Research Paper

Self-Objectification as A Moderating Variable Between Online Dating Applications Use and The Mental Well–Being of Filipino Young Adults

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Abstract

Usage of online dating applications increased during the peak of the pandemic, and along with this are the concerns about the mental health of young adults. The study focused on the effects of self-objectification on the relationship between online dating application usage and the mental well-being of its users. A total of 204 participants were gathered from five cities within the bounds of Metro Manila: Quezon City (22%), Manila (44%), San Juan (14%), Mandaluyong (11%), and Caloocan (10%). This study treated the data quantitatively using regression and moderation analysis in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study revealed that there was a moderately negative relationship between online dating applications usage and mental well–being of Filipino young adults ($r = -.315$; $p = .000$). This further revealed that frequent usage of online dating applications resulted to lower levels of life and relationship satisfaction, self–esteem, and higher negative affect, body consciousness, and symptoms of eating disorders. However, the study revealed no moderating effect between self-objectification and the relationship between online dating application usage and its users' mental well–being ($p = 0.3102$). An action plan was proposed to aid online dating application users in dealing with the consequences of too much exposure to the objectifying world of social media in general.

Keywords: *Self-Objectification; Online Dating Applications; Mental Well–Being; Moderation Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health concerns have been a global issue for decades, with a shift in focus from preventing severe mental illness to promoting positive mental health (Winzer et al., 2018). Measurements of mental health now include lower levels of mental illness, emphasizing the presence of positive feelings, life functioning, and community engagement (Sahanji, 2022). Two perspectives, hedonic and eudaimonic, explore subjective experiences and psychological functioning, respectively, influencing individuals labelled as "functioning well" (Fat et al., 2022; Her & Timmermans, 2020; Tennant et al., 2007; Rose et al., 2017).

Recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted challenges to mental well-being, with 17% of participants in the Tee et al. (2020) study reporting moderate-to-severe COVID-related psychological symptoms. Social distancing protocols have limited personal interactions, leading to increased reliance on online messaging tools and platforms.

The rise of social media, including online dating applications, has become a means for people to connect, particularly in the context of forming romantic relationships during the pandemic. The study reveals significant global engagement in online dating, with 259 million registered users projected to increase to 280 million by 2024 (Online Dating Worldwide – Statistics &Facts, 2022). In the Philippines, 71% of locals know a couple who met online, and 56% of Millennials use the Internet and online dating applications (OutrageMag.com Staff, 2020).

Online dating applications, such as Tinder, Bumble, and TanTan, allow users to filter profiles based on various criteria. The widespread use of these apps, similar to other social media, presents risks to general well-being, including higher relationship dissatisfaction and negative affect (Coyne et al., 2020; Hunt et al., 2018; Pernokis, 2017).

Another risk associated with social media usage is sexual objectification, which is prevalent

on various online platforms. Objectification, perceiving a person solely based on physical appearance, leads to self-objectification, particularly in young girls and women, resulting in appearance anxiety, eating disorders, shame, lower self-esteem, and negative affect (Daniels et al., 2020; Luke, 2020; Karsay et al., 2017).

While existing studies often focus on specific social media platforms, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the connection between online dating application use and users' mental well-being. The study focuses on Filipino individuals aged 18 to 29 residing within the bounds of Metro Manila. More specifically, this research focused on the association between self-objectification, mental well-being, and the use of online dating applications by young Filipino adults living in Manila, San Juan, Caloocan, Quezon City, and Mandaluyong.

This study used two theories to further explain the relationship among variables. The Objectification Theory, proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts, explores the impact of sexual objectification on individuals' psychological and physical well-being, emphasizing the negative consequences of perceiving and treating individuals as objects solely based on their physical appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This theory posits that experiences of objectification can lead to the internalization of objectified views, contributing to negative outcomes such as lower self-esteem, increased appearance anxiety, higher risk of eating disorders, and reduced sexual satisfaction.

On the other hand, the Social Displacement Hypothesis suggests that increased use of social media and online communication may displace or reduce offline interactions, potentially leading to negative consequences. This hypothesis proposes that the time individuals spend online may replace valuable face-to-face interactions, resulting in reduced well-being and satisfaction with social support (Glaser et al., 2018).

