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Gender and Online Self-presentation Process as Factors in Internet Dating and Relationships among Nigerian Undergraduates

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Abstract

The study investigated gender and online self-presentation process as factors in internet dating and relationship among Nigerian undergraduates. A total of 400 undergraduates 205(51.3%) males and 195(48.7%) females participated in the study. Their age ranged between 16-30 years, with a mean age of 20.5years. Two instrument which included, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale and Relationship Assessment scale were used in the study. Cross-sectional survey design and linear regression was used for data analysis. The study aims at finding out whether or not gender would significantly predict internet dating and relationship and online self-presentation process significantly predict internet dating and relationship among Nigerian Undergraduates. The result showed that gender did not predict internet dating/relationship among Nigerian Undergraduates. Online self-presentation process predicted internet dating/relationship among Nigerian Undergraduates ($\beta = .21, p < 0.01$).The findings of this study showed that self-presentation process determines online relational activities. Socio-psychological implications and limitations of the study were highlighted.

Keywords: Gender, Online Self-presentation process, Internet Dating and relationships, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Internet dating/relationship is a relationship between two people who met online and, in many cases, known each other via the internet. Online relationship is similar in many ways to pen pal relationships. This relationship can be romantic, platonic, or even based on business affairs. An

internet or (online dating) is generally sustained for a certain amount of time before being titled a relationship just as in offline relationships. The major difference here is that an internet relationship is sustained via a computer or online services, and the individuals involved in this relationship may or may not ever have met each other in person. However, the term is quite broad and can include relationship based upon text, video, audio or even virtual character.

This relationship can be between people in different state, country or mostly different parts of the world, or even people who reside in the same area but do not communicate more in person. People who communicate in person could also transfer their dating relationship to online. The internet dating arena represents an opportunity to document changing cultural norms surrounding technology mediated relationship formation and to gain insight into important aspect of online behaviour, such as self-presentation, impression formation strategies, mixed-mode relationships, wherein people first meet online and then move offline, (Walther, & Parks, 2002).

Previous research have explored relationship development and online self-presentation (Bargh, Mckenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Mclaughlin, Osbourne, & Elison, 1997; Parks & Floyd 1996; Roberts, & Parks, 1999; Utz, 2000). The online/internet dating is qualitatively different from many other online setting due to the anticipation of face to face interaction inherent in this context (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006) and the fact that social practices are still developing in most underdeveloped societies. The use of online dating or online personnel service has evolved from a marginal to a mainstream social practice in 2003, at least 29million Americans (two out of five singles) used internet dating services (Gershberg, 2004), in 2004, on average, there were 40 million unique visitors to the online dating sites each month in the United States. (Egan, 2003).

The easy access to the internet, the diminished social stigma associated with online dating and affordable cost of internet matchmaking services contribute to the increasingly common perception that online dating is a viable, efficient way to meet dating or long term relationship partners (John, 2002). Mediated matchmaking is certainly not a new phenomenon. Newspaper personal advertisement have existed since the mid-19th century (Schaefer, 2003) and video dating was popular in 1980s (Woll, & Cosby, 2000; Woll, & Young, 1989). Although scholars (Ahuvia & Adelman, 2002; Lynn & Bolig, 1985, Woll, 1986; Woll, & Cosby, 2000) have studied this earlier form of mediated matchmaking, current internet dating services are subsequently different from these incarnations due to their larger user base and more

sophisticated self-presentation options (Chang & Heo, 2014; Pineiro, 2016; Valkenburg, Sumter, & Peter, 2018).

Online dating sites are all structured such that participants provide a photograph and answer an array of questions including geographical location, age, weight or body type, education level, income and other relevant demographics. In addition, most sites allow participants to write several paragraphs describing themselves. Some sites require the participant to answer a psychological assessment so that they can be matched to potential dates (Valkenburg, Sumter, & Peter, 2018).

