationship incorporated consumerist and market oriented values into romantic relationships. Dating apps commodified love and emotions and thereby altered the nature of relationship in the digital world. Technologically driven relationships and temporary interactions altered the nature of relationships in the digital world.

## **Recommendations**

The commercialisation of relationships had a profound impact on the nature of relationships. The dating apps are erasing the values and meaning of relationships for their business motive. It also alter the norms and values in society. By creating awareness and implementing certain measures the impact of commercialisation of relationship can be reduce.

### **Create awareness**

There is a growing need for making dating app users aware about how their feelings and emotions are commoditised by dating apps for their business motive. Dating app users need to be educated about the commercialization of relationships. They must be aware of the commodification of their emotions and relationships and their impact on mental health. The dating app users need to be aware of the diminishing values and meaning of relationships. They should be aware of the challenges and risks in the digital world.

### **Be aware of the data**

Privacy of personal data is a major challenge faced by dating app users. There is a need to make users aware about the data collection practices of dating apps and the risks associated with it. Give users awareness about how dating app users collect and use data of users.

### **Creation of genuine profiles**

Creating authentic profiles with genuine interests is an important step to navigate commercialization of relationship. Dating app users must prioritize meaningful interactions rather than the unrealistic expectations marketed by dating apps.

### **Set boundaries**

The dating app users must set boundaries for their relationships in dating apps. They should create a clear boundary between superficial relations and meaningful relations. It will help them to avoid issues in relationships due to the unrealistic expectations created by dating apps.

### **Policy and regulation**

Data privacy is major concern of majority of dating app users. Implementing policies and programmes to protect the data of users can ensure safety and data protection. Implement policies to promote fair and transparent practices of dating apps.

In conclusion, there is a need to educate dating app users about the commercialization of relationships, commodification of emotions, data privacy concerns, relationships dynamics, change in the nature of relationships and risks associated with using dating apps. By raising awareness about these issues, users can make informed decisions, set boundaries and thereby navigate the digital dating platforms in a more safe and secure manner.

By addressing these concerns and issues, we can create a safer, more secured, informed and more responsible online dating landscape that prioritizes user experience and well-being and thereby promoting healthy relationships.

## **REFERENCES**



- Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P. W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H. T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online Dating: A Critical Analysis From the Perspective of Psychological Science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(1), 3–66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23484637>.
- Hubbard, P., Collins, A., & Gorman-Murray, A. (2017). Introduction: Sex, consumption and commerce in the contemporary city. *Urban Studies*, 54(3), 567–581. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26151364>
- Das, V. (2019). Dating Applications, Intimacy, and Cosmopolitan Desire in India. In A. PUNATHAMBEKAR & S. MOHAN (Eds.), *Global Digital Cultures: Perspectives from South Asia* (pp. 125–141). University of Michigan Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvndv9rb.9>
- Lundquist, jennifer hickes, & Curington, celeste vaughan. (2019). love me tinder, love me sweet: reshaping the college hook up culture. *Contexts*, 18(4), 22–27. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26853723>
- Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., Spyer, J., Venkatraman, S., & Wang, X. (2016). Online and offline relationships. In *How the World Changed Social Media* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 100–113). UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1g69z35.14>
- Vander Linden, S. (2012). Shopping for Love. *Scientific American Mind*, 23(1), 18–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24942103>
- Varsava, N (2017). Dating Markets and Love Stories: Freedom and Fairness in the Pursuit of Intimacy and Love. *Cultural Critique*, 95, 162–196. <https://doi.org/10.5749/culturalcritique.95.2017.0162>

- Erjavec, K., & Fiser, S. Ž. (2016). Aging Adults about Online Dating: “I am back on the relationship market!” Polish Sociological Review, 195, 361–371. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44113937>
- Rosenfeld, M. J., Thomas, R. J., & Hausen, S. (2019). Disintermediating your friends: How online dating in the United States displaces other ways of meeting. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 116(36), 17753–17758. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26851209>
- Barton, B. (2020). [Review of Love, Inc.: Dating Apps, the Big White Wedding, and Chasing the Happily Neverafter, by L. Essig]. Gender and Society, 34(2), 346–347. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26967120>
- Clark, J. (2015). Mobile dating apps could be driving HIV epidemic among adolescents in Asia Pacific, report says. BMJ: British Medical Journal, 351. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26523608>
- Coyne, S. M., Stockdale, L., Busby, D., Iverson, B., & Grant, D. M. (2011). “I luv u :)!” A Descriptive Study of the Media Use of Individuals in Romantic Relationships. Family Relations, 60(2), 150–162. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41236755>
- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/relationship>
- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336495952\\_Dating\\_Apps](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336495952_Dating_Apps)
- <https://joernlengsfeld.com/en/definition/digital-world/#:~:text=The%20term%20E2%80%9Cdigital%20world%20E2%80%9D%20refers,a%20multitude%20of%20digital%20technologies.>
- Neyt, B., Baert, S., & Vynckier, J. (2019). Job Prestige and Mobile Dating Success: A Field Experiment. IZA - Institute of Labor Economics. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep59730>