The connection between Objectification Theory and the Social Displacement Hypothesis lies in their combined contribution to understanding the potential negative effects of online interactions on individuals' social support and psychological well-being. Objectification theory emphasizes the psychological consequences of objectification, while the social displacement hypothesis underscores the potential reduction in the quality of social support due to the displacement of offline interactions by online ones.

This study aimed to contribute additional insights into the connection between online dating application use, self-objectification, and the mental well-being of users. The specific objectives include determining the frequency of online dating application usage among young Filipino adults, assessing the levels of self-objectification and mental well-being in this demographic, investigating the existence of a significant relationship between online dating application usage and mental well-being, exploring whether self-objectification moderates the relationship between usage frequency and mental well-being, and proposing potential action plans based on the study's findings.

Three instruments were utilized to measure three variables: the Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-Being Scale assessed users' mental well-being, the Self-Objectification Questionnaire gauged their self-objectification level, and a scale measured the frequency of online dating application usage. Respondents were selected based on the criteria of having or previously having an account and actively using it. The accumulation of respondents employed convenience sampling, representing only a portion of the population. The research adopted a pure quantitative research design, specifically utilizing moderation analysis. Moderation analysis is a research method that examines how one variable is expected to influence the direction or strength of the relationship between two other variables. Importantly, this study did not delve into exploring potential reasons behind the results obtained.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evolution of the internet has led to substantial changes in people's lives, with a significant increase in global internet usage over the past two decades. Internet users spend considerable time online, particularly in Asian countries, where there has been a 1000% increase from 2000 to 2022 (Key Internet Statistics to Know in 2022, 2022). Social networking sites (SNS) have become a prominent aspect of internet use, offering simplified platforms for communication, connection, and collaboration (Hall & Liu, 2022). Social media, a computer-based technology, allows users to share personal information within online communities, providing a convenient path for social engagement, especially for those lacking interpersonal skills. While online interactions contribute to positive well-being when combined with offline interactions, the depth and complexity of face-to-face conversations are missing in online communication, potentially leading to less satisfying interactions and increased loneliness (Bekalu et al., 2019; Huang, 2017; Smith & Anandavalli, 2021).

SNS encourages users to create public or semi-public accounts, using photo uploads to present an online persona. Female users are often assumed to prioritize presenting attractiveness through visually appealing photographs (Frost & Rickwood, 2017; Feltman, 2018). Active social media usage, involving posting and messaging, contributes to positive social well-being, while passive scrolling is considered more harmful. The upward social comparison hypothesis suggests users showcase attractive photos, potentially triggering feelings of inferiority among others (Rydahl et al., 2020; Lamp et al., 2019).

Online dating applications, akin to social media, have become prevalent, with Match.com pioneering online dating in 1995. Location-based applications have further facilitated easy access to online dating websites (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2020). These apps, as described by Winking (2021), serve to facilitate communication among individuals seeking friendship, romance, or casual relationships, allowing users to filter potential matches based on specific criteria (Spitzer, 2021). Swipe-based dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, and OKCupid have gained popularity, allowing users to make quick judgments based on displayed pictures and enhancing a sense of positive interaction through the "no rejection" notion (Holtzhausen et al., 2020; Luke, 2020).

Online dating applications use algorithms to match users based on shared interests, allowing connections through in-app messaging (Winking, 2021). Text-only communication in these apps provides a safer and more user-friendly mode of interaction, leveraging the absence of verbal cues in face-to-face interactions (Smith & Anandavalli, 2021). The study emphasizes the increased prominence of dating apps, supported by push notifications for new matches or messages. Societal expectations influence men to have more active engagement in online dating, while women often adopt a more passive role, exhibiting greater commitment in relationships and a preference for offline dating, accompanied by increased uncertainty with online dating applications (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018).

Exposure to sexualizing media has been linked to heightened beliefs in gender stereotypes, rape myths, and decreased body satisfaction, as noted by Karsay and colleagues (2017). Mainstream media, including social media, has become a powerful communication tool, but it also accentuates sexualization, beauty standards, and sexual appeal, imposing unrealistic body standards on individuals of all genders (Salomon & Brown, 2020). Objectification, evaluating a person based on body parts or sexual functions, is prevalent in various media platforms such as video games, magazines, television, and social networking sites (Feltman, 2018; Daniels et al., 2020).

