



DATING APPS AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS: THE QUALITY OF
RELATIONSHIP AMONG ONLINE AND OFFLINE COUPLES.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper **DATING APPS AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS: THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG ONLINE AND OFFLINE COUPLES** is the end result of our own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Dating Apps And Face-to-Face Meetings: **DATING APPS AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS: THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP AMONG ONLINE AND OFFLINE COUPLES** prepared and submitted by Chai Pau Pau Dakshina, Chew Yi Erng, Hwang Jia Yi, Lee Po Ee and Sherwina Deepa Devanbu in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Public Relations is hereby accepted.

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Abstract

As technology is getting advanced, online dating becomes a popular way for people to develop a new relationship. Dating apps are one of the methods and have been widely accepted by people, especially the youth when they want to find a long-term partner. Dating apps provide them a platform to find their preferred partner, especially providing the minority included gay and lesbian to have more opportunities to get their ideal partner. Romantic relationship is the most common relationship that dating apps users are trying to seek for. They are not only wanting to look for a romantic relationship, but also wanting to look for a quality in the relationship. However, the downfall of communication via dating apps has occurred throughout the process. Problem such as trust issue, love scam and online sexual harassment have been experienced by the dating apps users. This research brings the aim of exploring the quality of relationship among youth couples either while using the dating apps or meeting face to face and understanding how the dating apps could bring either positive or negative impacts towards the romantic relationship. The qualitative method used for this research will be in-depth interview whereas purposive sampling will be the method of selecting the interviewees. The findings that have been retrieved from this research, as a whole there are 4 themes which are criteria, critical thinking, communication and relationship. Each of the themes contains different sub-themes. The sub-themes for criteria are appearance, trust, and connectivity whereby the sub-themes for critical thinking are decision making and mutual understanding. Adding on, the sub-themes for communication are preference of communication method, communication barrier and display of emotions while the sub-themes for relationship are appreciation and comfortable.

Keywords: Dating apps, Romantic relationship, Youth, Quality relationship, Criteria, Critical Thinking, Communication, Relationship

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Dating apps is a software that have been designed for people to develop a relationship, for instance romance relationship, casual sex and friendship. It helps people in the society to stay connected with each other. The users of dating apps are allowed to look for their desired partners and friends according to their preferences such as age, gender and location (Orchard, 2019). According to Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012), dating apps are one of the most welcomed methods for people nowadays to meet with new people. Dating apps allow the users to create their own profile on the applications which include the user's images, description, location and their preferences on the desired relationship and locations; dating apps also allow the users to 'like' and 'dislike' the other profiles on the same application while they are looking on others profile (Chin, Edelstein & Vernon, 2018). According to Gitlin (2021), different users with different ages will have different purposes while they are using dating apps such as developing a new long-term relationship and for casual hookups.

According to Gonsalves (2021), relationships can be defined as any types of links and connections among people, including positive, negative, romantic and platonic. The four common categories of relationships are friendship, family relationship, romantic relationship and acquaintanceships. To define friendship, according to Blieszner, Ogletree and Adams (2019), friendship is a relationship that can last a lifetime, playing an important role in maintaining social bonds late in life when other relationships, such as with colleagues and members of the organization, may be abandoned. According to Barnard (2021), family can be defined as a group of people who joined and linked together by the ties of matrimony, blood or adoption, forming a single household, communicating with one another in their own social status, generally would be the husband and wife, parents, children and siblings. For romantic relationships, it brings the meaning of a loving relationship between individuals that includes

people's emotional and physical harmony (Wordpress Maintenance, 2021). To define acquaintanceship, according to The Editors (2021), an acquaintance is further than a contextual relationship via working or meeting due to being introduced by others, the behaviour in an acquaintance relationship is more courteous than friendship which sharing a similar previous experiences, bond and level of familiarity. An acquaintance relationship can be developed into a friendship once both of the people are having more in-depth understanding and have found the same interest. There are different types of relationships that can be found on dating apps, for instance, long-term relationships which are also known as romantic relationships and also to look for casual sex. According to Albright and Simmens (2014), the most common relationship that people are looking for for dating websites is a long-term relationship. Besides, most people who use mobile dating applications are seeking for or developing a casual sex partner (Licoppe, Riviere & Morel, 2015).

Dating apps nowadays are getting popular and widely used among Malaysian youth. According to Malay Mail (2019), the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) has redefined the age range of youth in Malaysia which is from age 15 till 30. According to the Unesco (2019), youths are the group of people who fall under the age of 15 to 24. According to The Straits Times (2017), a survey has been conducted by McCann Truth Central of McCann Worldgroup to find out the motives of youth using dating apps. The targeted audience of the survey are people from the age groups of 16 till 30 years old from 18 countries, and out of 11,000 respondents 2000 were from Malaysia. According to Hindustan Times News (2021), dating apps have provided youth a new and convenient way to stay connected with society without stepping out of their comfort zone. Dating apps allow the users to know more about the other person by looking into the other's profile. By doing so, the users could make decisions on if they want to meet with the person physically. As a result, users will not feel embarrassed to talk with others online as they have the power to choose what

topic to be discussed and if they would like to continue with the conversation (The Manifest, 2020).

Besides, dating apps also act as a communication medium as it allows people to have an opportunity to get in touch with people from different areas, not limited to their own country (Hindustan Times News, 2021). Other than that, there are also some personal reasons that lead youths to use dating apps, for instance, feeling lonely and needing someone to talk with, having curiosity on certain dating apps, and wanting to recover from a recent breakup (The Manifest, 2020). According to Brydon (2017), youths tend to use dating apps for different reasons such as looking for companionship and following the trend of using dating apps. Dating apps also allow youths to seek for romantic relationships in a more convenient and safe way. According to Lope (2020), dating apps allow users to seek for new companionship according to their preferences, for instance, their preferred location, gender, age and ethnicity. As a result, it can lead to an increasing chance for users to meet with the most suitable person. In addition, youths are able to look into others' profiles before they decide if they want to meet with the person physically, thus, it is safer for youths while they are expanding their social network (New Straits Times, 2017).

There are different dating applications in the market that are provided for people to use for searching for a relationship. According to research done by Adam, Rashidan, Rahim, Ar Azman, Mohammad Shukor and Mohd Fadzil (2020), the most popular and well-known dating apps among Malaysians are Tinder; however, the most common and widely used dating apps in Malaysia during the Covid-19 pandemic are Bumble, Jommpa, Lunch Actually and Coffee Meets Bagels (Tan, 2021). According to Dating Planners (2021), there are 9 dating applications and websites that are widely used by people internationally, and the apps included eHarmony, Elite Singles, Seeking, Silver Singles, Adult Friend Finder, Zoosk, Match and Bumble. From both news reports from local and international context can see that Bumble is the dating

application that is widely used by people. Bumble is an application that is created for people to stay connected with the society, it provides its users to look for new friendships and business mentors, not only for searching for dates. When both people match on the application, Bumble allows females to take the first move before a new conversation and if the woman did not start the conversation or the other person did not respond within 24 hours then the connection will automatically expire (Bumble, 2021).

By using dating apps, people are not just wanting to develop a relationship instead they want to develop a relationship with quality. According to Mills (2021), a quality relationship can always encourage and motivate people when they are having their difficult times; a quality relationship provides trust and care to another person and is expected to be there and give support when people are having difficult times. According to Knudson (2020), a quality relationship is a relationship with quality which is classified by four essential criteria: the relationship needs to be empowering, the relationship gives people a feeling of trust, the person in the relationship is being respected and the relationship can allow the person to be themselves. There is a relationship which shows the quality of a particular relationship which is the committed relationship but yet to be married. According to Chatel (2015), a committed relationship is a relationship where two individuals constantly communicate, deal and support each other, as well as putting each other in the future plan. According to Farooq (2014), a relationship quality is an assessment or rating of a person's relationship: It is a concept of an individual having different feelings towards their relationship, either positive or negative.

1.2 Problem Statement

As time goes by, so are its people and technology itself. With the development of dating applications, interpersonal communication among people has been affected. Dating apps enable users to meet people outside of their social circle and may also allow them to meet different types of people without boundaries. According to market research company YouGov

(2017), 3 out of every 10 Malaysians have used an online dating app, and 52 % know at least one couple who met online. Unfortunately, the communication between people may be affected, scammers and unscrupulous individuals have been accused of damaging others via the usage of online dating platforms. Scams, manipulations, hurts, and other nefarious concoctions are unquestionably against the law. The lawbreakers utilise various interaction techniques throughout the conversation in order to acquire advantages from the victims. It also has an influence on interpersonal interactions, as in many of the scenarios stated above, individuals have less confidence in the users of dating apps. Not only that, according to Madden & Lenhart (2019), many dating apps users anticipate the individuals they meet on the service to lie about themselves. Faking any part of an online dating profile, on the other hand, may be a short-sighted plan. The results showed that individuals are not fully revealing and presenting their true features to others, which has resulted in a decline in the quality of interpersonal interaction.

This research would like to look into the relationship quality among couples that meet through dating apps and face-to-face. The research would like to highlight three problems pertinent to dating app and relationship quality namely, trust issues about appearance deceiving, online sexual harassment, and chance for minority group to seek life partner.

Problem Statement 1: Trust issues, deceived by appearance

The lack of trust has been recognized as one of the most challenging barriers to communicating with people and when engaging in dating apps (Chiu & Pan, 2020). An effective way for individuals to impart and discover their affection or just to meet new individuals would be through dating apps. Adding on it is also to understand the behaviour of the users could enrich the understanding of why individuals choose to communicate or not on dating apps. Some people misused the dating app to lie or provide false impressions to other

people. However it also shows how much an individual has less trust using an online dating app to communicate. For example, the Malaysia researchers have found out that one-third of online dating apps users have not met up in their real life with their partners who knew each other in dating apps and this can be observed that people have less trust using an online dating app (Adam et al., 2020).

According to Morgan (2019), Jeffrey Evans from Fishguard who was 23 years old had online dating experience when using Tinder and Bumble dating apps. However, he said he is more likely to use it offline to meet real people. Jeffrey also said he found that online dating apps lacked trust because of the online presence which was so malicious. After he faced some issues, he decided to delete the dating app and said he just wanted to have a real connection with a real life partner without any unnecessary motives (Morgan, 2019). Meanwhile, there are some threats in dating apps which the users need to be careful when using it. For instance, a spiteful user is able to create fake profiles by engaging with other users to build the trust with them through communication only to violate the trust shortly (Stanier et al., 2010). Therefore, it is easy to create fake profiles in dating apps where the fakers can use another phone containing other people's photos to verify the authenticity of the profile (Stanier et al., 2010). When no trust or feedback profiles exist, multiple identities will appear to attack the genuine online dating app users. The fake profile users also specifically target the profiles which they want to attack and at the end it will spoil the users emotional well being and trust in others when trying to form relationships (Stanier et al., 2010).

