DATING APP USER EXPERIENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

DATING APPLERDE KULLANICI DENEYİMİ: FENOMENOLOJİK BİR ANALİZ

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Abstract
An increasing number of dating apps are available on mobile platforms and are based on the matching of various user profiles with multiple user profiles. This article takes a phenomenological perspective to understand dating app user experiences. The research aims to explore in-depth the experiences of users on such apps. The study uses a phenomenological research design from qualitative research methods to understand users' emotions, thoughts, and experiences while using dating apps. The data collected through in-depth interviews with participants were analyzed to understand their experiences and identify common themes. Through this study, the study attempts to make sense of how these experiences affect users' daily lives and relationship building processes by addressing issues such as the challenges, satisfaction, expectations, and relationship-building processes that users face when using dating apps. This analysis offers subjective insights into the design and user experiences of dating apps. Two dominant themes emerge from the analysis of participant opinions. Application hardware and user satisfaction are these. Post-match control, incorrectly functioning algorithms, and user verification are the three subheadings under application hardware. Conversely, subheadings related to user satisfaction include matches, community pressure, and ecosystem differences.

Keywords: Dating App, Phenomenology, Mobile App, User Experience.

Öz
Giderek artan sayıdaki dating uygulamaları mobil platformlar üzerinden app olarak hizmet vermekte ve çeşitli kullanıcı profillerinin yine çeşitli kullanıcı profilleriyle eşleşmesi üzerine temellenmektedir. Bu makale, dating app kullanıcı deneyimlerini anlamak amacıyla konuyu fenomenolojik bir perspektiften ele almaktadır. Araştırma, kullanıcıların bu tür uygulamalarda yaşadıkları deneyimleri derinlemesine incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada kullanıcıların dating appleri kullanırken hissettikleri duyguları, düşünceleri ve deneyimleri anlamak için nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik araştırma desenini kullanılmaktadır. Katılımcılarla yapılan derinlemesine görüşmeler aracılığıyla elde edilen veriler, katılımcıların deneyimlerini anlamak ve ortak temaları belirlemek için analiz edilmiştir. Söz konusu çalışma aracılığıyla, kullanıcıların dating app kullanımında karşılaştıkları zorluklar, memnuniyetler, beklentiler ve ilişki kurma süreçleri gibi konuları ele alarak bu deneyimlerin kullanıcıların günlük yaşamlarına ve ilişki kurma süreçlerine nasıl etki ettiğini anlamlandırmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu analiz, dating applerin tasarımı ve kullanıcı deneyimleri konusunda subjektif içgörüler sunmaktadır. Katılımcıların görüşleri incelendiğinde 2 üst başlık öne çıkmaktadır. Bunlar uygulama donanımı ve kullanıcı memnuniyeti olarak ifade edilmektedir. Uygulama donanımı başlığı kullanıcı doğrulama, algoritmaların doğru çalışmaması ve eşleşme sonrası denetim alt başlıklarına ayrılmıştır. Kullanıcı memnuniyeti ise eşleşmeler, mahalle baskısı ve ekosistem farklılıkları olarak belirlenen alt başlıklara sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dating App, Fenomenoloji, Mobil Uygulama, Kullanıcı Deneyimi.

INTRODUCTION

Today, mobile dating apps have become a phenomenon that fundamentally changes the process of seeking relationships and meeting new people. In addition to traditional methods, such as meeting in person or receiving recommendations from friends, people can now connect with thousands of potential matches with just a few taps. While these applications offer exciting opportunities for many, they also reveal the complexities of modern relationship dynamics and human interaction.

Using a dating app begins with creating one's profile. This requires not only providing various information, such as photos, interests, expectations, and personal values, but also a degree of "self-marketing" skill. Therefore, creating a good profile is critically important for attracting attention and establishing a potential connection. While navigating the application, users can typically filter by geographical location, age range, and specific interests, making it easier to find potential matches that align with their desired characteristics and preferences.

At this point, algorithmic structures come into play. Matching algorithms are the heart of dating apps and help users connect with potential partners. These algorithms undertake the task of analyzing users' profiles and considering their preferences to suggest suitable matches. They provide valuable insights into who users are and what kinds of relationships they are seeking, based on data such as photos, personal descriptions, and interests found in user profiles.