Sexual objectification, where a person is viewed, valued, and used solely for their physical and sexual appearance, leads to societal pressures to conform to distorted body ideals and increased body evaluation behaviours (Karsay et al., 2017). Women and girls can internalize society's sexualizing opinions and evaluations, perceiving an observer's view of their body as their

own (Zheng et al., 2018). Self-objectification occurs when individuals internalize others' views of themselves, valuing their bodies over other abilities and functionalities (Daniels et al., 2020; Feltman, 2018; Luke, 2020).

Women, often victimized by men's sexualizing behaviours, may view themselves according to these evaluations. Control beliefs, the belief that one can manipulate one's body's appearance, lead individuals to alter their behaviour to meet societal body standards (Daniels et al., 2020; Salomon & Brown, 2020). Body surveillance involves observing one's body to fit into societal standards, often manifested in photo-posting activities on social media, which is linked to negative body image and state self-objectification (Lamp et al., 2019).

In terms of online dating platforms, the structure is similar to other social media services, with added pressure to be considered attractive to find a potential partner (Luke, 2020). Individuals may transpose internalized objectified ideas through edited photos posted on social media. Exposure to sexualizing media contributes to Trait Self-Objectification, and appearance-focused social media use has a positive relationship with self-objectification among girls (Karsay et al., 2017).

Objectification Theory, as proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts and discussed by various researchers (Daniels et al., 2020; Feltman, 2018; Spitzer, 2021), explains how societal sexual objectification impacts the physical and psychological well-being of individuals, not limited to women. This theory suggests that exposure to sexualization, especially through media, leads to internalization of external opinions, resulting in a third-person perspective of oneself, often manifested through a heightened focus on physical appearance (Karsay et al., 2017). Women's vulnerability to sexual objectification negatively affects their well-being. Direct exposure or indirect self-objectification, where individuals view themselves from an external perspective, can harm mental health outcomes, leading to issues such as body surveillance, eating disorders, decreased self-esteem, depressive episodes, and other negative emotions (Spitzer, 2021; Feltman, 2018; Luke, 2020; Koval et al., 2019).

Studies by Daniels et al. (2020) and Koval et al. (2019) highlight the age-related increase in self-objectification among girls and the negative emotional consequences, including increased anger, guilt, shame, and embarrassment, associated with higher exposure to objectification. Luke's (2020) cross-sectional survey on mental well-being, self-objectification, and dating app usage reveals that self-objectification is an independent risk factor for mental well-being.

The surge in awareness about well-being has led to increased studies in this area, emphasizing mental health promotion and prevention of mental illness (Winzer et al., 2018). Well-being encompasses feelings of contentment, functioning well, and overall positive emotions. Mental well-being combines feeling good and functioning well, including happiness and a sense of purpose, even in the presence of mental illness and stress (Her & Timmermans, 2020; Spitzer, 2020; Eger & Maridal, 2015). It involves both eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives, with hedonic focusing on subjective happiness and eudaimonic on self-realization and psychological functioning (Smith & Anandavalli, 2021; Lamp, 2019).

Terms like positive mental health and mental wellness are used interchangeably with mental well-being, emphasizing the positive aspect of mental health. Individuals with higher well-being contribute positively to society by exhibiting responsible financial behaviour, engaging in prosocial activities, making ethical decisions, and prioritizing health. This positive impact extends to academic success, as seen in better grades and professional settings, where happier employees demonstrate increased productivity and reduced absenteeism. Overall, well-being is associated with a range of positive outcomes across personal, academic, and professional domains (Lambert et al., 2020). Mental health outcomes align with the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5th revisions proposed by the APA, while positive mental health, according to the World Health

Organization, is a state where individuals realize their abilities, develop coping mechanisms, work effectively, and contribute to society (Kelly, 2021). The measurement of mental well-being involves tools like the 14-item scale developed by Warwick and Eidenburg in 2007, assessing both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects. However, this scale has been criticized for neglecting the ceiling effect, which restricts score results to a positive direction, potentially limiting a comprehensive measure of mental well-being (About WEMWBS, 2020).

A functioning individual, according to Smith & Anandavalli (2021), has a sense of purpose and life direction, is self-determined, and forms positive relationships with others. Overall, the exploration of well-being involves the assessment of affective, cognitive, and psychological functioning, emphasizing a holistic understanding of mental health.