During the last decade, the Internet has turned into a significant stage to connect either potential seeking relationships or sexual accomplices (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012). As the Internet is a daily basis requirement for engagement in online dating practices, it generally can be observed that more non-single users are making use of the technology as a benefit for them. Many individuals feel comfortable when communicating online rather than offline and also by

using these apps makes them feel good about themselves and less desolated (Sumter & Vandebosch, 2019). Moreover, young adolescents' communication is also affected by dating apps in the sense of being able to lie about their appearances and information in regards to them. However some of the apps have been linked to one another thus it is harder to lie as individuals would be meeting face-to-face such as physical characteristics (Ward, 2017). Nevertheless individuals, on the other hand, report being dissatisfied during face-to-face interactions since they had different expectations based on the internet information. As a result, the risk of misleading information appears to be continuing (Ward, 2017).

On the other hand, the use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) is becoming more common in online platforms which mediate between human to human communication (Wu & Kelly, 2020). This can impact the perceptions of a person in the online dating app when trust is the most important keyword of establishing communication in a dating app. For example, according to the researcher Wu and Kelly (2020), the AI based tools include 'smart replies', which are short and straightforward generated messages that saves users time and energy in writing text and sentence-completion features, which means the AI system tries to detect what the users want to say and will see the opposite user what they begin to type as well. This AI is allowed to modify or create the generated messages to satisfy the opposite users' needs in communication to keep getting attention from the real dating app user. According to the current study, love nowadays can be found in algorithms which are in dating apps and 44% of people who use a dating app said that they would believe and trust the choices and matches of AI (The Star, 2021).

Problem Statement 2: Online Sexual Harassment

Users construct a personal profile on dating apps, which are primarily location-based platforms. Users upload photos and provide a brief description about themselves. If users choose to check in using their Facebook account, they will have access to additional data and

information. Users may explore other people's profiles based on numerous parameters such as location, gender, and age, and then discard or like profiles using the left or right swiping action. When two users express interest in one other's profiles, they are matched and may communicate through the app. All users must consent to the sharing of their personal information and profiles. The usage of social media and mobile apps has contributed to the growth of the sharing economy, in which users get compensated for their services. The perceived and experienced privacy threats and the actual advantages are always at odds. The settings and big data of dating apps allows strangers to engage in mutually agreed-upon spontaneous relationships. The app's design encourages users to rate others based on limited information. In terms of safety, a complete profile as defined by a dating app is insufficient. The verification approach reduces the possibility of physical impersonation to some extent, but it does not address bogus identities, fraudulent motives, skewed realities, or destructive habits created on the app (Maria & Cosima, 2021).

According to Castro and Barrada (2020), there are few interests for users that use online dating apps, which may include potential sexual and romantic partners or curiosity, enjoyment, and interpersonal interactions. Dating app not only bring the widespread use and benefits to social life, it also serve as a platform for antisocial behaviour such as sexual harassment and coercion. According to Douglass et al. (2018), 57% of Australian respondents who had used online dating app before had faced the online sexual harassment. Based on a study of Thompson (2018), women receive sexually insulting messages from men on dating apps. For example, men insulting comments on women appearance, even they got rejected or ignored, as well as sexually aggressive invitations, threats of sexual violence, and victim blaming. Unwanted sexual comments, approaches, and demands made on a digital medium are referred to as online sexual harassment. Receiving non-consensual content including sexual material, threats, or blackmail are common examples of online sexual harassment. Texting sexual images and

videos, publicising sexual information about someone, or forcing them to engage in sexual acts are just a few examples. This may happen if the individual utilised a phoney account, an alias, or other methods to conceal their identity (Kaakinen et al. ,2020). Perhaps much more terrifying is the fact that the other half of the suspects were known to the victims. This suggests that the harasser had a relationship with the victim and was so comfortable tormenting them that they didn't even bother to conceal their identity.

Besides, in this pandemic, online dating platforms have grown in popularity. However, a lot of users have reported that they have experienced some form of online sexual harassment on online dating platforms. According to Pew Research Center (2020), 28% male users and 58% female users ages 18-34 in online dating apps have received a sexually explicit message or image they did not ask for.

According to Ridley (2016), Alexandra Tweeten, told "Good Morning America" that she has received a lot of messages with harassing content and contexts, and also she was called "sexist and hateful" while using dating apps. "Not every man harasses women, but every woman you know has been harassed at some point." she said. Tweeten decided to speak out and strike back by creating an Instagram profile, "Bye Felipe", in an attempt to publicly humiliate her pestering online suitors.

AWAM (2020) claimed that many people whom have intentions are focusing on the fact that they may be anonymous on the internet, and taking the advantage to show their dissatisfaction through sexist remarks, insults, or online sexual harassment. This finding also highlights the reality that there is still a lack of enforcement focused on online sexual harassment. Both the police and the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) must take stricter steps to strike the issue.

Problem 3: Minority group seeking life partner

The LGBT community is a circle of homosexuality life was born as a hermaphrodite whereby is opposite to heterosexual people. Even there is no denying that LGBT communities who are the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have always been an essential part of the larger Malaysian society, recognizing themselves as LGBT is difficult as it seems non-normative genders and sexualities are the subject to social legal condemnation(Jerome et al., 2021). Instead, the growth in online dating apps is in part the advancement of new and modern technologies, as the number of LGBT users are increasing using the dating apps. Therefore, the users when using the same dating app were explored in terms of impression and self-presentation. The LGBT communities start to reveal their real faces when using the online dating app to find someone to be themselves in their own world. Consequently, the LGBT communities will know how to expose themselves online as they know the differences of the combination of meeting strangers via physical or online presence. According to Johnson, Vilceanu and Pontes(2017), when the LGBT communities post themselves with a profile without photos, it indicates lack of self-confidence and there are some communities who have higher self-confidence, they will post full-body pictures that are perceived to be trustworthy. Regarding posting their own real faces, they may be able to manage their self-presentation in order to find their potential partners in an online dating app. Overall, digital platforms such as online dating apps were found to be used in both long term relationships and casual sexual encounters(Johnson et al., 2017).

The LGBT community has been using dating apps as a way to share information about themselves and expand their horizons in this society. The usage of the Internet in nowadays could jeopardize the citizen especially in Malaysia and the reason is because of there is 61.3% are the Muslim people (Sarlan et al, 2016). According to a Malaysian researcher, the challenges of LGBT community are faced by using the social networking app Facebook. It was the biggest challenge that faced by LGBT communities, that Facebook can be a threat towards them as a

medium of social space in which they must be careful of the environments while socializing on Facebook. However, there are two main reasons that LGBT community might reduce the use of dating apps, which are the presence of fake profiles and the presence of cyber stalking. The LGBT community faces the appearance of fake profiles that are misleading by using other pictures or accounts who try to reach them and misused their intention of using dating apps. On the other hand, cyber stalking is another issue that makes the LGBT community uncomfortable to use the dating app when they feel someone is scrolling on their profiles.

When it comes to communicating virtually, however, it is simple, especially for LGBT people who find it difficult to find partners who are likely partners to be and reserved in regards to their sexual orientation (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012). The researchers find out that the dating app practices beyond specific apps and decide to utilized for people which can generating connections based on sex, friendship or indeed both (Bryan, 2020). For instance, Grindr is described as the world's biggest LGBT social networking app. Grindr is sharing detailed personal data with thousands of advertising partners, allowing them to receive information about users' location, age, gender and sexual orientation (Bloomberg,2020). The issue that happened in this dating app was giving user data to third parties which consists in profiling and advertising. For example, everytime when a user of the Grindr app, the internal networkds of the advertisement company get the users' GPS location, device identifiers and even the truth is using a gay dating app. According to Bloomberg (2020), it becomes a serious issue which leaks out the users personal information by a company and it develops into an insane violation of users privacy rights.

1.3 Research Objectives

RO1: To explore the quality of relationship among couples that meet through dating apps and face-to-face.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: Are the criteria of partner selection similar or different for couples in dating apps and face-to-face meetings?

RQ2: What are the similarities and differences in interaction between online and offline couples?

1.5 Significant of Study

This study is being carried out to determine how dating apps affect the quality of romantic relationships, as many individuals involved in the relationship develop on dating apps. Understanding how dating apps influence people's relationships is crucial since they may be aware of whether good or bad effects will occur during their communication in the relationship and can prevent the effects.

This study might also serve as a catalyst for future researchers who desire to do research on cases involving dating apps and communication. Furthermore, the study will assist them by providing them with the data gathered. Face-to-face engagement has declined as individuals prefer to communicate or contact through electronic devices as technology has advanced. As a result, romance would be more likely to take place online, as would the chance of problems resulting from communication. As a consequence, academics who seek to learn more about this subject might use our results as a starting point or incorporate them into their own study.

Additionally, this research may benefit those working in the communication and social media sectors, since it contains critical information on how dating app users communicate online and also about how the dating service is used. Also, the data collected may be utilised to do research on the impacts of online dating programmes. If the study proves to be useful, future researchers may look into ways to encourage people to utilise online dating sites. Promoting the use of online dating services may help, encourage, or oblige Malaysians to

establish relationships, minimise late marriages, and reproduce in order to battle the country's ageing population.

1.5.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is attraction theory. Attraction theory does impact the desire to create and maintain relationships with people and influence the way of communicating with them. Attraction theory is based on the 4 major specific factors: appearance, proximity, similarity and rewards. In this theory, appearance refers to physical and material appearance.

People tend to wish to be around other physically attractive people, which stems from the generalization that attractive people are healthier and more subconsciously, more likely to be physically attractive. ability to have a healthy baby. People in general are also attracted. to expensive material things and are more likely to make friends with the person who owns them. When it comes to proximity, it is defined as the connection made between those who surround a person. This is not limited to the neighborhood, but also refers to a place of work, study, or anyone that a person regularly meets. Face-to-face interactions provide the chance to make the intimacy needed to sustain friendships and allow conversation to become more straightforward and fluent. However similarity is an important factor as it would be of ease to feel relatable and be comfortable with someone. When studying most relationships, at the very essence there are general interests that are mutual interests shared between both sides. Likewise if there is a disagreement on the values believed of both ends thus it will impact the relationship in a negative way (Charmaine, 2013). Lastly, reward in the attraction theory, expresses that "individuals will like those others whose conduct is compensating them, or whom they partner with on reward occasions." This is justification for why individuals are normally drawn to appealing and effective individuals so they will be related with those positive qualities (Reward Theory, 2021).

Bringing back to the research objective which is to explore the relationship quality among couples that meet through dating apps and face-to-face. When using dating apps it eases the process of finding the person face to face as it can be exhausting (William, 2019). Thus many users resort to using dating apps and based on algorithms the users would just have to put in specific criteria when it comes to searching for a life partner. In this article certain individuals are more appealing than others and the researchers can anticipate who will in general get the most matches, says Joel (William, 2019). That is not the objective of these coordinating with sites. It is not the channel for users to only have attractive users. Not everything has to be based on looks, the criteria would vary depending when users meet up in real life. Perspective might change when looks come a little lower than other important criteria such as education, economical and social status of one.

The distance between a likely accomplice and the admired accomplice in a partner's speculative house has to be the best indicator for fascination said by an assistant professor from the University of California Santa Barbara, US, in describing the algorithm. However if it is a long term success, maybe, then, at that point, heartfelt craving can not be precisely anticipated before users get an opportunity to address or meet the other partner and likely associate with them. To be able to have long-term success would be by the willingness of the users to be open minded in their partners perspective. The more open one is in being genuine, and confident users would be able to do better, said Llyod (William, 2019).

