

# Fake profiles and scams rampant on dating websites

Dating websites fail at verifying personal profiles as they claimed and people who work there blew the whistle on matchmaking fraud, The Beijing Times reported on Wednesday.

Dating websites are in the spotlight as Su Xiangmao, 37-year-old tech entrepreneur and multimillionaire committed suicide on Tuesday after he was scammed by his former wife, who he met from jia Yuan.com, a well-known dating website in China.

In his suicide note, he claimed he and his wife were VIP members of a dating website with verified personal profiles made by website, according to early report. But he later found that information about his wife didn't check out and she scammed him for over 10 million yuan in months.

The paper reported that dating websites require people to register with a real name and ID, but information, like age, education or marital status and salary, can be easily altered.

After signing up with basic information, people can offer more personal data, like an academic certificate or property certificate, to have them verified so it will help them get more attention from other members, increasing their chances of making a match.

The dating sites claim they have several technology protections to verify information, including real-name registration, vetting and system where members can complain or report someone with fraud profile.

However, those protections seem to be not working at all, the paper said.

A reporter from The Beijing Times signed up on jia Yuan.com and baihe.com successfully with a fake ID with wrong ID number and random mug shot.

He also had no difficulties in changing his information, like academic background, profession, marital status and salary right after signing up, without further verification.

Jiajia, not her real name, a member of jia Yuan.com, believes in verified profiles, saying she cares very much if other members have verified information.

"I won't send any message to a man without any verified personal info," she said.

However, Chen Wei, an attorney with Beijing Yingke Law Firm, said, "Dating websites have no access to the Ministry of Civil Affairs' marriage registration database, nor the Ministry of Public Security's ID database, so there is no way they can verify the most basic personal information,

including a person's real name, age or marital history."

It seems there's a huge loophole in dating websites' vetting systems.

But it's just a start. More hoaxes are waiting.

A woman in the paper's story, who only gives the name Xiaoqing and who worked for two popular dating sites, including jiyuan.com, for over two years, explained how they exploit their clients.

She gets a commission fee from individuals who sign up with the matchmaking service

"I will get more salary if I can invite more online clients to sign up for a contract for matchmaking service," she said.

She said they have a template for clients saying someone's interested in them, no matter if it's true and they want to meet up or there's an event where there will be many people.

"We say all the fantasies for potential clients to show up at our event. Then our matchmakers will approach them individually to persuade them to sign up for our matchmaking service at the event," she said.

The matchmaking service costs range from thousands to hundreds of thousands of yuan and promise to find clients a certain amount of ideal dates in a certain amount of time. If the clients don't like who they meet, recommended by the service, the service will keep looking until they are satisfied.

It sounds fair. But actually it's common when matchmakers think some clients are too picky or hard to sell, they will ask their friends to fill in – just to fulfill the contract, rather than find the potential right person, according to The Beijing Times.

They usually show up for dates but are barely willing to talk about themselves and disappear with some excuses and never reply to any calls or messages from their dates. Some clients put the dots together, thinking it's a scam when they received calls from their disappearing dates defending their matchmakers after complaints are made.