For example, geographical location is one of these factors. When users want to match with people within a certain distance, the algorithm considers the user's specified geographical location and preferred distance to present suitable matches. During app usage, algorithms learn user behavior and offer new suggestions for future use. By analyzing users' actions, such as likes, past matches, and communication history, these algorithms help users better understand their preferences. Over time, the algorithm becomes programmed to offer matches more aligned with the user's interests and expectations. Therefore, the purpose of algorithms is to help users establish better and more meaningful relationships.

There are also challenges that come with using dating apps. For example, moving beyond profile photos and short biographies to establish real connections and develop intimate relationships remains a challenging process in the real world, despite the underlying algorithms of the applications. Additionally, for some users, the constantly increasing options and ever-changing communication dynamics can make the process of seeking relationships more complex.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of individuals who use dating apps and to provide a more comprehensive framework for the impact of these platforms on user satisfaction and the motivations of users. In particular, the analysis in this study revealed the main themes of the relationship between the technical infrastructure of the apps (verification, algorithms, post-match supervision) and user satisfaction, as well as the pressures from users' social environment (neighborhood pressure).

This study is important because it adds a new dimension to the research on dating apps, fills the knowledge gaps in this field, helps app developers develop strategies to improve user experience, contributes to users using dating apps more consciously, and offers a new perspective to the field of social sciences.

As a result of this study, questions such as how the technical infrastructure of dating apps (verification, algorithms, post-match control) has an impact on user satisfaction, how the pressures from users' social environment (neighborhood pressure) affect their decisions to use dating apps, what expectations individuals who use dating apps have from these platforms, and which features of dating apps users are satisfied or dissatisfied with were answered with the original opinions of the participants.

Through the interpretative phenomenological analysis method, the participants' experiences with dating apps were examined in depth, and their meanings were analyzed.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATING APPS

According to a report published by an international statistics institution (Statista, 2023), the use of dating apps and platforms is growing rapidly, and it is projected to reach 441 million active users worldwide by the end of 2023. Additionally, this market is expected to generate approximately 8.7 billion dollars (about $27 per person in the US) in revenue through dating services. A retrospective evaluation of the projections in this report has not yet been conducted, but it is currently supported by other statistical reports. For example, in 2022, more than 366 million online dating service users were reported. It is predicted that by 2027, the number of people seeking love through online platforms will rise to 440 million. This prediction is based on market share statistics. Online dating generated 2.86 billion USD in revenue in 2022, with no signs of a slowdown in the market. Therefore, the increasing market share indicates a growing number of users (Jo Dixon, 2023).

In this sense, Türkiye's historical journey relies on mass communication tools before the advent of information technologies. The roots of the first dating applications in Türkiye extend back to newspaper and magazine advertisements published in the late Ottoman period. These advertisements, in which individuals placed personal ads stating their search, represented a practice imported from Western countries known as "marriage ads" (Tunç Yaşar, 2019). For example, the ads published in the magazine İzdivaç can be cited as examples of such ads. In these advertisements, the general perspective of society becomes apparent through a form of self-advertisement of Western origin (Tunç Yaşar, 2019).

Considering technological developments, the journey of dating apps has had global effects (Punyanunt-Carter & Wrench, 2017). Chronologically, the first steps of this journey were taken at Stanford University in 1959. Jim Harvey and Phil Fialer launched a computerized matchmaking project by combining punch cards and an IBM 650 Mainframe, thus beginning digital romance marketing. Then, in 1965, at Harvard University, Jeff Tarr and Vaughan Morrill utilized the IBM 1401 to match people based on their similarities. In the early 1970s, under the leadership of James Schur, the first computer-based dating company, named Phase II, emerged, marking a new era for the digital age of romance.

In 1984, Jon Boede and Scott Smith creatively used bulletin boards to create the Matchmaker Electronic Pen Pal Network, allowing people to meet. During the same period, the online service company CompuServe made a significant innovation by enabling users who met in the virtual environment to meet face-to-face for the first time. In 1986, Gregory Scott Smith launched a bulletin board that allowed people to find love using their geographical locations, heralding the birth of Match-maker.com, the longest-running online dating service. This romantic journey continued with the rise of a series of online service providers that opened the doors to the digital age in the United States. Significant platforms like America Online (AOL), CompuServe, and Prodigy also played a key role in the spread of online dating and communication.