Surveys by iMatchup (Online Dating Magazine, 2003) and eHarmony (Online Dating Magazine, 2004) have shown that photos are the most important part of a profile. In fact, Ariely, Hirsch and Hortacsu (2005) found that men with photos are viewed four times more and women six times more than those without photos. iMatchup's survey of 1,000 of its members found that after photo, self-descriptive paragraphs, geographical location, age, race, religion, and income were the important pieces of information. e-Harmony's survey of its members, found that the top ten characteristics that men wanted in a woman were sense of humor, strong character, responsible, emotionally healthy, affection, good communicator, good family life, loyalty, kindness. Women wanted affection, sense of humor, emotionally healthy, loyalty, passion, kindness, good family life (Online Dating Magazine, 2004).

The process of online dating is quite different from traditional offline dating. Traditional dating most often begins with spatial proximity and physical attractiveness, followed by an investigation of similarities and interests and then personal self-disclosure. Dating usually begins once a week and may accelerate after a time of "getting to know you" (Ariely, Hirsch and Hortacsu, 2005). In contrast, online dating usually begins with a flurry of e-mail messages back and forth with early self-disclosure by both parties (Online Dating Magazine, 2004). Once this intimate relationship has been established, the process of meeting face-to-face begins. McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) found support for their model showing that e-mailing or online chatting led to phone calls which finally led to meeting in person. In addition, Gavin (2005) observed that the more offline communication channels used prior to meeting (e.g., telephone, letters) the higher the levels of depth, interdependence and commitment in the relationship.

McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) in their study of newsgroups found that those who better expressed their "true self" (their inner feelings) were more likely to have formed close online

relationships. Linking “true self” and self-disclosure, McKenna et.al. (2002) observed that self-disclosure lead to an increase in intimacy and that only after liking and trust were established could an online relationship be formed. McKenna et al (2002) predicted that with more self-disclosure online relationship would develop faster and be more stable than offline ones. In a field study, they found that vast majority of online relationships were still intact two years later in the same proportions that others had found for offline relationships. In addition, they found in a laboratory study that students liked each other more when meeting the first time online versus face-to-face and that assessment remained stable even after meeting physically.

In a set of experiments, Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons (2002) concurred that students were not better at expressing their “true self” over the internet than in person but the true self was also more accessible memory during online interactions and the “actual self” (the one shown outwardly to other people) was more accessible during face-to-face interactions. This true self-presentation is the hub of online relationship

Self-presentation can be thought of as the image or idea of the self; or the process of creating this image for a variety of social purposes. In Western culture, this image is tied to personality traits (Cousins, 2019) and the self-presentation of these traits has garnered scholarly study for over a century in Psychology and Sociology (e.g, Goffman, 1959; James, 1890). Arguably, online social networks represent a unique opportunity for self-presentation (Boyd & Ellison, 2017). Self-presentation online takes place primarily through social media profiles, many social media sites allow users to create a profile and visibly display connection to their social network (Boyd & Ellison, 2017). In addition, many sites allow users to upload and share personal information, pictures, links, and other multimedia with their friends or followers networks. Profiles first attracted widespread attention on social network sites such as Friendster and Myspace in the middle of the decade, and they have since been incorporated into many other social media platforms, including chat sites.

The personal profile is a key piece of a person’s social network experience, around which his or her self-presentation is built. Although users typically complete over half of all profile fields available to them (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007), all fields may not be necessary to create a meaningful self-presentation. Fiore and Donath (2004) also noted that within dating profiles only photos and free texts responses are predictive of the profiles overall attractiveness ratings and may not be useful content to perceivers when they make these ratings. Also, Stecher and Counts

(2008a) also find that users only need few profiles to make meaningful inferences about others within their social network. More information is not always better in an online profile, but the most meaningful attributes are worth displaying.

Online self-presentation is a complex subject, with many factors coming together to form an overall presentation of an individual. Elements as diverse as friends in the network, testimonials, interest, photos, and the-about-me-statement all say something about the person. For each of these, the locus of control over presentation of the information is closer or farther from the user and more or less easily “faked”. For example, the friends a person has in a network are relevant to a number of social processes, such as for confirming identity information (Donath & Boyd, 2004) and providing social context (Boyd, 2006), and while friends are often chosen explicitly, attributes of friends such as their display photos usually are not under the control of the user.