Thus, algorithms set by dating apps where user profiles are matched with potential partners are considered as the initial stage of the interaction process. Whereas, face-to-face first impression and having set criteria matters in partner selection. What comes next, integral to both individuals where they need to delve further into the relationship by getting to know each other by communicating their likes, dislikes, interests and working on accepting one another

that ensures their quality relationship. Would this process similar or different between online and offline couples are something that this research aims to figure out.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The Success of Online Dating Apps

Online dating apps are getting more popular and acceptable among people. According to a study done in America by Smith and Duggan (2013), the study found that dating apps has a high usage rate whereby 42% of American citizens know at least one online dater and 29% of them recognise someone who uses online dating applications to look for a partner. The research also shows that the perspective of Americans towards online dating and dating applications is also becoming more positive compared with the last eight years. The research method used in the study is quantitative research with the sample size of 2252 youths and the outcome 59% of the internet users in America they concur that the using online dating apps is one of the good methods to know new people and 53% of America internet users agreed that online dating apps can allow them to look for a person that are more matching with their preferences. The research also showed that a large majority of Americans have met with their partner via online dating and they develop their relationship into a long-term relationship and some of them are married.

In 2013, two-third of the people who date online have successfully gone out for a physical date with their online dating partner and one quarter of them have successfully gotten married with their online dating partner. The research showed that the online daters in 2013 are more willing to go out for a physical date with their online partner compared with in 2005. Data has shown that 66% of the online daters have successfully gone for a date with the person that they met via online dating apps or websites. Besides, 11% of Americans who are currently in a relationship for more than 10 years or less they met their partner via online dating. In addition, the research also shows that every five internet users, one of them with the experience of using dating apps has tried to ask their online partner to go out for a date and one quarter of

them are using the internet or email to sustain their long-distance relationship (LDR). This behaviour of using the online tools to sustain the LDR is very familiar among the youths.

According to Adam, Rashidan, Rahim, Ar Azman, Mohamad Shukor and Mohd Fadzil (2020), the homosexual youth community nowadays in Malaysia begin to utilise the dating apps to search for their ideal partner, at the same time they found that using certain dating apps, for instance, Tinder and Grindr can also give them the sense of comfortable. The reason behind this is their sexual orientation did not get enough support or was not accepted by the society, thus, dating apps give them the sense of comfy while they are looking for a relationship. The research also found that the usage of dating apps in Malaysia is getting higher and there is a vast number of dating apps users who use the dating apps service in Malaysia. The research has been done by using the quantitative research method. The research has been done via different methods including polls, surveys and questionnaires via different channels, for instance, WhatsApp, Facebook, Tinder and Instagram. The sample size of the study is 344 youths from the age group of 18 till 22 from different regions within Malaysia. The finding of the study is the majority of the respondents accept the existence and usage of dating applications. The study also discovered that youths in Malaysia have been influenced in trying to use dating apps. Moreover, almost a quarter of the respondents are currently using dating apps services.

2.2 Online Sexual Harassment

According to Castro & Barrada (2020), who conducted a study with the objective of the empirical research of the psychosocial content published in the last five years (2016–2020) on dating apps, the users have different motives and intentions including those negatives and bads when it comes to anonymity. The research was conducted in different databases, and the researchers have identified 502 articles in their initial search. The researchers screened the titles and abstracts, and examined articles in detail which included 70 studies in the review.

Besides, the researchers defined that, online sexual harassment includes inappropriate sexual solicitation, undesired requests to discuss sex, undesired requests of doing something sexual online or in person, getting inappropriate sexual messages and photos, having sexual messages and photos shared without approval, and revealing identification and private details about an individual online. While online sexual harassment may be a technique, it is likely to be followed with face-to-face harassment of a known victim (Castro & Barrada, 2020).

The scope, gender nature, and consequences of online sexual harassment in a variety of dating apps, typically by anonymous perpetrators. Dating apps present a new platform for sexual harassment since perpetrators can contact many victims across geographic and temporal constraints, all while potentially staying unknown or fake details which makes regulation extremely challenging (Castro & Barrada, 2020).

Users build a personal profile on dating apps, which are primarily location-based platforms. Users can upload images and a brief bio of themselves. Despite their popularity and potential social advantages, dating apps are frequently used as platforms for antisocial behaviour, which including sexual harassment and coercion (Castro & Barrada, 2020).

2.3 The Intention of Using Dating Application

According to Chan (2017), who conducted a theoretically based study into the relationship between personal characteristics and the intention to use dating apps. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between personal characteristics such as trust toward strangers in dating applications, sensation seeking, and mobile phone usage and the desire to use dating apps. A total of 257 people were involved as participants in this survey namely between the ages of 18 to 34, heterosexual, a current smartphone user, and open to new romantic or sexual encounters. In this study revealed that users regarded all dating apps as having massive possibilities for romance and casual sex. According to the study, the attitude

toward using dating apps for romance showed a significantly positive link with the desire to use dating apps to locate romantic partners.

According to Chan (2017), Perceived norms include descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Injunctive norms and descriptive norms are measured. The descriptive norm for seeking for romantic partners using dating apps was assessed by asking respondents how much they agreed with the statement "many people may use dating apps to find romantic partners". Perceived norms were discovered to have a factor in seeking casual sex using dating apps. However, the relationship between perceived norms for using dating apps for romance and desire was not substantial, since perceived norms had a role in seeking casual sex but not in seeking romantic partnerships.

Portolan & McAlister (2021), which studied the theoretically-based investigation of jagged love: narratives of romance on dating apps during Covid-19. It included two iterative focus groups and in-depth interviews, and 8 participants were also obliged to use the digital journaling tool to document their experience using dating apps. The respondents are between ages of 18 and 35 who lived in New South Wales and had used or were actively using the dating apps Bumble and Tinder (or both). In the research, many respondents which are dating apps users are philosophical or regretful about never meeting 'the one' or so called the true love, the one with whom they may accomplish the romance narrative's constituent events, the appropriate person with whom they can achieve a happily ever after. Therefore, people tend to find true love through online dating applications as there are many different characteristics of users in the apps. They express a desire to meet 'the one' and for 'organic' relationships that are natural, simple, and healthy, and that grow in accordance with prevalent romantic cultural narratives.

Balan et al. (2021) which studied the continuous intention to use dating apps in Malaysia. This research examines the relationship between gratifications and intention to

continue. This study used a random sample for the research and there are around 400 respondents as it may allow a more thorough verification of the results. The bulk of respondents who are using dating apps were between the ages of 20 and 29. This study showed that the dimension of gratifications provided by dating apps comprises amusement, sexual activity, companionship, romantic relationships, social inclusion, and location-based search.

2.4 Relationship Maintenance and Satisfaction in Long-Distance Dating Relationships

According to (Allie, 2013) who conducted a study on understanding how newer communication platforms play a role in long-distance dating relationships, particularly for college students. 20 undergraduate (85% female and 15% male) from a private university in Southern California, United States. These respondents had to verify that they were in a long-distance relationship to ensure that the questionnaire would be accurate to the purpose of the study. The goal of this study was to examine the ways in which newer technologies affect long-distance dating relationships (LDDRs), especially relationship satisfaction and maintenance strategies. The measuring of results is based on 3 main sections which were relational satisfaction, relational maintenance and communication channel use. One of the hypothesis stated couples that spend more time using newer Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in a LDDR are likely to have greater sense of relationship satisfaction; there is a direct relationship between the frequency of use of the CMC and the application of the relationship maintenance strategy in LDDR which was also an accepted hypothesis (Allie, 2013).

In this study the communication was divided into 2 parts: synchronous and asynchronous channels. Synchronous meaning direct are those wherein the message sender and message recipient are available at a similar time and prompt input is conceivable, though nonconcurrent channels need quickness, bringing about postponed input. It is labeled as a direct communication channel which is Skype. Asynchronous communication is labeled as indirect communication channels such as email or the general Facebook and Twitter is being absorbed

by the receiver's own pace (Change, 2003) discovered that long-distance relationship partners see technology as having a positive impact on their relationships; there were able to communicate directly despite it being virtual and time zone may vary but it is available anywhere. The results of this study found that Skype was the prominent new (CMC) channel that yielded supportive results based on the research questions and hypothesis given. The research by far has concluded that CMC does positively affect LDDRs. However, for the future studies should include specific maintenance strategies for individuals rather than groups, and how they will be implemented in new technologies for Facebook, Skype, and Twitter.

2.5 Privacy Concerns of Dating Apps

Lutz & Ranzini(2017) who studied Tinder users faced privacy concerns and found that the Tinder users are more likely to concern themselves with institutional privacy than social privacy. The researcher stated that online dating app services are supposed to allow users to know and find their dating app partner using the social network but there are always security and privacy concerns. In particular, there is too much emphasis on the individual and neglect users, especially young users, embeddedness in social contexts and networks. Therefore, mobile apps and those relying on location tracking in particular, collect sensitive data, which leads to privacy risks. Recent systems security suggests that trained attackers can easily detect mobile dating app services' location which can reveal the location of the victim. Furthermore, the social privacy concerns can be expected to be more pronounced than institutional concerns. For example, Tinder dating apps have been reported by many users and said it was 'creepy' to meet some Tinder users and this happens frequently. The method for this study is done by using quantitative research. The sample size for this study is 497 USA respondents who were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk in March 2016 who are using and non-using Tinder dating applications. The survey for fill out took around 13 minutes and it was geared toward Tinder users who were as opposed to non-users.

According to Cobb and Kohno(2017), who conducted a study on the relationship between users' personal information and the risks of privacy of dating apps. The aim of this study is to assess compatibility using dating apps such as recognizing the details or sensitive opinions about sexual preferences which are in profiles or in one to one communication. There are a total of 99 respondents who filled up the survey but the researchers just used two because one person had not used online dating and another one submitted the form twice. In that 99 respondents, have 35 male and 61 female respondents between the ages of 20-29. The most responses collected form Tinder profile analysis while the researcher posted the survey link through social and university networks. By using the survey, it can clearly be observed that most of the respondents agree with the reasons for stopping online dating. The respondents have mentioned cost and lack of success as their reasons to stop using the dating app. While the 30 respondents have stopped because they found their partner on a dating app. The other respondents felt bored and preferred someone offline or became frustrated over scams or bots. However, Tinder users have a paid subscription to 'Tinder Plus' that lets users see their previous, the most recent swipe, hide their age or location and make their dating app profile visible only to those they swipe right.

According to Marwick and Boyd (2011), privacy law follows a model and explains that privacy is the ability of a person to have their own secrets and information about themselves while privacy harms are deliberated by their impact on the other people. For example, determine chat messages could be recovered in at least half of the apps examined and, in some cases, the details of any users that had been discovered nearby could also be extracted. Most controversial aspect of the dating apps is giving the location to identify where the users are located.

