Fast-Sex Apps

Is there a cost to hooking up via smartphones?

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Dating apps have changed The landscape of contemporary sexual relationships. The most popular apps boast one-word names and often identify a target audience (Her), cater to kinky sexual predilections (Whiplr) or describe a user's preference to get right down to business (Pure, as in no dating, just sex, please).

Essentially, these apps make it really easy for individuals to do exactly what members of every pre-app generation have done: get together for the sole purpose of doing the nasty. But researchers are also considering the psychological impact this modern, more technological version of casual dating and sex can have on users of these apps. Findings presented at last year's convention of the American Psychological Association suggest a link between the usage of these apps and folks' mental health.

For the study, researchers asked 1,044 women and 273 men (mostly undergraduate students) to complete questionnaires about their use of Tinder, the popular dating and hookup app. The participants were also questioned about their body image, sociocultural factors, perceived objectification and thoughts regarding psychological well-being.

Findings showed that of the 10 percent of those who used Tinder, both males and females said they were less satisfied with their bodies and looks compared with those who didn't utilize the app. Interestingly, only the men reported suffering from lower levels of self-esteem.

Jessica Strübel, PhD, of the University of North Texas, one of the study's authors, said that regardless of gender, use of the app was associated with individuals' dissatisfaction and shame about their bodies, constant monitoring of physical appearance and comparing themselves to others, internalization of societal expectations of beauty and reliance on the media for information about looks, attractiveness and sex appeal.

Researchers noted that while the Tinder users who participated in the study tended to have lower self-esteem, this didn't mean the app caused it. The scientists urged that more research be done to help psychologists better understand the short- and long-term effects of these apps on their users.

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