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Online Dating Behaviours: An Emerging Reproductive Health Issues among Undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which personality-type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status and social network utilization predict online dating behaviours among university undergraduates in Anambra state. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw 1,007 respondents (Female=708; Male=299) with age range of 18 to 28 years (\bar{x} = 17.08; SD= 6.01) from an estimated population of 10, 244 undergraduates in Anambra state universities. Four standardized scales and one researcher developed instrument were utilized. Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation show that the hypothesized variables have significant positive relationship ranging from .86 to .36 at 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed). Regression Analysis indicates that the independent variables jointly accounted for 84% of the variance in the prediction of online dating behaviours of the respondents. However, parental socio-economic-status made the highest contribution (β =.368; $p < 0.05$). The outcome suggests that dispositional and socio-economic factors correlate with online dating behaviours of the respondents. Counsellors should leverage programme designers to ensure that techniques of identifying users' profiles especially their personality traits are incorporated into web to enable potential online dates have compatible partners for meaningful and satisfying relationship.

Keywords: Online dating, Undergraduates, Reproductive health, Nigeria

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is having dramatic global influence on almost all spheres of human existence including dating behaviours of emerging adults. Kim (2010) define online dating or internet dating as a system whereby individuals can find and contact each other over the internet to arrange a date, usually with the objective of developing a personal, romantic, or sexual relationship. Hitherto, dating process involves two people meeting face-to-face to establish friendship with the aim of each assessing the other's suitability as a partner in an intimate relationship or marriage. Heino, Ellison and Gibbs (2010) are of the opinion that online dating provides unrestricted matchmaking over the internet through the use of personal computers or personal phones. Similarly, Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis and Sprecher (2012) opine that online dating has altered the dating landscape by offering an unprecedented level of access to potential partners and allowing users to communicate before deciding whether to meet face-to-face.

Online dating sites have become popular platforms and have offered an unprecedented level of access to potential romantic partners that are otherwise not available through traditional means. Result of a survey conducted by Eastwick and Finkel (2008) show that out of 54 million single people in US, 40 million have signed up with various online dating sites such as Match.com, eHarmony, etc, and around 20% of currently committed romantic relationships have begun online, which is more than through any means other than meeting through friends. Olaide and Adewole (2004) observed that a sizeable number Nigerian youths whose age ranged between 18- 30 years use internet for several purposes. This observation was confirmed by recent statistics published by facebook (2014) which shows that Nigerians is second to South Africans in internet usage with over 11 million people using facebook out of which 25-34 constitutes 37% and 18-24 were 36% of its users. Similar findings was reported by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010) whose survey shows that 93% of young adults in America age 18-29 go online, making this age group the most likely to be engaged in online dating behaviours. This view is in tandem with Johnson (2007) who reported that as against accessing

educational information, 55% of college students surveyed use e-mail daily, 35% instant messaging daily, and 34% use search engines daily while only 15% search for academic materials.

It is not surprising that majority of youths patronise online dating sites given that sexual experimentation is a normal and healthy part of late adolescent development. Emerging adults experience "sexual unfolding" which is the normal expression of sexual feelings. This sexual "unfolding" is influenced by hormonal and physical changes, as well as psychosocial changes shaped by individual experiences and societal influence (Lorna, Sarrel & Sarrel, 1995). Erikson (1968) aver that the 6th stage of development known as *Intimacy vs. Isolation* is a period for the youths to explore relationships as well as form and maintain committed relationships. He further caution that youths who do not experience intimate relationships will likely feel a sense of isolation and reluctance to form interpersonal relationships in latter part of their life (Erikson, 1968).

As a result of the forgoing, youths in the university are more future-oriented and likelihood to resort to online dating sites in order to meet potential mates. In online dating, users create a profile that typically includes their user's photos, basic demographic information, behaviour and interests (e.g., smoking, drinking, and hobbies). After creating the profile, they search for partners based on a variety of attributes and exchange messages with them. Much as online dating can be a convenient avenue for people who may have trouble meeting potential partners, the caveat is that people may lie, or exaggerate about themselves to attract others who might not otherwise be interested in them. They may post flattering photos taken years ago when they were in much better physical condition, exaggerate about their accomplishments or could lie about their income, education level and whether they drink or take drugs. Eastwick and Finkel (2008) were of the opinion that there is often considerable discrepancy, or dissonance between users' stated preference and his or her actual characteristics.