According to Abdulahi, Samadi and Gharleghi(2014), the purpose of the study is to identify the negative effects of Facebook among Asia Pacific University scholars. There are a

total number of 152 respondents from different levels of education and gender in Malaysia university. The statistics in this research also include both descriptive and inferential statistics. There were 76 male respondents and 76 female respondents who participated in the survey while the majority of the range of the age group was 20-25 years old. The researcher found that the privacy and security issues were aligned with the previous researcher. Therefore, the respondents are still unaware of information sharing policies even the policies clearly stated there. People who use dating apps or social media apps do not know that their personal information can be shared or might leak out. This can affect the respondents and end up with privacy issues with unauthorized people. This study shows that social media or dating apps have a negative impact on users in terms of privacy issues.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Qualitative research collects and analyzes non-numeric data (text, video, audio, etc.) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gain in-depth insights into the problem and generate new ideas for research (Pritha, 2020). In principle, research methodologies are the procedure by which researchers explain, explain, and predict research phenomena (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013). This method is not "what people think" but "why" they think so. There are several well-known types of qualitative research methodologies, ethnography, stories, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies (Jeff, 2015).

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to overall tactics of incorporating the various components of research in a persistent and reasonable manner and choosing to actually address the research problem. Form a pattern for collecting, measuring and analyzing data.

However this research leans more towards phenomenology qualitative research. Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of the living experiences of individuals in the world (Brain, Catherin & Lara, 2019). Phenomenology helps the researchers understand the meaning of people's living experiences. Phenomenological research examines what people have experienced and focuses on the experience of the phenomenon (Gumberg Library, 2020). Phenomenology relates well with the research as it is based on participants' own experiences in romantic relationships. Thus participants have first hand experience in sharing their views, which would be a first hand answer.

3.2 Sampling

Initially, sampling was used to choose a suitable population for the research in order to ensure that the research met its objectives. As a result, sampling is essential in qualitative research to prevent any inappropriate processes that may have an impact on the research's output (Palinkas et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there are two types of sampling techniques: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling may be classified as random, systematic, stratified, or clustered. Furthermore, non-probability sampling is classed as convenience, dimensional, quota, as well as purposive. The distinction between probability and non-probability sampling is that probability sampling employs random selection, but non-probability sampling does not (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

3.2.1 Research Sample

The researchers used non-probability sampling as a sampling approach linked with qualitative research. Non-probability sampling is a technique in which researchers choose a

sample of the population based on their subjective judgement. Ordinarily, a sample of the population cannot even be assigned an equal probability of inclusion (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Non-probability sampling is often used when a population has a unique attribute that necessitates in-depth investigation.

Yet, the type of sample used in this study will be purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to the tendency of researchers to seek out components of participants in order to match the restricted and particular information requirements. Purposive sampling enables researchers to obtain a wealth of information from the data that they have collected. This helps researchers to communicate the significance of their findings to the general population. Purposive sampling is a popular strategy among academics since it saves time and money when compared to other sampling methods (Nyumba, 2018). The requirements previous knowledge of general response patterns, and all participants must fulfill the standards specified by the researchers. The essential requirements are given below:

- 1) Youth between the age of 18-30
- 2) Regardless of race among heterosexual couples
- 3) Dating applications users
- 4) Offline and online couples
- 5) Malaysian

The number of participants in qualitative research is determined by the investigation's criteria. 4 sets of couples, 2 are met online and 2 are met face-to-face when they are having romantic relationships who are appropriate for performing the study will be selected as participants. Researcher's estimated number of 4 sets of couples is used to conduct the focus group discussion, and the saturation level of the result from qualitative research is adjusted by the number of participants.

3.3 Pilot Study

According to In (2013), a good research study, as well as a relevant experimental design and accurate performance, are required to obtain a high-quality research output. A pilot study is a scaled-down version of a larger study that is conducted prior to the larger inquiry or to pre-test a research instrument. It may aid in the investigation of the study's subject as well as the dependability, reliability, and usability of the researchers' research methodology. Pilot studies may be used to identify issues with measuring equipment, although this can be avoided by pre-testing the instrument on a small sample of people with similar features (In, 2017). Before starting a pilot study, researchers must fully understand not just the study's express purpose and subject matter, but also the experimental procedures and timeline. The pilot study exposes researchers to the procedures required in the comprehensive study, which assists in the selection of the research method most suited to acknowledging the research question in the main trial (In, 2017). A pilot study is that it may provide early warning about areas where the research study may fail, where research procedures may not be maintained, or if planned methodologies or instruments are unsuitable or overcomplicated (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002).

In the research, the pilot study was conducted by the researchers to test the interview questions. Researchers will have to ensure that the interview questions are in line to the research objective and also able to answer the research questions. The pilot study helps to ensure the validity of the interview questions which are given to the targeted interviewees, couples. It is important to make sure that the interview questions are clear and understandable for the interviewees, so that a good and accurate response can be generated. The interview questions will be focused on the content which helps to explore the quality of relationship among couples that meet through dating apps and face-to-face. The open-ended questions will be set in a comfortable and less distraction context to make it easier to access the data. At the end of the pilot study, the researcher can explore the issue or solution from the perspective of participants.

The outcome of the pilot study was given to our supervisor and a few respondents to ask them about the interview questions. Most of their feedback stated that there were repetitive questions, sensitive questions that should not be asked during the interview such as has then been physically intimate time spent, were they seeing anyone else during the relationship. Supervisor quotes “End goal is to not end their relationship but to get the information that is related to our RQ 1 and 2.” After the feedback questions were changed according to the feedback and from 6 focus areas with a total 26 questions in total were reduced to 21 questions.

3.4 Data Collection Method

In general, data collection is regarded as a systematic method of acquiring information and measuring it in response to research questions. Data collection is a process that ensures accurate and genuine data. An accurate collection is necessary to maintain the research's integrity and avoid subsequent studies from being misleading. In addition, after the research problem has been determined, the research will move on to information gathering. Secondary data will be used to acquire information for this study. Secondary data, such as journals and websites, will be used to supplement the primary data gathered through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, secondary data would enhance the methodology in order to have a better understanding of the research problem by combining and analysing information from other sources. Secondary data is a type of data that is generated from research and may be found in a variety of online publications and websites. As a result, the study is linked to qualitative research, which tries to gather more information through in-depth interviews for a subjective topic (Johnston, 2014).

3.4.1 In-depth Interview

According to (Sutton & Austin, 2015), interview is a conventional data collecting technique in qualitative analysis that is critical for eliciting individuals' perspectives and expectations. As the purpose of this study is to explore the quality of relationships among youth

either while using dating apps or meeting face to face. Furthermore, according to Jamshed (2014), in-depth interviews (IDI) are often face-to-face, one-on-one, and lengthy. It is strongly recommended to use open-ended questions that generate detailed information and allow the researcher to interview respondents about their own experiences. The researcher selected in-depth interview to acquire information from the participants in this study. The purpose of conducting an in-depth interview is to elicit more specific information, a deeper understanding of the topic, and a strong connection with the participants. Also, the researcher is directly involved in the data collection process, and their context and observations will guide and form it. Qualitative research also involves a discussion of reflectivity, in which the analyst considers how their presence alters and affects the evidence they collect (Bolderston, 2012).

In-depth interview is a valuable qualitative data collection approach that may be utilised for several different reasons such as needs assessment, programme refining, issue identification, and strategy planning. In-depth interviews are best suited for circumstances in which researchers want to ask open-ended questions to extract detailed information from a small group of people (Guion et al., 2011). In-depth interviews do not seek answers to specific questions, but rather aim to understand the participants' experiences. The interview questions will be prepared in accordance with the study's research topic and will centre on how and why participants manage community libraries. The open-ended questions will be used to analyse the issues or solutions from the participants' viewpoint. To facilitate data collection, an in-depth interview may be performed in a quiet, distraction-free atmosphere. To elicit a more favourable reaction, the researcher may establish a pleasant rapport via interviews.

Nonverbal communication has long been recognised as a valuable source of information and a supplement to the study of human verbal behaviour. Indeed, researchers have shown that nonverbal communication, such as hand signals, communicate essential semantic

information beyond words and are important in semantic communication. Qualitative researchers have access to a wealth of nonverbal behaviour that may be captured, resulting in richer observations and interpretations than would be achievable with just verbal data (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Furthermore, as the objective of the research is to explore the quality of relationship in terms of interaction and communication among couples who meet through dating apps and face-to-face, the collection of nonverbal communication might offer richer descriptions and interpretations. All the body languages including eye contacts, gestures and facial expressions might be the important information and data for the further analysis of the quality of relationship among the interviewees.

3.4.2 Refinement Interview Protocol

According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), interview protocol includes not only developing a list of interview questions but also obtaining informed consent from interviewees. As a result, prior to the interview's start, a collection of interview protocols must be compiled. Each interviewee will provide specific information to the researcher in order for the researcher to contact them to confirm the interview time. Respondents must read and sign this voluntary agreement prior to commencing the interview. The interview procedure will be developed in accordance with the research questions established by the researchers to accomplish the research objectives.

The researchers will keep the information confidential and destroy it at the end of the research study. Researchers will perform interviews with each set of couples that include a few questions, for instance “How was the experience of using dating applications to look for romantic partners?”, “What is the difference between online (using dating apps) and offline (face-to-face) in communication and interaction?”, “Do you face any difficulty when solving arguments and conflict with your partner whether it is online or offline?”, “Do the degree of

intimacy and closeness will be affected in the relationship either via virtual or physical”, and “How do you deal with trust issues, especially being virtual?”.

3.4.3 Data Collection

Due to the pandemic of Covid-19, the researchers chose to conduct the in-depth interview online using Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Teams meetings and calls can be recorded. The recording records audio, video, and screen sharing and can be shared securely (Microsoft Support, 20220). As for Zoom it has a local and cloud recording. All Zoom accounts save local recordings to your computer. All paid accounts have cloud recordings that can be watched, shared, and downloaded (Zoom Support, 2022). Both offer MP4 video, M4A audio, and chat text.

The interviews took at least 2 weeks to ensure all the information was collected, as the couples were busy with their daily lives. The duration to finish one couples interview took 40 to 50 minutes. As a total it took at least 3 hours to have the interview session, the interview was done once with each set of couples.

Throughout the online interview, participants are encouraged to ask each other questions and share their opinions, experiences, and ideas. There are no boundaries in talking and interacting as long as the topic of conversation falls within the specified subject range. Group interaction is essential for the discovery of data, ideas, and outcomes. Each participant is invited to do so in order to provide unique perspectives on the subject and to respond succinctly to each interview question. The interview sessions are recorded in Microsoft Teams software for subsequent interpretation and conversion to a transcript by playing back the meeting record. Lastly, the data gathered from the participants would be applied on thematic analysis for further analysing.

3.5 Data Analysis

One of the methods of analysing qualitative data would be thematic analysis. According to Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun (2017), thematic analysis is a method that is popularly used by researchers while doing analysis for quantitative research data. This analysis is applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. To identify common themes - topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that have been repeated will be examined closely to by the researcher to be able to put them in categories (in a table format). Subject analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading a dataset (such as a detailed interview or a transcript from a focus group) and identifying patterns of meaning in the data (Virginia, 2006).

The 5 phase of thematic analysis process phase one is to familiarise with the data, phase two would be generating initial codes – short yet simple codes will be enough to put into category, phase three would be defining and naming interpretive codes and entire data set into sub themes or themes, fourth process is to identify patterns across all data to derive themes for data set and lastly defining and themes (Jack, 2019).