The most interesting and modifiable aspect of online self-presentation are those personal information that are easily under the control of the user, specifically the profile attributes with respect to the accuracy of the profile, these are more easily than say, the networks to which a person belongs, or the number of friends a person has, and thus, largely can be considered conventional signals, rather than the harder to fake and therefore, more reliable assessment signals (Donath, 2007).

However, there is evidence that the cases were appropriate and often because of the social contexts that keeps them honest, users tend to self-declare profile attributes that paints a reasonably close approximation of their true self (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann, 2003). Whether being faked or not, precisely because these attributes are under the control of the users, they stand to gain significantly from a more different understanding of how profile attributes contributes to their desired self-presentation.

Self-presentation strategies are especially important during relationship initiation, as others will use this information to decide whether to pursue a relationship (Derlega, Winstead, Wong & Greenspan, 2017). Research suggests that when individuals expect to meet a potential dating partner for the first time, they will alter their self-presentational behaviour in accordance with the values desired by the prospective date (Rowatt, Cunningham, & Druen, 2008). Even when interacting with strangers, individuals tend to engage in self-enhancement (Schlenker, & Pontar, 2000).

The pressure to highlight one's positive attributes are experienced the same time with the need to present one's true self to others, especially in significant relationships. Intimacy in relationships is linked to feeling understood by one's partner (Reis & Shaver, 2008) and develops through a dynamic process whereby an individual discloses personal information, response from the partner, and interprets that responses as understanding, validating and caring (ClaurenCeau, Barrett & Pietromonaco, 2008). Therefore, if participants aspire to get involved in an intimate relationship, their desire to feel understood by their interaction partners will motivate self-disclosures that are open and honest as opposed to deceptive. This tension between authenticity and self-presentation is inherent in many aspect of self-disclosure. In making decisions about what and when to self-disclose, individuals often struggle to reconcile opposing needs such as openness and autonomy (Greene, Derlega & Mathews, 2006).

Interactants in online environments experience the same pressure and desires, but the greater control over self-presentational behaviour in computer mediated communication allows individuals to manage their online interactions more strategically. Due to the unlimited nature of computer mediated communication, and the fact that computer mediated communication emphasizes verbal and linguistic cues over less controllable non-verbal communication cues, online self-presentation is capable of being altered and subject-to self-censorship than face-face. This greater control over self-presentation does not necessarily lead to misrepresentation online. Due to the "passing stranger" effect (Rubin, 1975) and the visual anonymity present in computer mediated communication (Jonson, 2001), under certain conditions, the medium may enable participants to express themselves more openly and honestly than in face-face context.

Commonly accepted understanding of identifying presumes that there are multiple aspects of the self which are expressed or made salient in different contexts. Higgins (1991) argue that there are three domains to the self: the actual self (attributes an individual possesses), the ideal self-conceptions (attributes an individual would ideally possess), and they ought self-conceptions (attributes an individual ought to possess). The disagreement between one's actual and ideal self are linked to feelings of dejection. Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) determined that individuals descriptions of their "ideal self" influenced perceptions of their romantic partners. In the direction of their ideal self-conceptions, Bargh, Mckenna and Fitzsimmons (2002) found that in comparison to face-to-face interactions and the lack of a shared social network online may allow individuals to reveal potentially negative aspects of the self-online.

Although self-presentation in personal web-sites has been examined extensively (Dominick, 1999; Schau & Gilly, 2003), but the realm of online dating has been studied more since early 2000 in Western culture (Baket, 2002; Fiore & Donath, 2004), than in Nigerian context where the internet facility is fast spreading. This therefore, constitutes a gap in knowledge the current research tends to fill. The online dating realm differs from other computer mediated communication environments in crucial ways that may affect self-presentational strategies. For instance, the anticipated future face-to-face interaction inherent in most online dating interaction may diminish participant's sense of visual anonymity, an important variable in many online self-disclosure studies. An empirical study of online dating participants found that those who anticipated greater face-face interaction did feel that they were more open in their disclosures, and did not suppress negative aspects of the self (Gibbs et al., 2006). In addition, because the goal of many online dating participants is an intimate relationship, these individuals may be more motivated to engage in authentic self-disclosures. Although self-presentation may have gender implication in online dating and relationships, most of these studies were western-culturally based. Examining gender implication of self-presentation in online dating and relationships among Nigerian samples is not only unique (as there exists a dearth of such empirical documentation in Nigeria) but adds to fill such knowledge gap identified in the literature review.