By 1993, the internet made its first appearance in Türkiye, opening new opportunities for people to find love and relationships. With advancements in technology, the first smartphone was launched, allowing people to become more connected than ever before. In 1994, Terrence "Lee" Zehrer registered Kiss.com, one of the pioneering personal dating sites featuring photos, which achieved significant success by attracting over 1 million users (about the population of Delaware). Soon after, Match.com was established, adding a new dimension to the digital dating world. During this period, the hourly cost of internet service providers in the USA decreased significantly, fostering the broader use of the internet. JDate, targeting Jewish singles, was also launched, contributing to the diversification of dating platforms for different communities. Today, dating apps are customized based on race, religion, sexual orientation, and relationship preferences.

In 1995, Craig Newmark's Craigslist.org allowed people to post free personal ads, making digital dating more accessible. In 2000, eHarmony was founded by relationship expert Neil Clark Warren and his son-in-law, with the goal of matching people based on deep compatibility. In 2003, IAC/InterActiveCorp acquired Kiss.com and merged it with Match.com, consolidating ownership of several iconic dating platforms and intensifying competition among major players in the online dating industry. In 2006, a dating site called "Gönülden Sevenler" was launched in Türkiye, entering the local dating market.

In 2011, OkCupid was acquired by IAC/InterActiveCorp, the owner of Match.com, further intensifying competition among major players in the online dating industry. In 2012, Tinder was founded by Sean Rad, Jonathan Badeen, Justin Mateen, Joe Munoz, Dinesh Moorjani, Chris Gylczynski, and Whitney Wolfe. Tinder made a significant breakthrough with its now-iconic swipe right and left feature, fundamentally transforming the digital dating landscape by enabling users to view and select potential matches based on their geographical location.

In Turkey, local dating platforms such as Gönülden Sevenler and Pembe Panjur provide services through their websites and mobile apps. Their interfaces are a mix of the iconic Tinder interface and a classic social media feed. There is no research on user profiles in literature or official statistics released by the platforms themselves.

International research on dating apps often focuses on user motivations. However, these motivations are frequently examined on a psychological and social basis. Research has identified several key motivations that drive individuals to interact with these platforms, romantic relationships, casual encounters, self-esteem validation, and social interaction. One of the salient motivations for using dating apps is the desire for romantic relationships. For example, research identifying 'love' as a key motivation suggests that users seek long-term, committed relationships through these platforms (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2018). This is in line with the findings of another study, which found that individuals with higher attachment anxiety were more likely to seek emotional intimacy and form relationships through dating apps (Timmermans & Alexopoulos, 2020). Conversely, casual sex motivations are also common, with users often using these apps to fulfill their physical and sexual needs (Lenton-Brym, Santiago, Fredborg, & Antony, 2021; Flesia, Fietta, & Monaro, 2021). Moreover, the social dynamics of dating apps significantly influence user motivation. The anonymity and accessibility of these platforms provide a unique environment for individuals, especially those from marginalized communities, to explore their identities and connect with others (Castro & Barrada, 2020).

Studies on dating apps in the local literature are shaped by various research (Cöbek, 2022; Er, Demiray, & Ok, 2022; Kılınç, 2022; Kıvanç, 2022; Yayla & İşözen, 2022; Ertoy, 2021; Özbaş Anbarlı, 2021; Aydoğan, 2020; Sahib, 2020; Semchenko, 2017). What sets this research apart from other studies is its focus on the original opinions of dating app users at the postgraduate education level.

PURPOSE AND METHOD
The purpose of this research is to highlight the private opinions of users over the age of 25 with postgraduate education regarding their subjective experiences with dating apps. By doing so, the study aims to offer a new perspective for the development of dating apps, which reach large audiences, grow in user and market share within the local population with increasing education levels, and fulfill an important social need. Additionally, dating apps provide a rich data source for understanding the dynamics of user relationships and human behavior, as platforms such as online games, mainstream social media (e.g., Instagram, X), and blogs are also used for dating purposes. Consequently, this research will also shed light on romantic interactions occurring in other digital environments. The ethics committee approval of the research was obtained by Istanbul Medipol University Social Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee within the scope of the decision numbered E-43037191-604.01-17062 taken on 04/03/2024.

In this research, the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method was used. Phenomenology is a philosophical method introduced by Edmund Husserl in the last century, with its key feature being the direct description of data. The phenomenological method allows researchers to approach the participant's personal world and gain an 'insider's perspective' (Conrad, 1987).