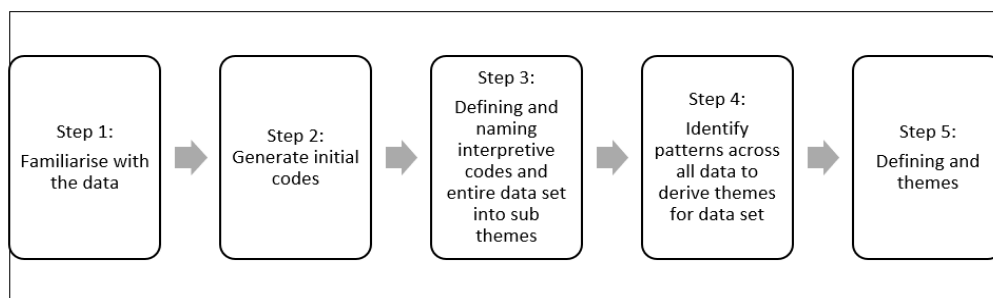


Figure 1: The 5 Phases of Thematic Analysis Process (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Firstly, to be able to familiarise with the data of the interview and being able to separate them based on the similarity in the answer given. Followed by, would be to start generating initial codes to be able to organize accordingly and thirdly would be to define and name interpretive codes and entire data set into sub-themes. The main goal is to be able to put the

interview's answer in sub-themes and when later identify the patterns across all data to derive themes for the data set and lastly to define a theme. This process will be done in a table that consists of 4 columns that are labelled extract or important moment whereby this is from what the interview has said word for word, to code or labelling it into something with lesser words, sub-theme and theme would be the last two columns. During the data analysis process, the program used would be Atlas. ti, an incredible workbench for the subjective investigation of enormous assemblages of literary, graphical, sound and video information. Modern instruments assist you with organizing, reassembling, and dealing with material in imaginative, yet methodical ways (Atlas, 2021). This would be of great help when it comes to sorting out the patterns of data to themes systematically.

When the research questions have been answered, the process of deriving the codes and theme takes place. First all the answers were moved into a table, and open coding started by looking at the answers from the couple, able to put them into different categories. The first coding had at least 70 for the offline couples and 64 for the online couples. After that it was needed to be categorized into a niche axial coding as for the offline couples axial coding had 30 and for the online couples axial coding were 15. As for the themes that were derived in total were 5, however it was finalized that there will only be 4 main themes which are criteria, critical thinking, communication and relationship. These main themes were created based on the axial coding that has been done beforehand. Looking at the results of the axial coding, the similarities between a certain theme was visible thus it needed to be put under one theme. For instance, the theme is communication, the sub themes are communication method, communication barrier, interpersonal communication and so on. Thus by creating these four main themes it was easier to put the coding into its respective theme without overlapping them.

3.5 Rigour

Rigour is defined as the researchers applying the elements of trustworthiness and capability which is a way of operating the validity of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Trustworthiness is not essential in a study, but it is the result of rigorous knowledge that makes sure the findings reflect the sense of purpose of the participants as closely (Murphy & Yelder, 2010). The traditional use of rigour using the standard of validity and reliability which have been thoroughly related with the positivist paradigm that conclude a linear approach that does not suit the inductive method of qualitative research (Sandelowski, 1993). The good quality research makes sure that the epistemological and theoretical view of the researcher is stated clearly (Meyrick, 2006). The significant point is the rigour needs to be present throughout the research procedure instead of just a reflection and the reason that researchers play an important role is continued reflexivity, whereby the multiple of a journal is used as an integral part of the research development (Bradbury-Jones, 2017). The obvious pathway is a technique of rigour which illustrates an inspection or 'confirmability' path as it allows the reader to strengthen researcher decisions that are reasonable (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). However, in this study the method will be used for this research is in-depth interview and select the interviewees using purposive sampling.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The respondents will be acknowledged about the aim of the interview before answering. The consent form will be given to the respondent to fill up to ensure they understand and agree with participating in the interview. The data and the personal data that collected from the interview will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Besides, the participation of interviewees to join the interview session will be 100% voluntary and the respondents may stop the interview if they are feeling uncomfortable. According to Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) and "POL-IPSR-R&D-004 Research Ethics & Code of

Conduct" from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, an informed consent form will be included in the research as a protection for the research interviewees (UTAR Research Portal, 2019).

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.0 Results

4.1 Respondents Demographics

The characteristics of the respondents who participated in the research are summarized as below:

- 4 pairs of couples have been interviewed, 2 from online approach (dating applications) and 2 from offline (face-to-face) approach. All 4 pairs of couples are in a committed long-term relationship.
- To identify which couple that is being stated in this research, labelling them as couple 1,2,3 and 4 would be the simplest and significant form of identifying the couple. This is due to protecting their identity. Addressing them as couple 1,2,3 and 4 with the pronoun of male and female was created. Couple 1 and 2 are offline couples and couple 3 and 4 are online couples respectively.
- The interviewees experienced both online and offline communication in their relationship.

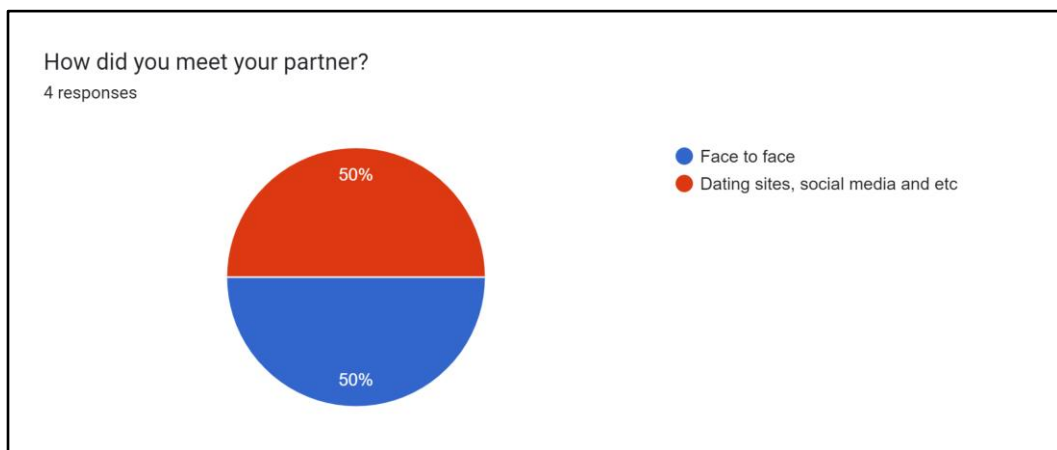


Image 1: How did the couples meet their partner?

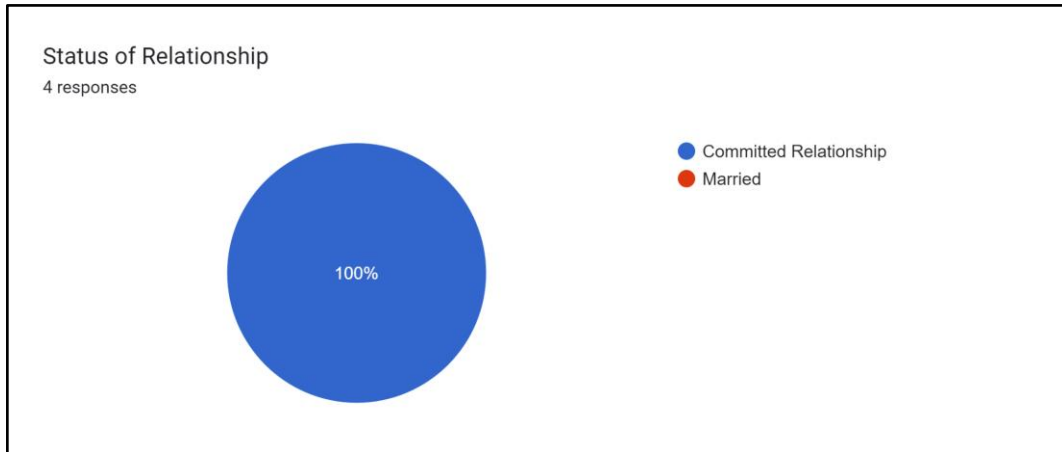


Image 2: Status of each couples relationship

4.2 Key Themes

The results of the qualitative study are focusing on one component which is

- To explore how the criteria of partner selection is similar or different for couples in dating apps and face-to-face meetings (**Table 1**).
- To explore the similarities and differences in interaction between online and offline couples (**Table 2**).

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Related aspects</i>
Criteria	Appearance	Swiping right (agree to start conversation or have interest) on dating application based solely on attractiveness such as profile pictures and outfits.
	Trust	Having trust issues when using dating application, for example bad intention, fake profile pictures, and hard to indicate the person is good or not.
	Connectivity	A connection is a relationship, link, or tie to something

		<p>or someone, characterised by the sense of being actually seen, heard, and valued. A sense of compatibility and closeness between two individuals that transcends physical attractiveness.</p>
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Table 1: *Theme of criteria of selection partners*

Theme 1: Criteria

In this theme we will discuss the criteria of selection partners. The definition of partner selection criteria is not universal, it varies from culture to culture and across time. It is crucial as people tend to pick the potential romantic partners who fit with their expectation, not only physical attractiveness but also emotional connectivity. This theme consists of three sub-themes, **appearances** which depend on photos and outfits from dating applications, whereby another sub-theme is about **trust** in dating applications, the two pairs of offline couples also mentioned that they have trust issues on dating applications. In addition, **connectivity** also is one of the criteria of selecting romantic partners.

Sub-theme 1: Appearance: In this research, "appearance" refers to the respondent's perception of their potential partner based on the profile photo in online dating apps. People like to evaluate a person's attractiveness at first look, in dating applications also. The presence of high-quality photos on your profile significantly increases the likelihood of matches and dates, high-quality photos as in pretty faces, nice outfits and so on. Respondents also pointed out that people swipe right (agree to start a conversation) based on appearance. Couple 3, they mentioned that profile pictures are one of the ways to decide whether to swipe right or not when using dating applications.

“The reason why I swiped right is because I was attracted by her profile picture, as the pictures were pretty cool. Therefore, I give a chance to

me and her to start the conversation, because if we can't communicate we can't get to know the person, and things are not going to go far."

Moreover, Couple 4, they emphasize that they will only swipe right based on profile pictures but not the bios stated on the profiles.

"Very simple, we swipe right based on the appearance of the pictures from the profile and these pictures are quite match with our own preferences, we did not look onto the bios at all."

Couple 1 (female) who only never used dating application before, stated that some in-depth characteristics could not be explored during the first meet via dating application, and appearances is the only way to decide to swipe left (not to start a conversation) or swipe right (start a conversation), as she said,

"I will just swipe right based on the profile pictures as I can't know the person's personality, communication skills and others. As long as he looks good on profile picture."