The relationship between self-objectification, social networking sites, and mental health is explored in studies like that of Bonilla-Zorita et al. (2020), which suggests that online dating applications can foster objectifying environments, leading to self-objectification and symptoms of depression and eating disorders. Zheng et al. (2018) and Salomon and Brown (2020) delve into the connection between selfie postings, self-objectification, and the moderating role of the imaginary audience, finding that younger individuals, with increased imaginary audience ideation, are more susceptible to self-objectification. Lamp et al. (2019) studied the relationship between self-objectification, depressive symptoms, and online behaviours, concluding that specific online behaviours linked to self-objectification are associated with negative mental health outcomes.

The literature review establishes connections among online dating application usage, self-objectification, and the mental well-being of users. Social media use, including online dating applications, can have both positive and negative effects on mental health, with higher usage associated with lower life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pernokis, 2018; Ryadhl et al., 2020; Smith & Anandavalli, 2021).

This study aims to bridge the gap between specific social media platform use, focusing on online dating applications, and the general mental well-being of users aged 18 to 29 (Winking, 2021). It seeks to determine users' mental well-being, including happiness, life satisfaction, psychological functioning, and self-realization. Additionally, the study aims to explore the role of self-objectification as a moderator in the relationship between online dating application usage and mental well-being, investigating whether self-objectification strengthens or alters this connection.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research employs a quantitative design, utilizing numeric data collected through methods like online surveys and telephone interviews (Subject and Course Guides, 2022; Steber, 2021). It incorporates moderation analysis to investigate the relationship between variables, specifically exploring whether self-objectification influences the connection between online dating app usage and users' mental well-being (Moderation Analysis Using Linear Regression, 2020; Blair, 2017; Parilla & Abadillla, 2021).

The study took place in Metro Manila, particularly focusing on Quezon City, a city with significant online dating app usage (GMA Integrated News, 2022). Convenience sampling was utilized, selecting participants based on proximity and accessibility in cities including Manila, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Caloocan, and Quezon City (Stratton, 2021; Simkus, 2023).

Three questionnaires were used for the purpose of this study. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), developed in 2007 by a panel of experts, including Sarah Stewart-Brown, Stephen Platt, Jane Parkinson, Stephen Joseph, Scott Weich, Jenny Secker, Stephen Stansfield, and Glyn Lewis, serves as a tool for monitoring general population well-being and evaluating mental health improvement programs. The scale comprises original 14-item and shorter 7-item versions, employing a five-response category. Scores, based on positive aspects of mental

well-being, are self-completed, indicating well-being levels (About WEMWBS, 2020). The Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ), a 10-item tool, assesses self-objectification across various subjects. Respondents rank statements related to body attributes with appearance-based and competence-based components. Scores ranging from -25 to 25 indicate self-objectification (Spitzer, 2021). A single question assesses users' time spent on online dating applications using a 7-point Likert scale (Overbeek, 2021). The study focuses on examining the relationship between changes in online dating app usage and users' mental well-being.

WEMWBS is validated across diverse age groups, minorities, and mental health service users. Ongoing studies explore its applicability in different cultures. It demonstrates normal distribution in the general population, with validation studies reporting high reliability and test-retest values in various cultural contexts (About WEMWBS, 2020; Mavali et al., 2020; Fung, 2019). SOQ exhibits high construct and concurrent validity, correlating positively with measures of appearance anxiety and body image assessment (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). It demonstrates good internal consistency (Spitzer, 2021).

The research, approved by the Ethical Committee, utilized non-probability convenience sampling involving 204 participants. Pearson correlation and moderation analysis were employed using SPSS to explore relationships and the influence of self-objectification on the connection between online dating app usage and users' mental well-being (Blair, 2017). The study adheres to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), ensuring privacy and proper data handling. Participants received informed consent outlining study details, emphasizing voluntariness and confidentiality. Pandemic restrictions led to online administration for convenience and safety (Republic Act 10173 – Data Privacy Act of 2012, n.d.).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The participant demographics include 111 females and 93 males, aged 18 to 29, concentrated in the 23 to 25 age group, residing in Metro Manila, specifically Quezon City (22%), Mandaluyong (11%), Manila (44%), Caloocan (10%), and San Juan (14%). The selection criteria align with previous surveys and Erikson's psychosocial development theory, emphasizing the significance of forming romantic relationships in the 18 to 30 age group (Statista, 2022; Winking, 2021).