Online dating behaviour has thus presented a new form of risky behaviours for youths especially those in school who have been removed from parental monitoring. For

example, online dating was associated with having unprotected intercourse among college students (Ferguson, 2011; Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2013). A recent study by Dake, Price, Maziarz, and Ward (2012) show that youths who had engaged in online dating also reported a high rate of having engaged in anal sex, having had four or more sexual partners, not using contraceptives at last intercourse, having engaged in oral sex, and having ever had sexual intercourse. The study further report that marijuana usage, cigarettes smoking, binge drinking, as well as suicidal thoughts and depressive symptoms were associated with online dating among youths (Dake *et al.*, 2012). It is also documented that recipients of sexually laden images in online dating were three times more likely to be sexually active than non-recipients of those images (Gordon-Messer *et al.*, 2012). It is documented that establishing marital union through online dating culminates to high level of marital discord and divorce in the society (Goodman, 2012). Discord in relationship suggests poor understanding of each other, different viewpoints in perception of things and situations around, attitudinal dissimilarities, behavioural differences and various forms of incompatibilities such as life-styles, clothing preferences, likes/ dislikes and orientation to life. Marital discord and divorce can be a stressful experience: it affects finances, living arrangements, household jobs, parenting and the outcomes of children of the marriage as they face each stage of development from childhood to adulthood (Goodman, 2012).

Given that online dating is a relatively new phenomenon, there is a scarcity of empirical research on online dating. Most previous researches conducted in non African continent has focused on deception in online dating (e.g., Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012; Toma & Hancock, 2012) as well as how self-presentation, self-disclosure, and personality traits among online daters shape relationship initiation and formation (e.g., Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008). Few published studies have directed attention on the role dispositional and economic factors play in predicting online dating behaviours. Therefore, the primary aim of the present research is to investigate the extent to which personality-type, self-esteem,

parental socio-economic status and social network determine online dating behaviour of university undergraduates in Anambra state. The outcome will undoubtedly add to existing literatures on online dating behaviours. It will also provide empirical data that will be beneficial to many stakeholders such as programme designers, educators, behavioural scientists and policy makers

Personality Types and online Dating Behaviours

Personality is a *person's consistent way of* perceiving, thinking, acting, reacting, feelings, and behaving. It arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life. Engler (2009) aver that personality is the individual differences among people in behaviour patterns, cognition and emotion. Currently the most popular approach among psychologists for studying personality traits is the five-factor model or Big Five dimensions of personality. The Big Five personality traits are five broad domains or dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. People are presumed to select an activities or behaviours that are congruent with their dispositions, preferences, attitudes and personality. Limited number of studies shows how personality trait is linked to the use of technology in relationships. Recent research demonstrates that personality trait levels may influence behaviours including online dating (Roisman, 2008).

According to Costa and McCrae (1992) openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has. People who are open to experience are intellectually curious, open to emotion, sensitive to beauty and willing to try new things. They tend to be, when compared to closed people, more creative and more aware of their feelings. They are also more open to new experiences and likely to enjoy adventure such as online dating.

Conscientiousness is another trait in big five personality traits. It is defined as tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement against measures or outside expectations. It is related to the way in

which people control, regulate, and direct their impulses. High scorers for conscientiousness are generally organised and dependable (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Another factor in Big five personality is Extraversion. Extraverts enjoy interacting with people, and are often perceived as full of energy. They tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented individuals. They possess high group visibility, like to talk, assert themselves, tend to be more sociable and have higher likelihood to date online (Canadian Research & Development Center of Sciences and Cultures, 2012). Study by Ehrenberg, Juckes, White and Walsh (2008) linked extroversion to increased time spent on text messaging. Introverts have lower social engagement and energy levels than extraverts. They tend to seem quiet, low-key, deliberate, and less involved in the social world.

Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or depression (Jeronimus, Riese, Sanderman, & Ormel, 2014). Furthermore, those who score high on neuroticism may have problems to think clearly, make decisions, and cope effectively with stress (Jeronimus, *et al*, 2014). They are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult. Neuroticism is connected to pessimism which impedes personal relationships (Fiske, Gilbert & Lindzey, 2009). Neuroticism, extroversion, and low conscientiousness personalities were found to be related to more text messaging (Butt & Philips, 2008). Kim, Hetherington and Reiss, (2009) using 3,345 respondents in the U.S found that people who are more “sociable are more likely to use internet dating services than are those who are less sociable. This finding challenges the stereotypical profiling of internet daters as being just lonely and socially anxious people” Wang, Jackson, Zhang and Su, (2012) show that high sensation seeking is associated with online adult entertainment use as well as internet dependence. Ferguson (2011) reports that female histrionic college students’ personality traits predicted their online dating defined as sending and receiving nude and erotic photos. Agreeable individuals’ value getting along with others they are generally considerate, kind, generous, trusting and trustworthy, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others

(Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003). Agreeable people also have an optimistic view of human nature, trusting, helpful and compassionate. A low level of agreeableness was also found to be related to more time spent on phone calls and instant messaging (Ferguson, 2011).

Self-Esteem and Online Dating Behaviours

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. Self-esteem defined as a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs and emotions and it is an enduring personality associated with other synonyms such as self-worth, self-regard, self-respect, and self-integrity (Ofole & Agokei, 2014). Previous studies are mixed as to how self-esteem levels can influence online dating and sexual behaviours, or whether or not self-esteem has any effect at all (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Aretz, Demuth, Schmidt & Vierlein, 2010). Several studies on global self-esteem found that individuals with low self-esteem are pessimistic, have negative outlook, tend to be critical of themselves, depend on the approval and praise of others when evaluating self-worth, hypersensitive to criticism- according to some researches all these are characteristic that facilitates online dating (Hill & Buss, 2006). According to Kramer & Winter (2008) people with low self-esteem will be even more eager to engage in online activities that may raise their self-esteem since online dating may provide an outlet for the hoped-for possible self to be expressed. On the contrary the researchers (Kim, Kwon, & Lee, 2009) found that people who are more sociable are more likely to use internet dating services than are those who are less sociable. This finding challenges the stereotypical profiling of Internet daters as being just lonely and socially anxious people.

Parental Socio-Economic Status and Online Dating Behaviours

Differences in computer use and access related to socio-economic status have been reported since the 1990's as "computer divide" (Becker, 2000). There is however, paucity of researches on the relationship between parental socio-economic status and online dating behaviours. There are

strong reasons to think that families and their economic circumstances in particular, influence individual's behaviors. Parental socio-economic status in this study is the level of income that parents earn at a particular period of time. This level of income could be the total amount of money earned daily, weekly, monthly and yearly which be determined by educational level, residence and types of equipment in the house. There is controversy over the influence of parental socio-economic status on predicting online dating behaviours. For instance, L Stanton and Feigelman, (2000) in a longitudinal study reported an inverse relationship between perceived parental socio-economic status and online dating behaviour (L Stanton & Feigelman, 2000). On the contrary, Metzler, Oell, Biglan, Ary and Smolkowski (1994) documented positive correlation between parental socio-economic status and concomitant sexual online dating behaviour in adolescent. Higher level of parental education has also been associated with lower adolescent online dating behaviour, delayed sexual initiation, safer sexual practices and lower risks of pregnancy (Choe, 2004; Perkins, Korgen, & Schumacher, 2008).

Social networking utilization and Online Dating Behaviours

Some of the main reasons people use social network sites are to keep in contact with old friends, and maintain or strengthen relationships with current friends. Social networking utilization involves the level at which the students have access and explore the internet tools and facilities to gain an ultimate access in the internet divide (i.e, world wide web) on the computer. Individuals who participate in social interaction frequently and with a more diverse group are thought to have more online dating contacts available to them than their counterparts (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2006). Helliwell and Putnam (2004) showed that social networking utilization and online dating behaviour have a strong positive relationship. Individuals who have more social resources available to them are likely to be involved in higher online dating behaviour. Similarly, one study found that IM usage promoted intimacy, as time spent on IM significantly correlated with effective intimacy, in terms of mutual self-

disclosure, emotional bonding, and feelings of closeness (Hu, Wood, Smith, & Westbrook, 2004). A strong relationship was found between intensity of Facebook use and perceived bridging of online dating behaviour.

Research Questions

1. What patterns of relationships exist between the independent variables (personality type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status, social network utilization) and online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state?
2. What is the combined effect of the independent variables (personality type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status, social network utilization) to the prediction of online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state?
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (personality type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status, social network utilization) to the prediction of online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state?