Sub-theme 2: Trust: Trust is the foundation of every relationship. Without it, the relationship will be unstable and ultimately collapse. In a relationship, trust provides a sense of security and loyalty. Trust is essential in relationships because it enables individuals to be more open and giving. However, it seems very hard to gain trust in relationships during online approaches, therefore trust issues occurred in dating applications. The respondents who used or did not use dating applications stated experiencing trust issues with dating applications throughout the interviews. Trust issues included fake profile pictures, such as using other people's pictures as their own, negative intents, like the desire to hook up with others, and a lack of security that does not comprehend the real personality. Therefore, it is hard for them to date with others via dating applications. Couple 1 mentioned about fake profile pictures, they said,

“Dating applications have many people using fake profiles, like these pictures, which make us feel that it is more like cheating others to swipe right and start the conversation with them. This is why I really don’t like dating applications.”

Moreover, Couple 3 who met on dating applications also mentioned that the particular dating application occurred fake accounts, and the people were having bad intentions such as hook ups, and they felt unrealistic. They said,

“Tinder feels very fake, in terms of fake accounts. It likes accounts that are not associated with an actual person as the profile or are created with a real person’s details without their knowing consent. and just doesn’t feel like a legit app to be on. Feels more of an app for hooking up.”

In addition, Couple 2, they have never thought to use dating apps since they do not believe those people who use dating applications to form a relationship as they feel insecure if meeting people online and they prefer face-to-face approaches.

“We have not used any dating applications before. The reason why is due to trust issues like we don’t believe in meeting people via dating applications, we prefer to meet people face to face. and feel more secure when we meet people offline.”

Sub-theme 3: Connectivity: The criteria of selecting partners includes connectivity as in the special and positive feeling of being together among each other, the special and positive feeling is based on mutual interest which can connect easily. It is crucial to find a person with whom people can easily start a conversation. Thus, people may enjoy performing activities and

discussing them without becoming bored. Having a common interest or topic to discuss facilitates the formation of a strong intimate tie between individuals. Couple 4 said,

“We have only been together for a few months, but we really feel connected with each other, reliable, and well understanding about each other as both of us think that mutual interest in conversation between each other is the most important thing in the relationship as not everyone can find someone who really has the same interest as the other person.”

In addition, Emotional connection is a bundle of subjective feelings that come together to create a bond between two people. Having an emotional connection with another person could enable the open exchange of values, opinions, and goals, it also provides the capacity to hold deep, significant talks about topics that would be difficult to discuss with others. Couple 1 (female) experienced a relationship which lacked emotional connectivity, but with a new partner she is able to seek emotional connectivity. she said,

“I had a relationship in which our thoughts were very different, he always rejected and didn't understand my point of view and did not allow me to do what I want to if he thinks that it is improper. As he did not get what I feel and think, I felt trapped and miserable at the moment, soon we broke up. But now, in this current relationship, my partner always respects my decisions and we have the same interests. And, our “three views” are parallel, like world view, outlook on life and value. Therefore, We both felt the sense of belonging in this relationship.”

Couple 3 also stated that,

“I would say in terms of our temperament we are similar and values we share the same. Not only similar values as well as interest. It's important if you are looking for someone in a long-lasting relationship.”

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Related aspects</i>
Critical thinking	Decision making	Dealing with differing perspectives, discussing and communicating throughout the whole decision-making process and coming out the best decision or solution to solve the problems.
	Mutual understanding	Changing perspective from one another, view the whole situation from a different way to create mutual understanding during disagreements or conflicts.
Communication	Preference of communication method	Engaging in conversations, individuals have preferred communication methods due to different situations, such as online and offline communication.
	Communication barriers	Interrupting or affecting the quality of conversation by communication barriers such as failing to share and respond immediately, not stable or lack of internet connection during online, misleading text or emojis and misunderstanding of meaning that is conveyed.
	Display of emotions	Sharing depth emotions and feelings to others in order to create closeness and connection in the relationship, and to achieve deeper intimacy.

Relationship	Appreciation	Being appreciated in a relationship makes a person feel special, honored, and treasured. For example, listening to others, tolerating others, and prioritizing others.
	Comfortable	Having the freedom from inhibitions and feeling at ease with others without desiring to make a change.

Table 2: *Themes of interaction among couples*

Theme 2: *Critical thinking*

This theme consists of two-sub themes, *decision making* and *mutual understanding*. Critical thinking in this research represents the way of thinking and approaching on how to resolve conflicts and decision making. This clearly shows how much the couples are able to adapt with each other when it involves decision making. In this study, the decision making part mainly revolves around situations where couples would need to come down to one decision both can agree upon. Not to forget that mutual understanding correlates when it comes to decision making and mainly also in resolving conflicts that occur offline and online. It shows how much the couple are able to tolerate and give and take on both ends.

Sub-theme 1: Decision making: When it comes to decision making , all 4 sets of couples have different and similar approaches in respondents. The difference when it comes to decision making in general it can be seen that the male partners are more simple and cool about the outcomes. However the similarities in this sub-theme is that the couples make decisions equally by considering each other's viewpoint.

Couple 1 (female) mentions that she would be the first person to speak out first before her partner, nevertheless the bottom of them make final decisions. She is there to initiate the conversation.

“I think she does not make the decision, it's the both of us who make the decision together. It's like we have a consensus then she comes out with the decision and both of us agree on that. Of course, we will communicate first”

As for Couple 2 (male) states when there is a conflict going on he tries to understand the situation by being in his partner's position.

“I will stand in her situation to understand her feelings and thoughts. Try to avoid communication when I am angry I think this is the most important part of being able to understand the situation on hand.”

For Couple 4 (female), she makes most of the decisions when it comes to situations that need decision making. Her partner is able to accept most of the time when she decides on the decision.

“She makes the decisions in most of the situation. I respect and agree with her decisions most of the time, as long as it is acceptable for me.”

Sub-theme 2: Mutual understanding: In this study, it shows that having mutual understanding between each couple is important as this shows how much they can tolerate each other. Couple 1 (female) states even when there is a misunderstanding they are willing to discuss the matter not worrying about anything other than solving the problem. Also being open on looking at each other's perspective. Couple 1 (male) also states that when there is a problem they prefer solving it immediately

“ When there is a problem, we discuss the matter face-to-face morning till night if it is needed. I will communicate with him during his free time. I do attempt to view and understand the situation from her perspective. This is to be able to solve the problem immediately in

order to prevent further fermentation that would affect our relationship. No matter what the outcome is, we always apologize when there is a misunderstanding.”

As for couple 3 (female) states when there is an issue to be solved, wanting to solve the issue and being able to face confrontation is key in being able to understand each other. Also to

“When there is a little part of misunderstanding, I don't want the space between me and him but instead I prefer to settle it by the end of the day. I also believe that is to be courageous when it comes to confronting and listening to what the other person has to say. It shows that we are capable of listening to each other.”

Lastly Couple 4 (female), mentions that as the couple meet very seldom face-to-face, hence they try to reduce or avoid the amount of conflict and misunderstanding when they meet as they want to enjoy the company that they have. However when there is a conflict that happens virtual Couple 4 (male) takes the time to understand the situation and do what's needed to recover. In return Couple 4 (female) to ensure the situation is being able to be spoken and resolved, cooling down time is needed before resolving the issue. Both the couple show an understanding where they both would need to cool down and want to speak about the conflict. Lastly the couple 4 is also considerate towards each other when it comes to hearing each other out during a conflict.

“Since we can only meet once in a long time, we try to appreciate every chance we meet, and avoid fights or arguments and conflicts when we meet. This is to value the time we are able to spend. We feel comfortable in offline communication. I will take the initiative to calm and comfort her. As I will give her time to calm down and be considerate, but at the same time I still accompany and pamper her in between. As for me, I need time to calm down, to consider and digest the problems that are on hand,

and then only be able to discuss with him after that. This is to have a clear understanding when we come to discuss the matter. In the end we communicate and discuss the issue after both of us calm down, it is the best way to communicate and not have unnecessary arguments. We will think and discuss with each other to solve the conflict, understand the situation or the way each other thinks. Not to forget that we have not to be selfish or only focus on our own thoughts but to be considerate of each other's thoughts towards each other.”

Theme 3: Communication

There are two sub-themes: *Preference of communication method* and *Communication barrier*, which elaborate from this theme - *Communication*. In this study, the preferences of communication methods are focused on the online communication method and offline communication method. The couples have the communication method which they prefer to communicate with their partner. The communication barriers are always not avoidable in couples relationships, including the physical distance, emotional barrier, technology access, etc. The communication barriers mentioned below will focus on the communication barriers they are facing during online communication.

Sub-theme 1: Preference of communication method: All the respondents, the four couples, prefer to communicate in an offline communication method. Couple 1 switched the way of communicating from offline to online due to the pandemics and the physical distance. Couple 1 mentioned that they feel that offline communication is more effective for them to deliver the messages and the offline communication also allows them to solve their conflicts more easily.

“On another hand, while offline, we are communicating face-to-face which makes it easy for us to deliver messages, I mean not only the words but also the tones, facial expression, body language and so on.

Even though someone gets angry, we can solve the problem immediately. But, online we can't really see each other and have some body language to know if he is angry or not. And, I think offline can solve the conflicts more effectively. "

Besides, Couple 2 who have their own commitment utilise the benefits of social media and social networking to keep contact with each other when they are both busy with their personal daily commitment. However, they still prefer the offline communication method. Couple 2 mentioned that offline communication allows them to have a more in-depth communication. These have shown that their preferred communication method is offline communication method.

"From my perspective, when we meet each other offline, we can have physical interactions like hugs and kisses. When communicating online, we are unable to have physical interaction. For example, when I am sad, what I need is just a hug from my partner, but communicating online we cannot do so. If we want to communicate more in-depth, I will prefer face-to-face communication."

Furthermore, Couple 3 is a pair of couples who met each other on a dating app, Bumble, and then became involved in the offline communication. For Couple 3, they prefer an offline communication method because they think it is better and more effective during physical communication. They mentioned that they will have face-to-face communication (offline communication method) when they need in-depth communication or talk about issues that are high in sensitivity such as discussion of their relationship issues.

"Preferably offline is better. I think that every time there is a deep question to talk about and is sensitive, we should do it face-to-face."

Look into Couple 4, they have expressed their preference to the offline communication method clearly in the interview. As Couple 4 are firstly met on dating apps and then approach each other offline but practicing long distance relationship, they clearly mentioned that they prefer offline interaction with the partner, as it builds more real life interaction and makes their conversation smooth during offline communication methods. They mentioned that they could observe the partner's facial expression and body language during an offline communication method, face-to-face meeting and more real and physical interaction, which are the reasons that led them to be more preferable about the offline communication method.

“I prefer offline interaction, because it is more realistic and we can make our conversation smoother than online. When we meet each other, like face to face, I am able to observe her facial expressions, and body language. We feel comfortable in offline communication. We could build more reality interaction and physical contact. “

Sub-theme 2: Communication barrier: There are a lot of communication barriers that will occur when communicating online for couples. The four pairs of couples have all faced communication barriers when communicating with each other online. The communication barriers that they encounter are internet connection issues, emoji use which are misleading, the misinterpreting without non-verbal communication, and their personal life commitment.

Couple 1 has mentioned that they are facing internet connection issues for communicating online, they have unstable internet connection.

