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Pandemic and Its Legal Impacts on Online Dating

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ABSTRACT

Technology growth has exploded in the previous decade, and along with it, human lifestyles have transformed. Dating is a traditional idea, yet internet dating is prevalent. This article will examine the various angles on internet dating and its ethical responsibilities. The different aspects include the pandemic that impacted nearly everything in the world, how it affected apps and their users, and other risks, legislation, and related cases. The study demonstrates the many aspects consumers frequently overlook, leading them into a blind alley of extortion or harassment. Users must exercise extreme caution, but law enforcement agencies must also concentrate on these newly emerging problems with cutting-edge solutions to create a sense of security and safety among their fellow citizens. In this article, we will cover the information technology act 2000 rules and regulations, money extortion through online dating applications, harassment on the online platform, and everything about online dating applications and their impacts.

Keywords: *Pandemic, online dating, extortion, fraud, IT Act.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Virtual has become a buzzword in the post-pandemic world, not only in everyday life but also in business. The online dating industry is one such business emerging as a new age and rapidly changing to meet changing demands. The idea of modern love has altered as a result of western culture's influence. We had come a long way from the days when parents prevented their kids from selecting a mate to the present when parents have abandoned the traditional approach and allowed their kids the freedom to make their own decisions.

Although the dating industry in India has been steadily growing since the introduction of home-grown dating apps roughly a decade ago, the growth post-pandemic has been phenomenal; dating apps like Tinder, Ok Cupid, Truly Madly, Happen, Woo, Grinder, Aisle, etc.

According to Quack Quack, an India-based dating App company, at least 41% of young daters out of approximately 20 million virtual daters use dating Apps to select their dates.

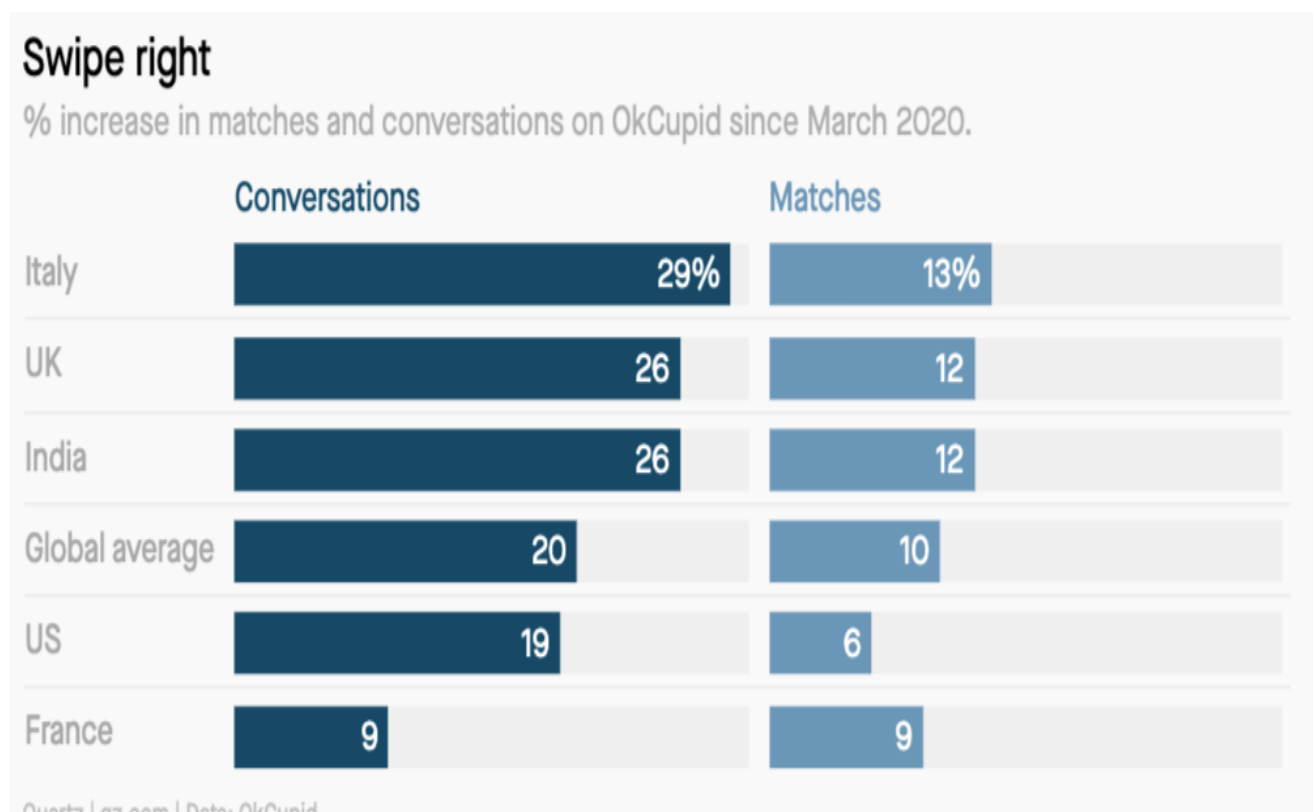
It wasn't long before dating sites sprang up to protect those who wanted to socialize online.

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Currently, dating sites have attracted millions of users and become one of the most popular ways to interact with people on the Internet. Despite its popularity, there are risks associated with using these services.

II. PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACTS ON ONLINE DATING

According to a year-end analysis from Tinder, dating apps had a record-breaking number of users in 2020. With more than 3 billion swipes, Tinder set a new record for the most activity in a single day on March 29, 2020, just as most of the globe went into lockdown. Dates on OkCupid soared by 700% between March and May 2020, and video calls on Bumble rose by 70%. What is the cause of this significant industrial growth? The pandemic is the apparent response. Dating applications like those mentioned above were among the few choices accessible to folks who desired social connection outside their home, as parties and group trips were off-limits under stay-at-home orders.



It might be the result of everyone's loneliness when life was restricted to four walls of the house, away from family and friends. However, the growth has also had negative implications. Online dating has become synonymous with privacy infringement, cyberstalking, bullying, and harassment.

Although the applications have made it simpler to locate a partner, everyone is now concerned about the threat to their privacy. In the blink of an eye, decisions are made. For the app's

algorithm to correctly match our profile with other users who could be interested in it, users on these apps disclose their info as much as possible. They don't think the information they gave the applications could be sold or provided to others. While they might promise that your information won't be shared, there have been a few recent reports of these applications monitoring users and disclosing extraordinarily private and sensitive information to a third party.

III. THE THREATS OF ONLINE DATING

When you swipe, type, and encounter internet similarities, dating apps gather a wide range of data. There are some things you tell people up front, such as your name, occupation, partner's demands, and sexual preferences. Additionally, they gather many data from your smartphone. The majority want access to your device's data, contacts, photographs, Wi-Fi and network connections, and location.

Every coin has two sides, and understanding the second side is just as crucial as understanding the first. You also offer information in ambiguous ways if you utilize a dating app or many other applications for that problem. You can, for instance, show your interest in or unhappiness with the sort of person you are viewing, which may include data like their racial heritage or the grin in their images, in addition to the time you spend perusing someone's profile. Personal data may become a source of revenue thanks to dating applications.

It has been proved that most people who use online dating sites are liars. They lie about their characteristics, employment, houses, salaries, and marital status. Also, Communicating online before meeting in person might lead to unreasonable expectations; curated profiles need to reveal essential information about who potential dates are as individuals, and having an unlimited number of possibilities means you may have a difficult time finding someone eager to commit. Whether an individual is a person, he is showing he is on the online platform. The risk of fraud and misrepresentation arises at a tremendous rate.

IV. NEW INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, AS WELL AS NEW IT REGULATIONS FOR OTT PLATFORMS

In India, there are no specific rules governing the internet dating industry. The Information Technology Act of 2000, now in effect, makes it easier for legitimate digital, electronic, and online transactions to avoid cybercrime, but there is no equivalent legislation for dating applications. However, while they are accountable for giving their clients a platform for intermediary communication, their liability is limited. As platform providers, companies must

display accurate and verified information, and they may be held accountable for such actions.

Because dating app use in India is relatively new compared to the West, yet it is rapidly expanding in Tire 1 and Tire 2 cities, our government is not yet capable of handling its issues. The government must act in the ensuing years. The government must enact rules requiring these applications to adhere to digital protection standards to prevent bogus profiles and identity theft. Scams, fraud, and criminal crimes are present, but relatively few are officially reported.

V. CASE LAWS RELATED TO CYBER FRAUDS AND CRIMES IN DATING APPS

- Suman Reddy, a 29-year-old software engineer from Bangalore, poses as a woman on the Lecanto classifieds app. Reddy had already defrauded more than 500 individuals, earning him many lakhs, by the time Guntur police detained him. The justifications were spontaneous trip arrangements involving stolen credit cards, medical emergencies, and many others.

- The LGBTQ population is more frequently targeted because they are less likely to visit the police station. Ashish, a homosexual guy from Mumbai, was going to Delhi for business and found a match on a dating app. He chose to meet him, but when they did, he was intimidated and asked for money—roughly Rs. 20,000—so he had to flee for his safety. When he got home and spoke to his buddy, he discovered that many other homosexual people have also been exposed to scams in this manner.

- Although there have been few recorded cases, people have begun to emerge and report them. The Russian Biwi Con case is a typical example of dating fraud in which a beautiful Russian girl befriends an older guy online. After conversing and talking for a while, she expresses a desire to visit India and learn more about Indian culture and him, but she is unable to do so owing to a lack of funds. This is the point at which everything begins. The man then feels terrible for her and transmits money for her to fly to India. Because the money was transmitted through services such as Western Union rather than any bank, tracing becomes more difficult. The next day, these thieves begin their game by blackmailing him into sharing the phone logs and footage with his wife if he does not transfer additional money. In such instances, a person does not go to the police station to preserve his current connection with his wife and other people. Taking advantage of it, large sums of money are extorted.

VI. CONCLUSION

India, an overcrowded nation with a large number of young people, is a very fruitful area for these applications, and shifting thoughts toward technology has accelerated the transition from being sociable to being a tech person. Some use them for entertainment, while others use them

for business, but the app manufacturers make money, and they don't care in this opportunistic and materialistic world if some percentage of their customers get cheated on their apps because overall business and other customers, including ordinary customers and scammers, are getting their work done without issue.

The laws must be properly formalized in order to exert pressure on businesses and app developers to adhere to the law. They must be required to look into and address the problems of their consumers. In order to keep up with the rapidly evolving digital industry, citizens must be more active and observant. They should not wait for the government to take action and set regulations. Last but not least, it's critical to be better knowledgeable about the law and to raise concerns when they arise.