Hypotheses

The following three hypotheses were generated to guide the study;

1. There will be no significant relationships between the independent variables (personality type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status, social network utilization) and online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state.
2. The independent variables (personality type, self-esteem, parental socio-economic status and social network utilization) will not have significant joint contribution to the prediction of online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state.
3. The independent variables (personality type, self-esteem parental socio-economic status, and social network utilization) will not have significant relative contribution to the prediction of online dating behaviours of undergraduates in Anambra state.

Materials and Methods

Design

The descriptive survey research of correlational type design was adopted to investigate the hypothesized relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable with the aim of finding the correlation coefficient, defined as a numerical representation of the strength and direction of a relationship in order to see how it interact with each other.

Sample

A sample size of one thousand and seven respondents (Female=708; Male=299) with age range of 18 to 28 years (\bar{x} = 17.08; SD= 6.01) was drawn from an estimated population of 10, 244 undergraduates in Anambra state universities. Sample size calculation was done using power analysis to determine an appropriate sample bearing in mind that the larger the sample size, the more likely to achieve a "Statistical Power" (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles, & Grimshaw, 2010). This sample is thus, a representative of the population with respect to gender, age, course of study, family background and online usage. Of the one thousand five hundred questionnaire distributed, a total of one thousand two hundred and two was returned out of which only one thousand and seven were correctly filled. Thereby making the researcher to have a return rate of 80.1 % which was considered satisfactory for a study of this nature.

Majority of the participants (65%) are from public universities while minority (35%) was drawn from private universities. Socio-economic status of respondents using parental socio-economic status as a proxy show that 40 % percent are from low income background, 45 % from middle, while the minority (15%) is from high socio -economic background.

Sampling Technique

Multi stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. This is because the sampling was carried out in stages using smaller cluster at each stage. The primary unit was made up

of three universities (1 each from Federal, State and Private) drawn from the population of five universities in Anambra state. The three faculties selected from each of the participating universities formed the secondary group. The tertiary units' comprises three departments in each faculty drawn using simple random sampling technique. In the final stage, simple sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 1,007 consisting of undergraduates. The questionnaires were administered to only two hundred level students. This is because the researchers considered them more matured and have greater possibility of being involved in online dating than the freshmen who will be coping with challenges of transiting from secondary schools to University.

Instrumentation

Personality Measure: Respondents personality was measured with Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann (2003) scale. It is a 10-item brief measure of personality (TIPI) or Five Factor Model dimensions. Findings suggest that TIPI is a brief instrument that can stand as reasonable proxies for longer Big-Five instrument. Section A was used to collect the respondents bio-data (Age, Religion, gender) while Section B contains 10 personality traits where the respondents were asked to rate on seven Likert scale (disagree strongly=5 to disagree strongly=1) the extent to which the pair of traits applies to them. Example of the items on TIPI are; I see myself as: extraverted, enthusiastic, critical, quarrelsome, dependable, self-disciplined, anxious e.t.c. The content in terms of structure and diction are culturally comparable to Nigeria context. The Items were both positively and negatively worded. Scoring was easy, items marked 'R' denotes reverse-scored items. In order to establish the coefficient of stability it was pilot tested on randomly selected university students in South Western Nigeria. Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was used to analyze the data, the result show that rho was 0.77.

Social Network Utilization Measure: Rosen, Whaling, Carrier, Cheever and Rokkum (2013) Media and Technology Usage Attitude Scale was used to assess the participants'

socio network utilization. The items were anchored on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). The questionnaire include 44 items which comprise 11 subscales namely; smartphone usage (9 items), general social media usage (9 items), internet searching (4 items), E-mailing (4 items), media sharing (4 items), text messaging (4 items), video gaming (3 items), online friendships (2 items), Facebook Friendships (2 items), phone calling (2 items) and TV viewing (2 items). For the present study it was pilot tested on 100 undergraduates randomly selected from universities in Southern Nigeria. Coefficient of correlation using Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was $\rho=0.87$.