- Coser, R.L. (1974). The family: Its structure and functions. St. Martin's Press.
- Strong, & DeVault, C. (2019). The marriage and family experience (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

## **APPENDIX**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### PART I

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

1. E-mail ID
2. Name of the respondent
3. Contact number
4. Age of the respondent
  - a) 18-21
  - b) 22-25
  - c) 26-29
  - d) 30-40
  - e) Above 40
5. Sex
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
  - c) Others
6. Place of residence
7. Educational Qualification
  - a) Below SSLC
  - b) Graduate
  - c) Post Graduate
  - d) Technical (Diploma)
  - e) Other

8. Occupation of the respondent

- a) Self-Employed
- b) Government Service
- c) Private Service
- d) Homemaker
- e) Unemployed
- f) Student
- g) other

9. Marital Status

- a) Married
- b) Unmarried
- c) Other

10. Locality

- a) Urban area
- b) Rural area

11. What is your monthly income?

- a) Less than 99,99/-
- b) 10,000-19,999/-
- c) 20,000-49,999/-
- d) 50,000-99,999/-
- e) More than 1,00,000

## PART II

12. How did you come to know about online dating apps?

- a) Advertisements
- b) Social Media
- c) Friends Circle
- d) Family
- e) Others

13. Have you used any dating app?

- a) Yes
- b) No

14. If yes, which dating app have you used?

15. Are you currently using any dating apps?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16. What are you looking for on dating apps?

- a) Casual Dating
- b) Friendship
- c) Long-term Relationship
- d) Just curious
- e) Others

17. How often do you use dating apps?

- a) Daily
- b) Weekly
- c) Monthly
- d) Rarely

18. How long have you been using dating apps?
- a) Less than 6 months
  - b) 6 months to 1 year
  - c) 1-2 years
  - d) 2-5 years
  - e) More than 5 years
19. What time of the day do you usually use dating apps?
- a) Morning
  - b) Afternoon
  - c) Evening
  - d) Night
20. Which features do you consider most important on dating apps?
- a) Messaging system
  - b) Profile Customization
  - c) Safety measures
  - d) Matching algorithm
21. What do you find most frustrating about using dating apps?
- a) Limited matches
  - b) Fake profiles
  - c) Time consuming
  - d) Unwanted messages
  - e) Others
22. Do you think dating apps provide safety for users?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
23. Do you have fake profile on dating app?
- a) Yes



- b) No
- c) To some extent

24. Which among the following can be considered as safe?

- a) Online dating
- b) Tradition dating
- c) Both
- d) Don't know

25. Do you think dating apps help to find genuine relationships?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26. How lasting is the relationships formed through dating apps?

- a) Below 1 year
- b) 1 year
- c) 1 year-2 year
- d) Above 2 year
- e) Other

27. Do you have paid subscription?

- a) Yes
- b) No

28. How much does the paid subscription cost?

29. Do you think that subscription cost is high?

- a) Yes
- b) No

30. Do you think subscription enhances chances for finding partners?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
31. If No, explain
32. What are the disadvantages related to the lack of subscription?
33. Have you ever felt pressured to upgrade to a paid subscription?
- a) Always
  - b) Never
  - c) Sometimes
34. Do you think that dating apps prioritize profit over user experience?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
35. If yes, explain
36. Are you aware about how dating apps are generating their revenue?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
37. Do you think dating apps encourage superficial interactions rather than meaningful relationships?
38. Do you feel that dating apps make profit out of relationships?
- a) Yes
  - b) No

39. If yes, explain
40. Do you feel that dating apps promote a disposable mentality towards relationships?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
41. Do you feel that dating apps are shaping relationship dynamics as part of their business motive?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
42. Do you feel that data collection practices of dating apps are safe and secure?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
43. If No, explain.
44. Do relationships formed through dating apps feel meaningful than offline relationships?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
45. What do you think is the most significant impact of dating apps on relationships?
46. Did you find a partner from dating app?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
47. Do you feel that dating apps have made it easier to find a potential partner?
- a) Yes
  - b) No

c) May be

48. Do you think that dating apps are a good way to meet people?

a) Yes

b) No

49. Are you satisfied in your relationship through dating apps?

a) Yes

b) No