‘The person is just beside you so it’s easy for us to talk but if we are online, the internet connection will be one of the big challenges for us to communicate. For example, like somethings Couple 1 (male) went to

some place where don't have a connection or his phone had no battery.

Couple 3 also stated in the interviews that, when communicating online, both of them need proper internet connection, or that will become a main communication barrier as well.

'Online, one thing depends on external things, you need to have a proper internet connection.'

Besides, Couple 1 mentioned that they rely a lot on emoji in their online conversation, this impacts misunderstanding due to the misleading of emoji.

"We are communicating with social media, so we rely on Emoji very badly, as if today he sent an Emoji representing anger, then I will worry that is he angry at me? I will think a lot which leads to conflicts."

The Couple 4 are not only meeting online, but also having a long distance relationship now. They are also facing the barriers of the misunderstanding and misleading of text messages and emojis.

"The misunderstanding or misleading will easily occur because of the emojis, words or auxiliary words that we use."

Moreover, Couple 2 mentioned that there is a lack of the ability to have non-verbal communication. They are not able to get the meaning and point that her partner tries to convey in the messages and words.

"I think the difference will be communicating offline, we can read each other's facial expression while communicating but when online communication we are unable to read the other's facial expression. Besides, when the communication is physically done, we can easily

understand and sense others emotions via their body language. I think it is difficult to have no difficulties at all when communicating. For example, when you are trying to convey a message but the others cannot get the point or misunderstanding on certain words when communicating. Because when communicating online, sometimes we are unable to describe and convey exactly what we are trying to tell.”

Couple 3 mentioned in the interviews that, without hearing the sounds and tones of each other and without observing the facial expressions of one another, the misunderstanding easily occurs.

“When it's online there is easier to get more misunderstandings. Can't really hear the person's tone, or see the person's facial expression.”

Furthermore, due to Couple 1 having different commitments for their own daily life, they may not be able to give each other a quick response in online communication, this slightly affects their feelings to share the happiness with each other.

“We will be very sensitive. On another hand, while offline, we are communicating face-to-face which makes it easy for us to deliver messages, I mean not only the words but also the tones, facial expression, body language and so on.”

Couple 4 also indicates that the personal commitment to daily life of the partner is a communication barrier to them.

“Also, we could not share our life or experiences in-time, like, not directly, have to wait until he is not busy. Because he is a college student and also working part-time.”

Sub-theme 3: Display of Emotion: The four couples have emotions to express, body language movement and sharing their feelings with their partners as they have emotional security, it is a form of non verbal communication between the partners. It is easily visible that all the couples have developed a safe relationship with their partners which helps them to have genuine intimacy. Couple 1 (female) stated that they are communicating face to face which makes them feel easier to communicate and deliver the information accurately. It is an opportunity to communicate more than just words, since they might watch and modify depending on body language and expression. Moreover, when they have conflicts between them, they will give time to each other and will think about the issues that have happened and will stand on opposing sides to view the connection differently. It can be seen clearly whether the partner is still upset or angry. Just by looking at their facial expressions and body languages.

“The both of us are communicating face-to-face which makes it easy for us to deliver messages, I mean not only the words but also the tones, facial expression, body language and eye contact will reveal our true feelings towards each other. I also ask myself why he is angry, what is his perspective towards this issue. How can I see it from his perspective? Lastly, discover that calming emotions first helps to move to the next face which is to solving the problem and seeing facts.”

Next, Couple 2 (male) has mentioned that the partner easily gets emotional when conflicts happen. To avoid it becoming bigger between them, he will step in and apologize to his partner as he finds that to apologize helps reduce the partner from being in an angry mode.

“ When there is a conflict I try to communicate well with my partner, as I need to stay calm first and at the same time comfort her to avoid putting her in a bad mood. During conflicts, she tends to be more aggressive and does not resolve the situation whereby this is where I step in and apologize even if sometimes it is not my mistake.”

Furthermore, the Couple 3 (female) as they met online and she feels that nervous about their first meeting when they meet physically. She tends to feel awkward and overthink before meeting the partner.

“ The first time I met him, I felt a little embarrassed and was also private about our meeting. As I was unable to plan very well in our first meeting due to my schedule being packed. In fact I made him wait 45 minutes and it was awkward first time seeing him. I wasn't worried, I felt awkward but I wasn't worried about how would our first meet up end.”

Consequently, the Couple 4 (female) feels that as she is a girl and feels shy to meet her partner during their first meeting. Especially in the beginning, getting along may be difficult. Therefore, she always needs time to calm down and think about the problems that happened between them. The Couple 4 (male) when he and his partner have arguments via online, he will comfort her. As he will also give her time to calm down and be considerate after the conflict occurs.

“ As for me, I need time to get used to the interaction between each other when we first meet. I felt a bit shy and awkward during the first meeting. When in conflict I will take the initiative to calm her, as in to comfort her. I will give her time to calm down and be considerate. At the same time I always need time to calm down, to consider and digest the problems that are on hand and how do we resolve this together.”

Theme 4 : Relationship

This theme consists of two sub-themes, appreciation and comfortability. Appreciation among the couple whereby the couple allows the partner to feel special, honored, and treasured. Besides, comfortable in terms of the couple having the sense of freedom from inhibitions and

feeling comfortable while staying with each other without the feeling of making changes in the relationship.

Sub-theme 1: Appreciation: The respondents mentioned they are appreciating every chance that they are able to meet up with the partner. In this research, the term appreciate shows that the couple feel glad with the existence of the partner, they value the effort the partner did for them, as well as they treasure and respect each other in the relationship. The sense of being appreciated in the relationship allows the couple to want to stay committed in the relationship.

During the interview, couple 1 (male) has mentioned that his partner changed her behaviour which is to learn to control her emotions after understanding his situation during work. This has allowed him to feel that he is being respected in the relationship, as well as his emotion and feeling has been cared for by the partner. During the interview he was being asked that will the partner gets angry when she did not get his message reply immediately during his work and he mentioned that:

“ At first, she got angry, but after that she knew my working time, working environment, and working tasks,she started to amend her emotions which I really appreciate. After that, she didn't get mad regarding this issue.”

Besides, Couple 4 (male) mentioned that he cherishes all the chances that allow him to meet physically with his partner. During the interview, he mentioned that since it is not easy to meet up with the partner physically, they will always try to avoid arguments or conflict whenever they have the chance of meeting with each other offline. Not only that, when he was being asked that who will be the one who apologise first after an argument, he mentioned that he will be the one who take the initiative to apologise as the occurrence of the partner allows him to feel cherish and grateful, apologise is a way to calm his girlfriend during an argument, but not

seem as a 'loser'. He also mentioned that although the period of then being a couple is not long, they can feel the connection among each other. They rely on and understand each other in any sense. He said that he can feel that the partner treated him well and he feels grateful about it.

“Because we can only meet once in a time, so we appreciate every chance we meet, and avoid fights or arguments and conflicts when we meet. We feel comfortable in offline communication. ; Of course it is me, haha.. Truly, she is good, I really appreciate her occurrences and being my girlfriend. The apology is more like, one of the ways to calm her down. ; We have only been together for a few months, but we really feel connected with each other, reliable, and well understanding about each other. She treats me well; I really appreciate it a lot.”

Sub-theme 2: Comfortable: The respondents feel enjoyment when they are spending time with their partners, during conversation, sharing experiences, and sharing thought. They feel relaxed towards their partners even though they share personal issues. When they were asked how comfortable they are with the partner, the couple 3 (male) mentioned that in the relationship he will be able to feel that he is being respected when he is sharing his thoughts and feelings. Not only that, some vulnerable details will not be easily used during an argument in future as his partner is respecting it.

“I am comfortable with her, sometimes in previous relationships, when you are vulnerable with the person. Those details shared, get used as a point during arguments. I've experienced that before and other guys too. She took me a while to be vulnerable with her because of their past experience. I notice that she never does that, in fact when it comes to anything that I've shared she is very respectful towards it.”

After that, couple 3 (female) also added that she is very unrestrained while staying with her partner as the partner makes her feel easy when staying together. The way that her partner acts and speaks does not make her feel precarious but makes her feel open-hearted to share everything with the partner.

“I am very comfortable with him, what I’ve seen in him is he is very consistent with the way he is, speaks and acts. From there I gain their trust, I know he is trustworthy. I did have my doubts, what if I share things that he doesn’t like. But again he proves me wrong. So that’s how I managed to get very comfortable with him.”

Not only that, couple 4 (male) also mentioned that he feels good in having conversation with his partner, even though both of them stay silent when they spend time together.

“We are comfortable talking about everything, anything, and even nothing.”

After that, his girlfriend, the couple 4 (female) also added that they will share everything with each other via social media all the time even though the partner is still yet to reply to the previous messages. They love to share everything with their partner in life. Anything that happens around them could be a conversation or sharing topic for them.

“We share a lot of posts or videos on social media even though others haven’t replied. Our context is full of life sharing about those “small” and “big” things that happened.”

Summary of findings and Analysis.

To summarise the findings and analysis in this research, there are 4 main themes found during this research which are criteria, critical thinking, communication and relationship. Each theme

had 2-3 sub themes to categorize the findings that were similar and different among the 4 couples. Do refer to the table below for the themes and sub-themes that were retrieved.

No	Theme	Sub-Themes
1.	Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appearance 2. Trust 3. Connectivity
2.	Critical Thinking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decision Making 2. Mutual Understanding
3.	Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preference of communication method 2. Communication Barriers 3. Display of Emotions
4.	Relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciation 2. Comfortable

All these are based on the 4 couples and their quality of relationship despite it being through dating apps or face-to-face communication. The RQ 1 are the criteria of partner selection similar or different for couples in dating apps and face-to-face meetings? There is a visible similarity when it comes to criteria of selection in partner, communication preference. However the difference that is noticeable would be how each couple solves conflict that requires critical thinking and as a whole relationship how do they complement each other. RQ 2 which is, what are the similarities and differences in interaction between online and offline couples? The findings strongly relate back to the RQ that have been stated to ensure that it does relate with what the researchers are looking for.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 The Similarities and Differences in Interaction Between Online and Offline Couples

Based on the four themes, and sub-themes that have been found during the finding, offline and online couples do have some similarities and differences when it comes to interacting online and offline.

When focusing on similarities, based on the theme, criteria and sub-themes, the online couple finds that appearance is one of the criteria that determine the quality of selecting a partner on dating applications. They find that the appearance of dating applications is important when it comes to 'swiping right' on dating applications. When the appearance of the application matches their preferences, they will give a chance by swiping right, otherwise, they will swipe left to skip the particular person. According to Tran, Kaplan, Austin, Davison, Lopez and Agenor (2020), their research showed that appearance on a dating application is important as people on the dating application tend to look for people with certain criteria or appearance that they prefer or are looking for.

Next move on to the theme of communication and its sub-theme, the communication barrier. The online couples agreed that there is a communication barrier that occurs when they are communicating with their partner online. Communication barriers such as unstable internet connection become one of the barriers when they are communicating online. According to Quaglio and Millar (2020), poor internet connection can lead to negative impacts on a relationship, especially emotional communication. A poor internet connection can bring challenges in forming an effective tie, and at the same time will become a challenge for online relationships to be maintained. The couples mentioned that this is a big challenge for them as it is an uncontrollable and external issue that they are unable to predict when it will be happening. Besides, emoji is often used during conversations among online couples. However, this could also be one of the communication barriers for them. Misinterpretation of the meaning

of the emoji sent by the partner could be one of the leading issues of miscommunication and finally cause arguments. According to Tigwell and Flatla (2016), people tend to interpret emojis in their own way as one particular emoji can present different meanings for different people and it has the possibility of leading to miscommunication.