Online Dating Behaviours: Online dating behaviour was assessed with Goodson, McCormick and Evans (2000) scale. The instrument was originally developed to document college students' attitudes and behavior when using the Internet for three main functions: (a) obtaining information related to sexuality (for school, work-related projects, or personal information); (b) establishing and maintaining relationships (such as using e-mail or participating in chat groups); (c) sexual gratification (sexual arousal and/or entertainment). The questionnaire consists of eight sections: A through H, with most questions being Likert scales (4-5 points). In addition to questions about e-mail and Internet use, the instrument contains items measuring practices, and outcome expectations and expectancies for the three functions just described. All outcome expectations and expectancy scales demonstrated appropriate internal consistency (Cronbach ranging from .76 to .95) and temporal stability over a 2-week period (Pearson r ranged from .69 to .78). The scales were also factor-analyzed; the resulting factor structure accounted for 68.8% of the variance (Goodson, McCormick, & Evans, 2001). The instrument was pilot tested to make it culturally acceptable. Test-retest reliability index using PPMC was $r=0.82$

Self-Esteem Measure: Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale was adopted to measure the respondents' self-esteem. RSE is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self.

The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 high school juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State. The scale showed adequate psychometric properties when it was used on a sample of 98 African American single mothers. The authors reported that RSE Scale had adequate internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of .83. The RSES has been translated and adapted to various languages, such as Persian, French, Chinese, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. The scale is extensively used in cross-cultural studies in up to 53 different nations including Nigerian (Ofole & Agokei, 2014). Test-retest for pilot study within a week interval using students from Oyo state tertiary institutions yielded coefficient correlation of $r=0.82$. . Scoring is easy as five of the items are positively worded statements and five have negatively worded ones. The scale measures state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. These suggest that the instrument has satisfactory psychometric properties for measuring self esteem of the target group

Socio-Economic Status Measure: A questionnaire titled 'Socio-status items' (SSI) was used to assess the respondents' parental socio-economic status. The instrument was developed and validated for the purpose of the study based on relevant literature reviewed. It has four sections which captures the parents' occupation, educational level, residence and types of equipment in the house. Those variables were used as a proxy to the students' parental socio-economic status. Test-retest over a two-week period suggested that SST responses remained stable, with reliability correlations of $r = .803$ for total scale, $r = .804$ for subscale 1, and $r = .676$ for subscale 2.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) with emphasis on simple percentages, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and Multiple Regression Analysis,

Ethical Issues

Prior to the commencement of the research approval was sought from the Students' Affairs Dean of the private Universities who participated. However, students were individually approached in the public universities due to the flexibility in the school administration. To ensure confidentiality of responses, the researchers did not include any identification data such as name, phone number, or contact address. In order to adhere to the principle of volunteerism, opportunity was given participants to opt out if they were dissatisfied with the objective of the research.

Results

The results of the three hypotheses are presented thus;

Hypothesis One: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to examine if there is significant relationship between the independent variables (personality trait, parental socio-economic status, self esteem and social networking utilization) and online dating behaviour among undergraduate students, the result is presented on table 1

Table 1: Mean, Standard deviation and Zero order correlations of the study variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Online Dating behaviour	1,007	29.45	12.34	1.00								
2. Extraversion	1,007	19.10	6.81	.856*	1.00							
3. Agreeableness	1,007	19.45	6.05	.756*	.846	1.00						
4. Conscientiousness	1,007	18.15	5.82	.857*	.899	.735	1.00					
5. Neuroticism	1,007	19.00	5.58	.818*	.887	.753	.949	1.00				
6. Openness	1,007	21.10	6.15	.363*	.460	.298	.439	.584	1.00			
7. Socio Economic Status	1,007	23.20	7.68	.793*	.719	.561	.711	.610	.256	1.00		
8. Self Esteem	1,007	23.15	8.74	.747*	.785	.683	.752	.723	.487	.583	1.00	

9.Social Network	1,007	23.70	7.93	.401*	.451	.236	.486	.646	.638	.238	.236	1.00
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** significance at 0.05 level

The first hypothesis which stated that there will be no relationship between the independent and dependent variables was rejected as shown on table 1. The descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variable as shown in the table reveal that students' online dating behaviour is significantly correlated with extraversion ($r = .856$; $p < .05$); agreeableness ($r = .756$; $p < .05$); conscientiousness ($r = .857$; $p < .05$); neuroticism ($r = .818$; $p < .05$); openness ($r = .363$; $p < .05$); parental socio-economic status ($r = .793$; $p < .05$); self esteem ($r = .747$; $p < .05$) and social networking utilization ($r = .401$; $p < .05$). This implies that the strength and direction of the relationship (positive or negative) interact with each other to influence undergraduates' online dating behaviours.