Gender is generally conceived as a set of characteristics or traits that is associated with a certain biological sex, (Male or female). It could also be said to mean the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. More and more initial romantic interactions are taking place online instead of the usual face-to-face (Walter & Parks, 2002). As a result, the normal gender role of men actively courting women are beginning to be challenged, as women are now able to take dating matters into their own hands. Technology offers a woman the chance to pursue a man and avoid the harsh social stigma against that behavior and that may be only one of the many ways that online dating shakes up the traditional gender roles of the man actively pursuing the woman, who then decides whether the relationship shall continue. Meeting a significant other online is becoming an increasingly popular and acceptable way to find love, yet little is known about the veracity of the information people provide in these online forums. While there is certainly an obvious appeal to knowing a litany of information about dating partners before one meets them, this framework also allows for the

possibility of an enormous amount of deception. Research suggests that online daters have a variety of motivations for using the Internet to find love including seeking companionship, fulfilling a romantic fantasy, control over how they are presented, and freedom from stereotypic roles (Lawson & Leck, 2006; Sanjakapdzi & Maximilians 2014; Guadagno & Okdie, 2011).

Men and women often differ in how they perceive and behave in romantic relationships (Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Zak, 1998). Romantic relationships are not the product of complete honesty. Quite to the contrary, lying is present in some capacity in almost all relationships. When surveyed, almost all individuals (92%) claimed to have been deceptive towards a romantic partner (Knox, Schacht, Holt & Turner, 1993). In some cases, relationship deception is used for self-presentation (Baxter, & Wilmot, 1985) or withholds pertinent information (Roloff & Cloven, 2000). Other times, lying is a means to avoid a punitive reaction from one's significant other (Cole, 2001). The ubiquity of relationship deception does not come as a complete surprise, as there are numerous studies that show men are deceptive a great deal in their everyday lives (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer & Epstein, 2016).

There is evidence that people reserve their most severe lies for those they are romantically involved with (DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004). While the lie teller often sees this deceptive behaviour as driven by altruistic goals, such as to spare a partner's feelings, the recipient of the lie generally does not share the perspective that kindness and concern are the motivating factors (Kaplar, & Gordon, 2004).

Concurrently, there is also evidence that self-presentation deception is more prevalent in men during computer mediated interactions than to face-to-face communications (Zimbler & Feldman, in press). While this may seem like a recipe for rampant relational deception, Toma, Hancock, and Ellison (2008) believed that blatant deception in online dating is attenuated by the balance between the deceptive opportunities available and the social constraints stemming from the anticipation of meeting the person at some time in the future. In other words, lying a little may make one's profile look more appealing, but lying a lot greatly increases the chances of rejection upon meeting a potential dater in person. As this new technology revolutionizes the art of dating, it is prudent to ask what factors might determine the veracity of these first communications leading up to partner selection.

Scholars such as Guadagno and Okdie (2011) examined how gender impacted on the degree of self-presentation, individuals displayed within the context of internet dating. In their study,

participants filled out personality measures in one of four anticipated meeting conditions: face-to-face, email, no meeting, and a control condition with no pretense of dating. Results indicated that, compared to baseline measures, male participants increased the amount they self-presented when anticipating a future interaction with a prospective date. Specifically, male participants emphasized their positive characteristics more if the potential date was less salient (e.g., email meeting) compared to a more salient condition (e.g., face-to-face meeting) or the control conditions.

Similar patterns of deceptive self-presentation have been shown in online dating contexts. When presenting themselves to desirable potential dates, men are more likely than women to engage in deceptive self-presentation (Rowatt, Cunningham & Druen, 1998). Took and Camire (1991) surveyed male and female college students and asked them to indicate their willingness to engage in deceptive self-presentation to attract a mate. Men reported being more willing to use deception to appear more dominant, more resourceful, and more kind than they actually were. Conversely, women reported being willing to use deception to present their physical appearance as more favorable than it actually was. Similar findings have been reported in classic research on self-presentation (Zanna & Pack, 2015). Specifically, Zanna and Pack (2015) demonstrated that women changed their self-reported sex role attitudes to match the gender role values than men (either traditional or non-traditional) of a perceiver when they believed the perceiver was a desirable male. Overall, the literature on deceptive self-presentation suggests that both the context of the interaction and gender of the interactants matter.