IPA is a method shaped by three distinct methodological influences: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith & Osborn, 2009). It explores in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds. In other words, the researcher aims to understand how participants try to make sense of their own worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2009). The most important value in an IPA study is the meanings that experiences, events, and expressions hold for participants. The approach is phenomenological because it involves a detailed examination of the participant's life world, focusing on personal experience. It emphasizes an individual's personal perception or account of an event, rather than aiming to produce an objective statement about the event itself (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

IPA studies typically involve small samples. However, this does not suggest that generalizations drawn from larger samples are less valuable. The focus of IPA is on the detailed examination of specific cases rather than broad generalizations, making it a preferred approach for gaining in-depth understanding (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

A frequently used data collection method in IPA is the semi-structured interview. These interviews have a general focus or set of themes but maintain a flexible format, allowing the order of topics to vary based on participant responses. The interaction during the interview plays a crucial role in deepening the exchange of information. While unstructured interviews can foster a conversational atmosphere, the time and effort required for their application and analysis must also be considered (Jennings, 2005).

In this research, questions were posed to participants regarding their comparative views on dating apps, their reasons for choosing these platforms, and their intentions. The interview data were analyzed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis method. Unique usage behaviors of the participants were examined, and common themes were identified. By interpreting users' demands, complaints, satisfactions, and findings regarding parallel approaches and usage patterns, this study aims to guide future research and provide insights for dating app companies.

RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

In this research, participants were selected based on their personal views and experiences, focusing on individuals over 25 years old with postgraduate education who use dating apps. The convenience sampling method was employed, where samples are selected by the researcher according to predetermined characteristics, representing a non-random selection process. This method ensures that data are collected in a practical, fast, and economical manner (Malhotra, 2004; Haşıloğlu, Baran & Aydın, 2015). The concept of convenience relates to compatibility with purpose or accessibility.

During the research process, a semi-structured interview technique was employed. These interviews have a specific focus or set of themes but maintain a flexible format compared to more formal structured interviews. The order of topics discussed varies based on participant responses, and the interaction with participants plays a crucial role in deepening the exchange of information. While unstructured interviews can foster a conversational atmosphere, the time and effort required to implement and analyze this method must also be considered (Jennings, 2005).

Before the final interviews, a pilot interview was conducted with 2 participants to test the comprehensibility of the questions. Based on the results of these pilot interviews, semi-structured interview questions were updated, and then final interviews were conducted with 7 participants determined for the actual interviews between 14.06.2024-18.07.2024. Each interview was conducted face-to-face for at least 30 minutes. During the interviews, with the consent of the participants, the conversations were recorded as audio files. After obtaining demographic information such as age and gender, pre-prepared questions focusing on their thoughts and experiences were directed to the

participants, and the content was shaped according to the interview.

In the interviews, a comprehensive approach was adopted where the main theme focused on the usability of dating apps and the challenges and conveniences experienced in this regard were examined. Participants were encouraged to explain their experiences with detailed and supportive questions, thus ensuring a deeper examination of the experiences.

The seven-step guide of the IPA method provided significant guidance in the in-depth analysis of the data in the study. After the initial interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and carefully examined. Repeating themes and prominent statements were also noted, and an in-depth analysis of the data was carried out. Then, the data of each participant were evaluated independently and individually, and similar patterns were identified by making cross-comparisons between the participants' themes.

Table 1. Participant Information.

Participant	Gender	Age	Purpose of Use
Participant 1	Male	38	Socialization
Participant 2	Female	46	Establishing Romantic Relationship
Participant 3	Male	26	Socialization
Participant 4	Female	33	Socialization/Romantic Relationship
Participant 5	Male	32	Socialization/Romantic Relationship
Participant 6	Male	29	Socialization
Participant 7	Female	28	Socialization/Romantic Relationship

The gender distribution of the participants is not homogeneous. In the study, which includes the views of 4 male and 3 female participants, 3 participants stated that their purpose of using dating apps is solely socialization, while 3 aim for both socialization and establishing romantic relationships, and 1 uses the applications solely to establish romantic relationships.

When examining the participants' views, two main themes emerge: application infrastructure and user satisfaction. The application infrastructure theme is divided into subthemes of user verification, malfunctioning algorithms, and post-match control. User satisfaction is identified with subthemes such as matches, societal pressure, and ecosystem differences.

Table 2. Subthemes Related to Application Infrastructure.

1. Application Infrastructure
a) User Verification
b) Malfunctioning Algorithms
c) Post-Match Control

The application infrastructure includes the technical infrastructure and features that enable the functioning of online dating applications. Robust servers store user information and run matching algorithms to analyze potential matches. Databases store user profiles and relational information, and

algorithms analyze user preferences to suggest suitable matches.