Hypothesis Two: Multiple Regression Analysis was used to examine if the independent variables (personality trait, parental socio-economic status, self esteem and social networking utilization) jointly predict online dating behaviours of the respondents.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on Students' Online Dating

	Sum of square (SS)	Df	Mean Square	F	Remarks
Regression	25714.53	8			
Residual	4574.97	998	3214.32		
Total	30289.50	1006	23.95	134.19	$P < 0.05$

Note: Multiple R (adjusted) = .921; Multiple R^2 (adjusted) = .843; Standard error of estimate = 4.89

The second hypothesis which stated no significant joint relationship was rejected. The results presented in table 2 show that the independent variables collectively yielded a coefficient of Multiple R (adjusted) = .921; Multiple R^2

(adjusted)=.843 This shows that 90% of the total variance of participants' online dating behaviour is accounted for by the linear combination of the four predictor variables studied. Analysis of variance produced an F- ratio value significant at 0.05 level ($F = 134.19 < .05$). The findings thus confirm that the four variables are significant predictors of the criterion measure.

Research Question Three: Result of relative contribution of the independent variables (personality trait, parental socio-economic status, self esteem and social networking utilization) to the prediction of online dating behaviour of the respondents

Table 3: Relative Contribution of Each of the Independent Variables to the Prediction of online Dating Behaviours of the Respondents

Model	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients		T	P
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant	10.516	1.822		5.773	P<0.05
Extraversion	.050	.169	.028	.298	P<0.05
Agreeableness	.437	.133	.215	3.284	P<0.05
Conscientiousness	.408	.303	.193	1.346	P<0.05
Neuroticism	.184	.368	.083	.499	P<0.05
Openness	.248	.091	.124	2.717	P<0.05
Socio-Economic Status	.590	.073	.368	8.130	P<0.05
Self Esteem	.320	.075	.227	4.252	P<0.05
Social Network	.238	.088	.153	2.710	P<0.05

The table 3 shows that each of the independent variables as evident in the Beta and t values made a significant individual contribution to the prediction of students' online dating behaviour. In terms of magnitude of contribution, parental socio-economic status made the most significant contribution ($\beta = .368$; $p < 0.05$) to the prediction. Other variables made significant contributions in the following order: self esteem ($\beta = .227$; $p < 0.05$); Agreeableness ($\beta = .215$; $p < p < 0.05$); Conscientiousness ($\beta = .193$; $p < 0.05$); social network utilization ($\beta = .153$; $p < 0.05$); Openness ($\beta = .124$; $p < 0.05$);

Neuroticism ($\beta = .083$; $p < 0.05$) and Extraversion ($\beta = .028$; $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

This study examined the dispositional and socio-economic factors predicting online dating behaviours among undergraduates in universities in Anambra state universities. It also investigated the relative and joint contributions of the variables to the prediction of online dating behaviours. The result shows that neurotics, that is, those emotionally less stable, those open to experience, agreeable and conscientious patronise online dating. The outcome corroborates reports of previous scholars (Correa, *et al.* 2010; Clemens, Atkin & Krishnan, 2015) who found that extraversion, openness to experience, and neuroticism positively predict online dating behaviours. However, unlike the present study where parental socio-economic status was found to be the most potent factor in predicting online dating, Correa *et al.* (2010) found extraversion to be the strongest predictor of online dating.

This outcome is not surprising given that extroverts have more social interaction than introverts in every context. Another possible explanation could be that people with lower extraversion (i.e., introverts) often report communicating with others through social networking sites which they considered more appealing than communicating with through more face to face. This view was supported in Orr, Sisic, Ross, Simmering and Arseneault (2009) study. However, Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel and Fox (2002), Sheeks and Birchmeier (2003) found an inverse relationship in their study which show that introverted women were more likely to report using chat rooms and to engage in online dating than more extraverted women because introverts are said to be drawn to chat rooms and other forms of computer-mediated communication because they feel they can express their "real" selves more adequately online.

Another predictable outcome of this study is that neuroticism positively predicts online dating behaviours this is consistent with the findings of (Correa *et al.*, 2010; Ross *et al.*, 2009; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008) who report that people higher in neuroticism are also more likely to use social services on the internet such as chat rooms and discussion

groups. As with introverts people higher in neuroticism report being drawn to these online environments because they can more adequately express their “true” selves online (Amichai et al., 2003; Sheeks & Birchmeier, 2007). Furthermore, Correa et al. (2010) suggested that, because neuroticism is associated with greater feelings of loneliness, people higher in neuroticism may engage in computer-mediated communication as a way to reduce loneliness. One study (Amichai *et al.* 2003) found that lonely women are drawn to social computer-mediated communication to overcome boredom.

