

What compulsive dating-app users have in common

July 31 2019, by Jeff Grabmeier



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Loneliness and social anxiety is a bad combination for single people who use dating apps on their phones, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that people who fit that profile were more likely than others to say they've experienced negative outcomes because of their dating app use.

"It's not just that they're using their [phone](#) a lot," said Kathryn Coduto, lead author of the study and doctoral student in communication at The Ohio State University.

"We had participants who said they were missing school or work, or getting in trouble in classes or at work because they kept checking the dating apps on their phones."

Coduto said it is a problem she has seen firsthand.

"I've seen people who use dating apps compulsively. They take their phones out when they're at dinner with friends or when they're in groups. They really can't stop swiping," she said.

The study was published recently online in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and will appear in a future print edition.

Participants were 269 [undergraduate students](#) with experience using one or more dating apps. All answered questions designed to measure their loneliness and [social anxiety](#) (for example, they were asked if they were constantly nervous around other people).

Compulsive use was measured by asking participants how much they agreed with statements like "I am unable to reduce the amount of time I spend on dating apps."

Participants also reported negative outcomes from using dating apps, such as missing class or work or getting in trouble because they were on their phones.

Results showed, not surprisingly, that socially anxious participants preferred to meet and talk to potential dating partners online rather than in person. They tended to agree with statements like "I am more confident socializing on dating apps than offline."

But that alone didn't lead them to compulsively use [dating apps](#), Coduto said.

"If they were also lonely, that's what made the problem significant," she said.

"That combination led to compulsive use and then negative outcomes."

Coduto said people need to be aware of their dating app use and consider whether they have a problem. If they have trouble setting limits for themselves, they can use apps that restrict dating app use to certain times of day or to a set amount of time each day.

"Especially if you're lonely, be careful in your choices. Regulate and be selective in your use," she said.

More information: Kathryn D. Coduto et al. Swiping for trouble: Problematic dating application use among psychosocially distraught individuals and the paths to negative outcomes, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/0265407519861153](https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407519861153)

Provided by The Ohio State University

Citation: What compulsive dating-app users have in common (2019, July 31) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-07-compulsive-dating-app-users-common.html>

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