The user interface allows users to use the application effectively and facilitates access to communication tools. Additionally, security measures are important for the security of user data and the detection of fake profiles. The responses given by the participants were concentrated around three subthemes connected to the main theme of application infrastructure through cross-comparison.

- a. User Verification: Dating apps use various methods to verify users' identities. These methods may include steps such as email verification, phone number verification, social media verification, photo verification, and video verification. Users typically receive a verification code via an email address or phone number during registration to verify their accounts. Some applications ask users to link their social media profiles to their accounts and even request that they take a selfie in a specific pose or record a short video. These verification methods are used to increase user security and reliability and help detect fake profiles and malicious users. Participants stated that they faced challenges due to deficiencies in user verification systems.

"*I mean, having to upload a document that clearly shows marital status, like an ID card, and having to disclose it—even a married person can use it, but they have to be upfront about it.*"
 (Participant 4)

One participant expressed that the verification steps took away their freedom to still be anonymous.

 "*The application only allows certain things within the limits it wants, so it doesn't give freedom there. In this regard, it's good that you can't proceed to certain steps without verification, even when opening a fake account you have to go through some verification processes.*"
(Participant 1)

- b. Malfunctioning Algorithms: This includes issues like incorrect matches based on user experience, failure to understand user preferences, inability to detect spam or fake profiles, not presenting potential matches that meet users' expectations, and discrimination against certain user groups.

"*Frankly, I noticed that some matches had significant differences between their profile information and their real-life personalities. There is a serious problem both in verification and in the algorithm's matching.*"
 (Participant 7)

Another participant expressed disappointment when meeting people matched by the algorithm:

"*Yeah, I know I wasted my time meeting very unnecessary people. Normally, if I saw such a person, I would not even look at their face. On the street, I wouldn't even say hello; they have no conversation, nothing.*"
(Participant 6)

- c. Post-Match Control: This involves preventing issues that users may experience after communicating with each other. Through this control, users can filter unwanted messages, report disturbing behaviors, and communicate securely with other users. However, the victimization experienced in applications in this sense brings along functionality problems.

 "*There was someone I met on this app for a while; everything was going well, but then I noticed their messages got a bit weird. Frankly, this event really upset me. Then, of course, I wrote to the app team at once; no matter what I did, I could not solve it. I can say it's not entirely reliable.*"
 (Participant 7)

 "*A bad experience is when the match is removed while going to meet. This happened a few times. That*

is why now I do not want to go to a meeting without getting an Instagram or a phone number. Because dreadful things happen, I mean, I set out, to a place half an hour or 40 minutes away from where I live. While on the way, it says the match has been removed. This is very demoralizing."
 (Participant 3)

Table 3. Subthemes Related to User Experience.

2. User Experience
a) Matches
b) Societal Pressure
c) Ecosystem Differences

User experience in dating apps is shaped by factors such as user-friendly interfaces, easy accessibility, effective matching algorithms, security measures, and communication features. Additionally, users preferring the application, active usage, and providing feedback indicate a good user experience.

- 2.a. Matches: While the algorithm mechanism in the infrastructure points to matches, the disappointment experienced during face-to-face meetings after matching negatively affects the user experience multiple times. The success or failure of the match can ironically determine the future use of the application in the opposite direction.

"My good experience was meeting my girlfriend; my bad experience was matching with an egotistical person and arguing with them for 2 hours, then deleting the app right after leaving the table. My 2 hours were wasted for nothing."
 (Participant 5)

Participant 5 stated that they had a bad match experience but continued to use the app and eventually found their girlfriend. The same participant also mentioned that they stopped using the app after a successful last match. In short, app usage continues after dissatisfaction, but after satisfaction is achieved, app usage ends.

- 2.b Societal Pressure: Users often hide their usage due to societal stigma, usually stemming from social norms or family expectations. Especially in traditional or conservative societies, individuals may hide their use of dating apps due to environmental influences.

"It would bother me if my surroundings knew. Because I encounter some prejudices about these applications both in TV programs and when I socialize outside. There is a widespread perception that it always leads to one-night stands or that only those who want one-night stands use it. Since I don't want a one-night stand, I don't share this."
 (Participant 2)

"Yes, of course. Because our environment is not suitable for this, they would not take it well. First, people's perception is that these applications are not places where you meet and get married; they are places for daily flings, and they do not lead to marriage. So, they would question how you can trust people here. That's why I wouldn't want it."
 (Participant 5)

Due to the general perception of society that these kinds of applications are only for temporary relationships and not seen as a starting point for serious relationships like marriage, users do not want their usage to be known. This situation shows the conflict between societal norms and perceptions and individuals' personal preferences. However, due to the increasing number of users, it seems likely that society's perspective on these applications will also change.