Previous studies are mixed as to how self-esteem levels influence online dating and sexual behaviours, or whether or not self-esteem has any effect at all. For instance, researchers (Forest & Wood, 2012; Mehdizadeh, 2010) have found that global self esteem is a characteristic that facilitates online dating. The researchers were of the opinion that persons with global self-esteem tend to value their lives, health, physical and mental capabilities, and childbearing potential (Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten 2006). Having these characteristics according to Oattes and Offman (2007) may increase the likelihood for online dating. On the contrary, Forest and Wood (2012); Mehdizadeh (2010) suggested that people with lower self-esteem might be more likely to use online dating because they may view online environments as safer places to express themselves. The reason given by the researchers is that people with lower self-esteem may have rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity is a disposition to “anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection” (Watson & Nesdale, 2012). They further argue that people higher in rejection sensitivity may be more likely to engage in online dating because it may be easier to avoid rejection and because rejection cues may be less salient in online environments. Another study found that online dating also allows users with lower self-esteem to engage in more selective self-presentation than do traditional dating environments (e.g., Walther, 1996). According to the researchers, they may choose which aspects of themselves they present to others, both in creating their profiles and in communicating with others. Users can therefore, present only

those aspects of themselves that they want others to see, thus possibly reducing rejection by other users.

Parental socio-economic status was also reported as a fundamental cause of disparities in online dating behaviours. This finding suggests that somewhat younger, more educated, and higher socio-economic status respondents than the general population use internet for various activities including online dating. This finding collaborate World Health Organization (2010) position that the conditions in which people are born affects how they, grow, live, work and age, and behave. This outcome was further collaborated by Ginette, Blackhart Fitzpatrick & Williamson (2014) who argues that higher income greatly increases the likelihood of internet use when compared to respondents with an income of less than \$30,000 per year, supporting the digital divide hypothesis. Consistent with the theory of the digital divide, is the argument that respondents from high income urban and suburban communities are more likely to be internet users than respondents in the low income rural reference category. This further confirms Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) position that poverty or the need to survive became the driving force and motivation behind the online dating behaviour of adolescent girls. The researcher argue that the rising level of adolescent female online dating behaviour is a function of the need to achieve or maintain an upscale life-style or for the longer-term objectives of establishing contacts with wealthy or prestigious people, and of obtaining assistance with finding a good job while others use sex as a bargain for marriage or to prove their fecundity as a prelude or prerequisite for marriage.

There is controversy over how internet utilization relate with online dating behaviours. Some researchers found that internet use can increase or decrease online dating behaviour depending on how the internet is used. They reported that people use the internet to seek information and fulfill interpersonal needs such as watching movies, entertainment, passing time, relaxation, However, some studies indicate that internet use may not be as relaxing an activity as watching television (Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Rubin, 1983). Such group argues that people who are lonely or depressed may be using the internet to improve their wellbeing through online social interaction (Caplan, 2003). Research by Bargh and McKenna

(2004) show that those who use the internet have low psychological wellbeing related to lack of face-to-face contact with people. Individuals with apprehension towards live interaction may feel like they are able to express themselves better online because the perceived barriers to self expression are reduced; they may feel free to say and do things online they would not in-person (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002).

Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidence to suggest that the big five personality coupled with self-esteem, social network utilization and parental socio-economic factors can positively predict online dating behaviours. However, parental socio-economic status was found to be the most potent factor in predicting online dating behaviours among respondents.

Implications of Study

It implies that those who possess the big five personality traits are more likely to engage in online dating behaviours. Moreover, people with high global self-esteem who come from high socio-economic status background have the opportunity to utilise internet for different purposes including online dating.

Recommendations

Since online dating has become an accepted and widespread means of partner search in the 21st century,

- Behavioural scientists to empower the youth with skills on how to identify online daters with genuine identities to avoid being deceived by web scammers.
- Counsellors should also leverage programme designers to ensure that these variables are incorporated into web for potential online dates to have compatible partners for meaningful and satisfying relationship.
- There is need for educators, counselling psychologist and programme designers to continually organise workshop to equip the youths with life skills which will strengthen their assertiveness, interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills so that they can

negotiate any relationship whether online or offline competently.

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