A post hoc analysis with g*power determined the sample size of 204 participants, achieving a high statistical power of 0.999. Subsequent analysis in Jamovi assumed data normality and homogeneity. Table A presents the outcomes of normality and homogeneity tests. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicates normality (p = 0.139), and Levene's Test suggests homogeneity (p = 0.110).

Table 1. Assumption Check for Normality (Shapiro-Wilk Test) and Homogeneity (Levene's Test)

Levene's Test			
F	1.76	Statistic	0.989
Df1	6	p	0.139
Df2	197		
p	0.110		

This study primarily aims to determine if self-objectification moderates the relationship between online dating application use and the mental well–being of its users. Besides, the objectives of this study are to determine the frequency of online dating application usage among Filipino young adults, their level of mental well–being and self-objectification, as well as to determine if there is a significant relationship between online dating application use and mental well – being.
What is the frequency of online dating app usage among selected Filipino young adults?
Filipino young adults use online dating applications on average 27.94% of the time, while

2.45% have no dating app, as shown in Table 1. Social media platforms like Friendster, Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become more popular, impacting dating and long-term relationships. Younger generations are more open to finding true love on social platforms compared to older generations, who value traditional courting methods.

The popularity of using online dating applications among young adults can be traced to their innate need to associate themselves with other people. According to the theory proposed by Erik Erikson, during this time, people encountered a dilemma between intimacy and isolation, and to keep themselves sane, they needed to form and maintain intimate bonds with other people (Winking, 2021).

Table 1. Frequency of Online Dating Apps Usage among Selected Filipino Young Adults

Scale	VI	Frequency	Percentage
7	Two to three times an hour	24	11.76%
6	Once an hour	22	10.78%
5	Two to three times per week	31	15.20%
4	Once a week	29	14.22%
3	Two to three times per month	36	17.65%
2	Once a month	57	27.94%
1	Never	0	0
0	No dating App	5	2.45%
Total		**204**	**100%**

What is the level of self-objectification among Filipino young adults?

As shown in Table 2.1, more than 50% of Filipino young adults displayed a moderate level of competence-based self – objectification, while exactly 50% of them have moderate appearance-based self – objectification. This indicated that half of the participants value their appearance more than their skills and abilities. However, more than half of the participants moderately value their skills and abilities.

Adults and young adults aged 21 to 30 benefit the most from interpersonal interactions, which is why they use online dating apps more than other age groups (Winking, 2021). It was supported by Spitzer (2021), who stated that online dating applications were desired among young adults. These claims about online dating applications were further proved in a study conducted by Sumter and Vandenbosch (2018), in which they stated that dating applications facilitated an increased prominence among users because of the push notifications they received whenever they had new matches or messages.

Table 2. Level of Self-Objectification among Selected Filipino Young Adults in Terms of Appearance-based

Accumulated Score (Ranked)	VI	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 10	Very High	0	0
11 – 20	High	32	15.69%
21 – 30	Moderate	102	50%
31 – 40	Low	70	34.31%
41 – 50	Very Low	0	0
Total		**204**	**100%**

Table 2 indicates that among the young Filipino adults, 53.93% had a Moderate level of competence-based Self-Objectification. On the other hand, 11.27% had a high level of competency-

based self-objectification, as shown in Table 2. The result infers that more than half of the participants moderately value their skills and abilities. A small percentage of them value their skills and abilities more than their appearance. In addition to the previously stated results of the study, mean scores acquired through the instrument's scoring and interpretation process reveal that most of the selected young Filipino adults have moderate self-objectification levels. This could mean that they moderately experience indicators of self–objectification such as body consciousness, constant comparison to other people, body shame, and control beliefs.

The younger generation was more exposed to social media as compared to older generations because of the rise of technology as time passed by. Internalizing problems seemed to have increased, especially in girls living in the 21st century (Winzer et al., 2018). As the study of Karsay et al. (2019) proposed, exposure to social media had a positive relationship with body surveillance, which was one of the indicators of self-objectification. This was especially true as social media enabled an objectifying environment by posting pictures and rating them in terms of likes and reactions.

Table 3. Level of Self-Objectification among Selected Filipino Young Adults in terms of Competence-Based

Accumulated Score (Ranked)	VI	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 10	Very High	0	0
11 – 20	High	23	11.27%
21 – 30	Moderate	110	53.93%
31 – 40	Low	71	34.80%
41 – 50	Very Low	0	0
Total		**204**	**100%**

What is the level of mental well-being of selected Filipino young adults?