- 2.c. Ecosystem Differences Between Various Dating Apps: Although this is not an officially declared situation by the applications, they do not have statements to the contrary either.

Therefore, each dating app has its own ecosystem. Participants have opinions about this situation based on their circle of friends or subjective experiences.

"I used Tinder and didn't like it because there were always messages implying one-night stands in profiles there. So, it did not appeal to me. I just looked and left. The reason I preferred Inner Circle was that it was accessed with a referral system. So, I thought it might be a bit more serious. What I liked about Bumble was the system where women message first. It was that the initiative was initially with me."
(Participant 2)

"I don't use Tinder much in Turkey because the people using it here are more for, let's say, work—I mean, there are a lot of escorts there—so I find it easier to meet people on Bumble in Turkey."
(Participant 3)

""While talking about applications, there's a framework drawn like there are more knowledgeable, better-looking people on OkCupid, etc. Such hearsay affects a person. It is not very possible to research how many participants there are here, what the profile is like. Unless there is a study done on this, I do not look at these, but these rumors affect me. That is why I opened it and looked there. For example, at that time, I liked that OkCupid tested some social and cultural factors like answering English questions in English."
(Participant 4)

In similar statements from participants, there is a belief that some applications like Tinder offer a more relaxed atmosphere, leading users to seek more spontaneous and short-term relationships, and thus one-night stands or instant flirts are more common. Additionally, other applications like Bumble are evaluated as providing an opportunity to meet users who are looking for more serious relationships, with more decent content and users with a specific relationship purpose. This is also assessed through features like women sending the first message on Bumble, making the platform more female-oriented and offering a more polite communication environment.

CONCLUSION
Dating apps provide more flexibility and freedom in every area of human life. People no longer miss opportunities to meet due to work intensities or geographical limitations; these applications offer people the opportunity to meet individuals from diverse cultures, age groups, and lifestyles, providing diversity and a stronger possibility of matching.

At the core of a dating application is the function of enabling people to match with each other and allowing them to establish potential relationships. For this, the functional features required by the applications come to the forefront. For example, the user verification systems of applications are of immense importance in preventing fake profiles and fraud cases. Ensuring user security and offering a reliable environment directly affect the success of the applications.

The study examines the relationship between the technical infrastructure of dating apps and the user experience in more depth, especially in dimensions such as user verification, algorithm performance, and post-match audit. In addition, important concepts such as 'neighborhood pressure' and 'ecosystem differences' contribute to a better understanding of the impact of dating apps in social and cultural contexts.

However, because of increasing market share and growing competition, developing effective algorithm mechanisms in addition to basic functions like security and usability, offering non-superficial options for socialization, or providing guidance services will determine which dating apps stand out.

The online romance experience, which directly and quickly affects social dynamics, also brings social preparation for similar technologies in the future. Therefore, the online romance experience should be

seen as a crucial factor that has the potential to shape not only today but also the future.

In short, it is possible to say that dating apps have become an indispensable part of the modern relationship world. Although they are merely entertainment tools for some, they can open doors to real and meaningful relationships for others. While these applications profoundly change the ways people connect and establish relationships with each other, they also contain significant social and cultural impacts that can alter the fundamental characteristics of human relationships.

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of individuals who use dating apps in order to build a more comprehensive framework for the impact of these platforms on user satisfaction and users' motivations. To this end, the results of the interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed various factors that shape the user experience of dating apps.

The findings of the study suggest that one of the most important factors influencing user satisfaction with dating apps is the technical infrastructure of the app. Technical details such as user verification processes, the functioning of algorithms, and the management of post-match communication directly affect users' trust and satisfaction with dating apps. Problems such as false matches, malfunctioning algorithms, and security vulnerabilities undermine users' trust in apps and reduce their satisfaction.

Furthermore, users' decisions and experiences with dating apps are significantly influenced by pressures from their social circles. This phenomenon, which we can term "neighborhood pressure," particularly in societies with strong traditional values, causes users to have reservations about using dating apps. Additionally, the opinions of other individuals in users' social circles regarding dating apps shape their attitudes toward these platforms.

Another significant finding of the study is that users have different expectations from dating apps. While some users utilize these platforms with the aim of forming romantic relationships, others seek to make new friends or expand their social circles. These diverse expectations determine the features users value in apps and the features they are satisfied with.

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