In addition, the lack of ability to have non-verbal communication is also one of the communication barriers that are agreed upon by offline couples. They agreed that when they are communicating face-to-face, they are able to read the facial or body expression of the partner, however, when they are communicating online, they will not be able to do so which forms a barrier among them. The online couple also mentioned that it will be easy for misunderstanding and miscommunication when they are unable to observe the partner's facial expressions or body language, as well as unable to hear clearly the partner's voice tone. According to Segal, Smith, Robinson and Boose (2020), non-verbal communication is playing an important role in communication as the non-verbal signals allow people to show him/her attitude or feeling when having communication which would help in developing trust, and clarity in communication and rapport during a conversation.

Focusing on the difference, based on the criteria theme and sub-theme trust, online couples find it harder to develop trust as they are afraid of falling into fake profiles, and impersonating someone else compared to offline couples. The difference shows that trusting is the main focus however they have different approaches when it comes to trusting people who date online versus offline. Such as online couples take more time to trust and get to know each other before deciding on meeting face-to-face communication compared to offline couples. Online couples take more time to form connections on purpose in order to boost the degree of trust they have with their partners, especially considering some of the negative stigmas that are connected with online dating (Aditi, 2014). The vast majority of people who date online are apprehensive about the possibility that their potential romantic partners may provide false

information about themselves or present themselves in a dishonest manner. Therefore, people who use online dating spend more time getting to know their partners in order to enhance the likelihood of uncovering any inconsistencies before they become emotionally invested and involved on an emotional level (Aditi, 2014).

Followed by the second theme critical thinking, sub-theme decision making. The difference between online and offline couples would be the style of decision-making. It is not tied down to one gender in making the decisions of anything in this relationship. However, it is visible that the male partners have more patience and are easy going when it comes to decision-making. As from the findings of this research both genders do make the decision-making process. Several research demonstrates that making decisions in partnerships may improve relational functioning (Owen. J et al., 2013). His study found that people who make more conscious relationship decisions (about who they want to be with and for physical closeness) report better relationship functioning. After controlling for demographic characteristics and attachment styles, more careful relationship decision-making was linked to better levels of dedication, relationship adaptability, and less infidelity (Owen. J et al., 2013).

5.2 Theoretical Framework

Based on the findings, attraction theory has 4 major specific factors which are appearance, proximity, similarity and rewards. Out of the 4, there are 3 factors that were able to be identified which were appearance, similarity and rewards.

The appearance factor and data are available as to how online and offline couples choose their partner. As an example, online couples select their partners from profiles that look real. Offline couples, refer to a person's physical appearance. This implies that "appearance" matters in a sense. However, looks are not the cornerstone of a relationship, nor are they the primary cause for a partnership's success or failure over time. This data is available as there are

2 couples who meet and know each other physically. Both of the couples meet face to face to know each other by looking as if they are meant to be together. As we can see appearance does matter even physically as people need to pay attention to dressing up, being attractive, having a sense of humour and so on. Appearance can bring physical attractiveness in different ways and need to see how it works with different couples.

Next, the similarity is also a significant factor in which couples feel comfortable. For instance, critical thinking is one of the similarities in which critical thinking in this study refers to the manner of thinking and strategy for resolving problems and making decisions. This demonstrates how adaptable couples are when it comes to making decisions together. Decision-making is important in the relationship when it comes to making decisions. Determine how the couples made their choices will affect their life and act appropriately when making a choice. When it comes to decision-making in general, male partners tend to be more straightforward and accepting of the consequences. Nevertheless, the other partner accepts their decision as well as their point of view regarding the decision-making process. This study focuses on couples that have reached an agreement over a single option. However, this should not distract from the fact that there is a connection between mutual comprehension, the ability to make decisions, and the successful resolution of offline and online disagreements. This exemplifies the couple's capacity for tolerance as well as the ability to reach a compromise. Besides, mutual understanding is also one of the aspects that is important which is the key to a solid relationship is open communication and mutual regard for one another's sentiments. This research demonstrates that mutual understanding between couples is essential since it reveals how well they can tolerate and understand one another. Relationships need an understanding of each other's emotions and sentiments, yet it is impossible to comprehend someone based just on their appearance. To do that, the couple must communicate with each other. When couples suppress their emotions and sentiments instead of discussing them, mistrust and

misunderstanding ensue. This study also proves that mutual understanding is very important in a healthy relationship and acknowledges that the importance of mutual understanding in relationships cannot be overestimated.

Moreover, rewards are another factor that was able to be identified in the research. Communication and relationship would be the theme that is suitable for this factor which brings reward to the respondent's relationship. Communication is a requirement for all relationships. Nothing works if two parties are unable to express their objectives, expectations, misunderstandings, and scheduling difficulties. Communicate each other's availability to prevent another partner from attempting to contact you. Inform your partners that you are about to complete your tasks and will be available to spend time with them whenever you are able to do so. Therefore, personal information sharing is essential to a healthy relationship. Moreover, the relationship is also one of the important themes which could bring comfort and appreciation to a relationship. When two people are in a relationship, they should appreciate each other and feel comfortable so that they can maintain their relationship in the long term. Thus, couples feel that being valued in a relationship helps a person feel unique, cherished, and respected. When a person expresses their appreciation for someone, they communicate how much they matter to the other person and the more special that another partner makes their partner feel better for their connection will be.

5.3 Limitations

As this study is being undertaken by a group of students for their Final Year Project (FYP). Throughout this research, they have encountered minimal barriers. First and foremost, they have limited time to gather data as qualitative analysis involves a considerable time commitment to conduct in-depth interviews with each respondent and finalize the transcript. Due to the fact that each respondent used their preferred language to complete the interview,

they should repeatedly listen to the audio in order to get the respondent's original meaning, only then can they translate it into English without affecting the original meaning.

Moreover, this research is about exploring the similarities and differences in the criteria of partner selection and interaction between online and offline couples. However, the sample size is insufficient to provide a reliable picture of how online and offline couples perceive the quality of relationships. If a sufficient sample size cannot be obtained, the collected data may be inadequate.

Additionally, the researchers faced a communication barrier during online sessions, which led to misunderstandings. If the interview had been conducted in person rather than online, miscommunication would not have happened. Nonetheless, this was one of the obstacles that the researchers had to overcome owing to the limitations that had emerged in this research.

5.4 Contributions

This research benefits other scholars who are interested in conducting future studies related to the quality of relationships between online and offline couples. This research comprehended the similarities and differences in interaction among online and offline couples. Although there are several research studies on the relationship among couples, there are relatively very few who explore the quality of the relationship in terms of interaction and communication and compare online and offline couples. This resulted in the creation of a new area of study in which future researchers with a similar interest might embrace this research and further explore this new finding.

As this research is focusing on the quality of relationships among online and offline couples, this study might also serve as a catalyst for future researchers who desire to do research on cases involving dating apps and communication. As mentioned in the significance of the

study in Chapter 1, face-to-face engagement has declined as individuals prefer to communicate or contact through electronic devices as technology has advanced. However, Chapter 4 data analysis stated clearly that people do prefer to communicate face-to-face in a romantic relationship in dealing with conflicts, expressing feelings, and so on. As a consequence, academics who seek to learn more about this subject might use our results as a starting point or incorporate them into their own study.

Moreover, this study may be useful to individuals in the communication and social media industries, since it provides crucial information on how dating app users interact online and how the dating service is used. Additionally, the acquired data may be used for a study on the effects of online dating services. As Chapter 4 data analysis stated, the informers mentioned the trust issue in dating applications which affected them having low trust in dating applications to look for romantic partners. The developers of dating applications may have improvements based on the concerns such as fake profile pictures, and fake accounts with the purpose to encourage people to utilize online dating applications for seeking partners online.

Additionally, this research may benefit those working in the communication and social media sectors, since it contains critical information on how dating app users communicate online and also about how the dating service is used. Also, the data collected may be utilised to do research on the impacts of online dating programmes. If the study proves to be useful, future researchers may look into ways to encourage people to utilise online dating sites. Promoting the use of online dating services may help, encourage, or oblige Malaysians to establish relationships, minimise late marriages, and reproduce in order to battle the country's ageing population.

5.5 Recommendations

The summary of the results from this study has shown how dating apps affect the quality of romantic relationships, as there are many individuals involved in the relationship developed via dating apps. This study disclosed a new revelation which helps to understand how dating apps influence people's relationships since they may be aware of whether good or bad effects.

Additionally, to guide future users of dating apps, the study needs a better grasp of what social apps are all about. Since it contains some critical information on how dating app users communicate online and also about how the dating service is used, a further study of the different grey areas should be explored to get a better understanding of dating apps.

Also, the study proves that social apps can be useful in approaching partners, future researchers may look into ways to encourage people to utilize online dating apps. Promoting the use of online dating services may help, encourage, or oblige Malaysians to establish relationships, minimise late marriages, and reproduce in order to battle the country's ageing population.

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Appendixes

Interview questions

1. Dating background

1.1 How did you meet your partner?

1.2 Current status of communication is via offline or online?

1.3 Did the pandemic make the relationship move online or was it due to LDR (long-distance relationship)?

2. How did you come across this application? (State the dating apps that they use)

2.1 What was your intention in using dating apps?

2.2 How was the experience of using a dating application in search of a romantic partner?

2.3 What do you look for before you match (swipe right) the user? Would communication skills be one of the top priorities?

3. How was the communication and interaction different when it was online and offline?

3.1 After communicating online, when it was time to meet face-to-face were there difficulties?

3.2 Do you find that communicating online and face-to-face have big differences?
(only people who moved their communication method answer this)

3.3 Is online or offline communication and interaction help to get to know each other Better? (only people who moved their communication method answer this)

3.4 Do you face any communication problems when communicating with your partner? Any difficulty? Internet, etc.

3.5 Who makes the final decision for most situations?

3.6 Did you find it effective to communicate virtually? Why?

4. As a couple, there are difficulties faced, how arguments and conflicts are solved with your partner being online and offline.

4.1 How do you deal with conflict in your relationship? Online/Offline

4.2 What will you do when your partner is angry? Do you distance yourself or avoid?
resolving the problem?

4.3 Was confrontation easy when you were dating your partner online?

4.4 How do you tolerate each other when there is a conflict and who is the first to apologize?

5. Does the degree of intimacy (E&P) affect the relationship either virtual/ physical?

5.1 How comfortable are you with your partner?

5.2 How much do you rely on each other?

5.3 How are you certain that your partner is the right person for you?

5.4 Do you find dating face-to-face is much more comfortable than dating online?

(Only applicable to people who change their communication channel)

5.5 How do you rely on one another, since you are not next to each other how do you know they are the right person to be with?

6. Limitations faced during offline and online dating?

6.1 How were you able to resolve them?