The level of mental well–being of selected young Filipino adults had a general assessment of 3.28, interpreted as some of the time or moderate, as shown in Table 3. The indicator, "I've been interested in new things", had the highest computed mean of 3.63, which was verbally interpreted as Some of the time or Moderate. On the other hand, the indicators "I've been dealing with problems well" and "I've been thinking clearly" had the lowest computed mean of 3.08, interpreted as Some of the time or Moderate. A moderate level of mental well–being means that the participants have adequate levels of happiness, satisfaction, and psychological functioning. They have average levels of self–esteem, life satisfaction, and happiness and, at the same time, average levels of loneliness and depression, as positive mental well-being doesn't always mean the absence of negative feelings. The interpretation of the result was similar to that of the scoring manual of the instrument, which stated that it was equivalent to a moderate level of mental well–being that could mean they were neither depressed nor manic. This could be due to several factors, such as interpersonal relationships and environment (Winking, 2021; Beauchamp et al., in press).

This was congruent with the study conducted by Tee et al. (2020), wherein approximately 17% of their participants rated COVID-related psychological symptoms as moderate to severe. However, this contrasted with the study conducted by Shaikh et al. (2021), as they found higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among young adults in the Philippines. Many factors have contributed to the differences in the mental well–being of people in this age group, such as gender, socioeconomic status, coping mechanisms, and the like (Shaikh et al., 2021).

Table 4. Level of Mental Well-being of Selected Filipino Young Adults

Indicators in terms of Mental Well-being	$\overline{X}$	VI	Rank
1. I've been feeling optimistic about the future	3.26	ST	8
2. I've been feeling useful	3.15	ST	12
3. I've been feeling relaxed	3.17	ST	11
4. I've been feeling interested in other people	3.40	O	3
5. I've had the energy to spare	3.20	ST	10
6. I've been dealing with problems well	3.08	ST	13.5
7. I've been thinking clearly	3.08	ST	13.5
8. I've been feeling good about myself	3.24	ST	3
9. I've been feeling close to other people	3.43	O	2
10. I've been feeling confident	3.29	ST	6
11. I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.28	ST	7
12. I've been feeling loved	3.31	ST	5
13. I've been interested in new things	3.63	O	1
14. I've been feeling cheerful	3.34	ST	4
GENERAL ASSESSMENT	**3.28**	**ST/M**	

Is there a significant relationship between the use of online dating applications and their users' mental well–being?

There was a significant relationship between the use of online dating applications and their users' mental well-being, as evidenced by the .000 value. The r value of -.315 indicates a moderate negative linear relationship between the variables, as shown in Table 4. It means that higher online dating application usage accounts for lower mental well–being of its users. Aside from their predatory nature, online dating applications replace time spent with actual dating, thus affecting its users' social involvement and further impacting their psychological well-being. Furthermore, these applications facilitate an objectifying environment where people judge someone based solely on the posted pictures, which, if internalized, will have implications for their mental well-being.

The result of the study was congruent with the study conducted by Pernokis (2018), in which it was found that people who were addicted to using online dating applications had generally lower well–being compared to those who were not using them. More specifically, those who used the apps more frequently had lower life and relationship satisfaction as well as increased negative effects. The study of Rydahl et al. (2020) further supported this by claiming that individuals who used Tinder more than anyone has high self–consciousness and low happiness as well as a possibility of increased loneliness and anxiety.

Table 5. Significant Relationship Between Online Dating Applications Use and Its Users' Mental Well–Being

		Mental Well – Being	Online Dating Apps Usage
Mental Well – Being	Pearson Correlation	1	-.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	204	204
Online Dating Apps Usage	Pearson Correlation	-.315**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	204	204

Does self-objectification moderate the relationship between the amount of online dating app usage and mental well-being?

Self-objectification was significantly related to the mental well-being of the users of online dating apps, as shown in Table 5. However, there was no significant relationship between self–objectification and the interaction between online dating application usage and its users' mental well–as evidenced by the p-value of .3102, accepting the null hypothesis. It can be inferred from this finding that self-objectification does not change the direction of the relationship between online dating application usage and the mental well–being of its users. Moreover, it does not change the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. This could be due to the users' social relationship and personality development; few other predictors that could facilitate the relationship between the said variables.