The major principles of attraction, similarity and physical attractiveness, are also relevant in online dating. Some online dating websites match their members according to similarities shared between the two individuals (eHarmony.com, Match.com, OkCupid.com). Married couples who met online through eHarmony.com had similar personalities and interests before they ever met (Gonzaga, Carter & Buckwalter, 2010) However, none of this would come to be if the individuals did not like each other's profile pictures from the beginning. Pictures of the individual are very important characteristics in an online dating profile (Hitsch et al., 2010). As noted earlier, men may place greater importance on physical attractiveness conveyed through pictures compared to women (de Vries, 2010; Hitsch et al. 2010). Evidence that men's traditional gender role as "provider" is a factor in the potential mate selection in on online dating websites is limited.

Hitsch et al., (2010) examined the online dating profile characteristics associated with men's and women's decisions to make contact with another person. Men showed little preference for a potential partner's occupation; however, women's preferences were strongly influenced by a potential partner's occupation, preferring men with higher status occupations. Similarly, although both men and women preferred partners with higher incomes over those with lower incomes, this preference is more striking in women than men. This partially supports Social Role Theory's prediction that men are socially expected to be the breadwinners.

For example, in online contexts, men place more value on the woman's picture than the text of her profile, but women give approximately equal value to the picture and profile text (Hitsch, Hortaçsu, & Ariely, 2010; de Vries, 2010). However, Luo and Zhang (2009) point out that in face-to-face dating situations, men and women do not differ in how physical attractiveness affects their choices. Others have concluded that men generally choose partners based on physical attractiveness, and women choose partners primarily based on social status, but only when considering a long term relationship (Li, Yong, Tov, Sng, Fletcher, Valentine & Balliet, 2013). When looking for short-term relationships, physical attractiveness is found to be most important for both sexes (Li et al., 2013).

Scholars (e.g., Bargh, Mckenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Mclaughlin, Osbourne, & Alison, 1997; Parks, & Floyd, 1996; Roberts, & Parks, 1999; Utz, 2000) opined that online self-presentation have a crucial role to play in the process of individuals going into a relationship or engaging in the act of dating on the internet. Online activities are relatively new in Africa and in Nigeria. And this underscores why most studies in this domain are western based as such, has led to dearth of empirical evidence in Nigerian samples. This is therefore an aspect our study is unique and contributes to literature as cultural factors could account for variations in research findings across countries and continents. This study intends to determine whether gender and online self-presentation process would significantly predict internet dating and relationship among Nigerian sample. It was further hypothesized that gender would not significantly predict internet dating / relationship and online self-presentation process would not significantly predicts internet dating and relationship among Nigerian samples.

Method

Participants

Four hundred (400) undergraduates of University of Nigeria Nsukka UNN consisting of 205 (51.3%) males and 195 (48.7%) females who were drawn using convenience method of sampling participated in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select six Departments (Psychology, Political Sciences, Micro Biology, Animal Sciences, Civil and Mechanical Engineering) from the 9 Faculties (Social Science, Biological Sciences, Arts, Education, Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Physical Sciences) in the Nsukka campus of University of Nigeria. Two hundred and thirty-seven (237) participants were between 17 to 23 years while one hundred and sixty-three were 24 years and above with mean age of 20.5 years.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. They were the Perfectionistic Self-presentation scale (PSPS) (Heiwitt, & Gordon, 2003) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendricks, 1988).

