



Happily Ever After? How do Online Daters Define and Discuss Success?

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BACKGROUND

Prior research on online dating focuses on the characteristics of individuals who use online dating sites [5, 6], how individuals represent themselves on different services [1, 3], and the strategies individuals utilize to find a partner [2, 4]. To date, there have been no studies that examine success stories associated with online dating websites. This study attempts to fill that gap and establish a way forward for examining the dimensions of online dating success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the definition of "success" differ among the three online dating services, Match.com, eHarmony and OkCupid?
2. To what extent do the descriptions of successful relationships differ between three online dating websites?

METHODS AND SAMPLE

The researchers collected a systematic random from the publically available "Success" websites of the three most popular online dating websites, Match.com (n=544), eHarmony (n=213) and OkCupid (n=61). The researchers used SPSS and publically available word frequency tools to analyze the variances in word usage in the descriptions of success.

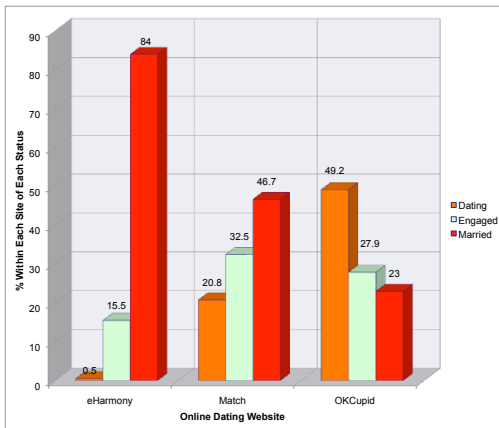


Table 1: What "Success" looks like for different Online Dating Websites

FINDINGS

- Definitions of success differ between online dating websites. eHarmony has a significantly higher percentage of Married couples than the other two websites. The number of eHarmony and Match.com success profiles increases from Dating through Married, while OkCupid's frequency decreases from Dating through Married. This finding is reflected in Table 1.
- eHarmony and Match.com success stories had a higher frequency of phrases related to serious aspects of relationships. OkCupid success profiles were found to have a higher frequency of phrases dealing with the situational aspects of dating.



CONCLUSIONS

Individuals that utilize different online dating websites have different definitions of success. The reasons for these different definitions between online dating websites are unknown, but the results from this study help to inform future research designs to further understand the definition of success in online dating.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers believe that these findings help to inform the following research questions for future studies.

1. Does age contribute to a difference in the construct of success?
2. What cultural dimensions of online dating sites contribute to differences in the definition of success? For example, one site we examined had an abundance of same-sex couples.

SOURCES

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