There are a lot of other reasons behind this relationship, which include consuming particular social media platforms, as well as varying degrees of sexualizing content present on these platforms (Luke, 2020). The results of the study support one of the findings in Pernokis's (2018) study, which indicated that routine use of online dating applications was positively associated with positive mental health and social well–being. However, the present study contradicted Schønning et al. (2020), who concluded that self–objectification accounted for some of the negative association between online dating application usage and the mental well–being of its users. The same was true with the study of Luke (2020), wherein it was stated that exposure to sexualizing media increased the likelihood of a person developing––objectification, which was positively related to a heightened risk for mental health concerns such as eating disorders, lower self–esteem, and negative cognitive performance.

Table 6. Test of Moderation of Self-objectification Level to the Relationship between Amount of Online Dating App Usage and Mental Well-being

Model	Coefficient	SE	t
Constant	46.0423	.7088	64.9600
ODA	-1.6881	.4008	-4.2115
SOQ	.1127	.0565	1.9970
Int_l	.0295	.0290	1.0173

Based on the findings, what action plan may be proposed?

Table 6 shows the proposed action plan based on the findings of this research. An action plan was created as an output, and it is not only for online dating application users but for the entire population of young Filipino adults. This can help them be aware of their mental well–being and the possible implications of excessive social media usage. It was established in this research that the use of online dating applications comes with psychological risks. In addition to that, the objectifying nature of these applications promotes self–objectification that could further affect its users mental well–being. In these applications, people post pictures of themselves which they think are the most beautiful. And by nature, other users will swipe left or right depending on their preference. The number of matches itself can affect the person by prompting them to think that fewer matches mean they do not fit society's beauty standards. This thinking, when internalized, will turn into self–objectified thoughts that could damage the person's mental well–being.

It is important that users and prospective users be informed of the risks they may face by using online dating applications. For this, a series of webinars and activities are proposed to help young adults deal with the consequences of using too many social media platforms like online dating applications. These webinars/talks will last at least an hour to tackle important and relevant

matters regarding the issue at hand. These are intended for the participants to gain knowledge about the objectifying world of social media, including online dating applications, and its effect on people's mental well–being. During the webinars, an exchange of ideas from psychology professionals and testimonials from users themselves will emerge, giving the participants a pseudo-experience on the matter.

Aside from the webinars included in the action plan, a social experiment is also proposed. In this social experiment, participants of the upcoming webinar can set up an online dating application account on a big screen. The interface will somewhat be the same, as well as the experience. Participants may swipe left or right on other people's profiles, depending on their preference. However, despite how beautiful and confident they are in the picture entered on the big screen, they will receive no matches/likes. After the experience, they will answer a short form regarding their experience. Debriefing from the experiment will happen during the seminar/talk that comes after. In this activity, the participants will get a hold on how their current feelings/emotions change just by acknowledging that they did not receive any matches/likes from the applications.

The main agenda for these webinars/talks and social experiments is to inform the public about the existing concerns not just about online dating applications but other social media platforms as well. Objectification is not the only factor that could further the effects of social media usage on its users' mental well – and some of those are more detrimental than self – self-objectification. The rise of these applications is inevitable, and the only thing we can do is to inform the users of its pros and cons. Prevention is better than cure, but in a fast-moving world, there are some cases where we can only do so much to help our fellow human beings.

Table 7. Proposed Action Plan

Area of Concern	Objectives	Activities	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Expected Outcome
Increasing use of online dating applications among young Filipino adults	To give awareness on how excessive usage of online dating applications psychologically affects its users.	Webinar/Talk: "The Psychology of Swiping Left and Right"	July 2023 – August 2023	Filipino young adults (18 to 29 years old) Psychology Professionals	For participants to be aware of the effects of online dating application usage and how to deal with it.
Increasing levels of self – -self-objectification among online dating application users	To give awareness about the implications of self-objectification in the person's mental well–being.	Webinar/Talk: "Self – Objectification : Who's Fault is it?" "Breaking the Mirror on the Wall: How to Deal with Self – Objectification "	June 2023 – August 2023	Filipino young adults (18 to 29 years old) Psychology Professionals	For the participants to be aware of the adverse effect of self-objectification , where it stems from, and the possible ways to deal with it,
Improvement of young	To help social media users,	Social Experiment:	Septembe r 2023 –	Filipino young adults	For the participants

Area of Concern	Objectives	Activities	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Expected Outcome
Filipino adults' mental well–being by focusing on social media usage and self – self-objectification	especially young adults, improve their mental well–being despite being exposed to the objectifying world of social media.	"Swipe Right for a Happier Future" Seminar/Talk: "Double Tap: Dealing with Likes and None"	October 2023	(18 to 29 years old) Psychology Professionals	to experience first-hand how rejection, in the form of "likes" and "swipe rights", affects their mental well–being. And for them to have knowledge of how they can possibly deal with negative feelings when online.

