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### **Is There a Dark Side to Dating Applications? Exploring the Prevalence of Perpetration and Victimization on Dating Applications**

Rebecca Fisico, BA (Hons)  
Leigh Harkins, PhD  
Jocelyn Filipowich  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Since 1995, the number of people meeting their sexual or romantic partners online has risen at an exponential rate (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). When researching why people say they use dating applications, it became apparent that this growing popularity is due to a variety of reasons. These reasons included that when people use dating applications they feel more in control of their love life, they believe they have an increased ability to find prospective partners, and because dating applications allow people to form a variety of connections, not exclusively romantic ones (Hobbs, Owen, Gerber, 2016).

Although dating applications can be a useful addition to peoples' lives when used appropriately, this study investigates if and how often dating applications can facilitate the perpetration and victimization amongst its users. This is such an important avenue of study because cyber-victimization and perpetration within dating relationships appears to be somewhat rampant. One study found that 93% of participants reported being a victim and 93.7% of participants reported being a perpetrator of an act of minor cyber abuse. In the context of this study minor cyber abuse consisted of acts like name-calling, swearing, insulting, and "shouting" using capital letters (Leisring & Giumetti, 2014). This same study found that 12.6% of participants reported being a victim and 13.3% reported being a perpetrator of severe cyber abuse. Severe cyber abuse in this context consisted of threats, humiliation, and public embarrassment (Leisring & Giumetti, 2014). Dating applications may also be a hot spot for perpetration and victimization because individuals have been found to have less guilt associated with perpetration online due to the lack of direct contact and larger distance away from their victim (Melander, 2010; Schnurr, Mahatmya & Basche, 2013).

This study will explore the prevalence rates of perpetration and victimization on dating applications. This will be done by using anonymous online surveys done by student participants. This will be a very preliminary study because most research that has been done on dating applications has not explored these issues and have focused more on cyber-victimization or cyberbullying among friendships and dating relationships in general, rather than on a specific platform of communication, like a dating application (Draucker & Martsof, 2010; Melander, 2010; Kellerman, Margolin, Borofsky, Baucom & Iturralde, 2013; Schnurr, Mahatmya & Basche, 2013). Since the dating application Tinder, alone has over 10 million active users a day it is evident that if perpetration and victimization on these applications is prevalent it can be far reaching making it an important and innovative area of study (Sumter, Vandenbosch & Ligtenberg, 2017). This study will allow for an improved understanding of participants' attitudes and sexual experiences with dating applications in

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general, as well as increasing the level of understanding and knowledge on the potential dark side of dating applications.

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**Rebecca Fisico** is a student at The University of Ontario Institute of Technology, majoring in Forensic Psychology and minoring in Criminology and Justice. Her research is focused on delving into little known world of dating applications and exploring the prevalence of perpetration and victimization on this platform. Due to the preliminary nature of this research she hopes to add to the limited information in academia on this topic and help create a stepping stone for future research in this area. She hopes to use her education to help facilitate positive change within the world by addressing and tackling the difficult issues that others may not want to address. She hopes to do this through front line work, assessing current programs and policies, and creating innovative solutions to the identified problems.