The study delves into the online dating behaviour and mental well-being of Filipino young adults, revealing that approximately 27.94% utilize online dating applications. Social media platforms influencing dating trends are discussed, with an emphasis on their impact on the younger generation. The research grounds itself in Erik Erikson's theory, connecting online dating to the developmental need for intimate connections during a specific life stage. The study's findings indicate that 53.93% of young Filipino adults display a moderate level of competence-based self-objectification. The exposure to social media, particularly pronounced among the younger generation, correlates with increased self-objectification, as highlighted by Karsay et al. (2019). It further identifies a moderate level of mental well-being among participants, linking mental well-being to factors such as interpersonal relationships, aligning with previous research by Winking (2021) and Beauchamp et al. The study's interpretation aligns with the scoring manual, indicating a moderate level of mental well-being and suggesting average levels of various psychological indicators. Moreover, this study suggests that higher app usage is associated with lower mental well-being. The study's uniqueness lies in its exploration of online dating's impact on social involvement and the objectifying nature of these platforms, contributing to the understanding of their influence on mental well-being.

The study employs moderation analysis to determine the effect of self-objectification on the relationship between online dating app usage and mental well-being. This method adds a layer of sophistication to the analysis, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between these variables. The study's significance is further emphasized by addressing the existing problem of the lack of related literature in this specific area. By exploring the relationships among online dating behaviour, self-objectification, and mental well-being within the context of Filipino young adults, the research fills a gap in the literature, providing valuable insights into a relatively unexplored territory. The inclusion of moderation analysis adds depth to the study, enhancing its contribution to the field of psychology and social sciences.

CONCLUSIONS

The study's significant findings lead to several noteworthy conclusions about young Filipino adults and their use of online dating applications. Firstly, there is a growing trend among this demographic to engage with these platforms at least once a month, seeking a range of connections from romantic relationships to platonic friendships (Huang, 2017). Additionally, these individuals exhibit moderate levels of appearance and competence-based self-objectification, possibly influenced by the nature of online dating applications that expose them to sexualized and idealized media, resulting in concerns such as weight dissatisfaction and a drive for thinness (Luke, 2020). Despite this, the mental well-being of young Filipino adults using online dating applications appears to be at a moderate level, characterized by neutral positive and negative feelings, indicating average levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and life functioning (Frost & Rickwood, 2017).

However, a significant and negative association is noted between the usage of online dating applications and the mental well-being of users. Higher usage is linked to lower mental well-being, potentially contributing to psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and various esteem-related problems (Schønning et al., 2020). Intriguingly, the study reveals that self-objectification levels, prevalent in social networking sites like online dating applications, do not directly impact the relationship between application usage and mental well-being (Pernokis, 2018). This implies that factors beyond self-objectification contribute to the observed impact on mental well-being.

In light of these findings, the proposed action plan emerges as a valuable resource not only for current users of online dating applications but also for those contemplating their use, offering insights that extend beyond individual behaviours and experiences.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The study's findings highlight the need for further exploration and refinement due to acknowledged limitations. A deeper examination of the factors influencing self-objectification among online dating app users is deemed essential to enhance understanding of its intricate relationship with usage patterns and mental well-being. The study suggests a more extensive investigation into variables such as societal norms, cultural influences, and individual psychological profiles that shape users' self-perceptions within the online dating environment.

The recommendation for future research includes extending participant numbers and focusing on specific types of self-objectification to clarify relationships among variables. Additionally, professionals are advised to educate young Filipino adults about the consequences of excessive social media use, particularly on online dating apps. Awareness programs, seminars, and activities are proposed to address mental well-being issues and the negative effects of social media. Psychology professionals are encouraged to propose activities that help users manage emotions in an objectifying online environment, emphasizing the importance of maintaining emotional well-being.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on certain aspects but acknowledges the need for refinement and expansion in future research. A deeper exploration of factors influencing self-objectification in the context of online dating applications will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping users' mental well-being.

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