Perfectionistic Self-presentation Scale (PSPS)

PSPS is a psychological assessment tool developed by Hewitt and Gordon (2003). It is a 27-item with three subscale measuring perfectionistic self-promotion 5,7,11,15,17,18,23,25,26, and 27 non-display of imperfection 2,3,4,6,8,10,12,20,22, and 24 and non-disclose of imperfection 1,9,13,14,16,19, and 21. The PSPS is rated on a 7-point likert scale ranging from (1) *disagree strongly* to (7) *agree strongly*. Hewitt and Gordon (2003) obtained an alpha co-efficient for the three subscale (perfectionistic self-promotion, non-display of imperfection and non-disclose of imperfection) in whole showed good internal consistency (.86, .83 and .78) respectively and a test-retest analysis showed that the factors were stable overtime. Pilot study results with PSPS to ascertain the reliability of the instrument yielded a Cronbach alpha of .77.

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

Relationship assessment scale was used to assess and measure an individual's satisfaction with their relationships. The RAS was developed by Hendricks (1988). It is a 7-item scale designed to measure general relationship satisfaction among individuals. The 7 items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Hendricks (1988) report internal consistency ranges from .80 to .86, and Crobach's alpha of .80. Pilot study results with RAS to ascertain the reliability of the instrument for the present study yielded a Cronbach alpha of .69.

Procedure

The researcher administered the questionnaire to 442 University Undergraduates, who were sampled to participate in the study from among the University's undergraduate population in Nsukka campus. Participants were met at their classes, hostels, and quadrangles. The researcher in each of the places introduced themselves and created rapport before administration of the questionnaires. It took two days for the distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires especially at their hostels. But the questionnaires were collected upon completion at their classes and quadrangle. There was no research assistant. The researcher paid adequate attention to the concern of the participants to enable them correctly complete the questionnaires. Out of the 442 questionnaires distributed, 402 (98%) were used in the data analysis as the only completed and correctly filled questionnaires were collected and used and the rest were discarded on the basis that they were wrongly completed.

Design/Statistics

Cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. And linear regression was used to analyze the obtained data.

Results

Results of this study were presented in two Tables: Table of Correlation and summary table of beta contribution of all the variables.

Table 1: Correlations of gender and online self-presentation process on Internet dating and relationship

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	1							
2 Age	-.05	1						
3 Relationship Status	.07	.09	1					
4 Residential Area	-.16**	.11*	-.16**	1				
5 Year of Study	-.02	.44**	.16**	.02	1			
6 Religious Affilia	-.14**	.14**	.03	.05	.04	1		
7 OSPP	.09	.03	-.00	.04	-.02	-.00	1	
8 ID/R	-.02	-.05	.66	-.05	.03	-.04	-.21**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

OSPP= Online Self-Presentation Process; ID/R = Internet Dating/Relationship

Results of Table 1 above indicated that residential area significantly correlated with gender ($r = -.16$, $p < 0.01$), age ($r = .11$, $p < 0.05$), and relationship status ($r = -.16$, $p < 0.01$). Year of study

also significantly predicted age ($r = -.44, p < 0.01$) and relationship status ($r = .16, p < 0.01$). Religious affiliation showed a significant correlation with gender ($r = -.14, p < 0.01$) and age ($r = .14, p < 0.01$). Online self-presentation process did not show a significant correlation with any of the gender and internet dating/relationship. Internet dating/relationship significantly correlated with internet dating/relationship.

Table 2: Beta (β) Contribution of the Predictor Variables-gender and online self-presentation process

Model		B	Std Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig
	(Constant)	34.23	2.50		13.69	.000
1	Gender	.06	.66	.01	.10	.92
	OSPP	-.08	.02	-.21	-4.18	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ID/S

Table 2 illustrates the predictive contribution of each of the independent variables. According to the results, gender did not predict internet dating/relationship, while online self-presentation process predicted internet dating/relationship among University Undergraduates ($\beta = -.21, p < 0.01$).

Discussion

The study investigated gender and online self-presentation process as factors in internet dating and relationship among Nigerian Undergraduates. It was predicted in the hypothesis that gender would not significantly predict internet dating/relationship. The results of this study supported the first hypothesis that gender would not significantly predict internet dating/relationship. The result of this study can be explained by the fact that internet/relationship behaviour has no gender limitation. In other words, online dating and relationship may not have appealed both male and female undergraduate students. Because these students see each other almost all the times and on daily basis in school, online dating may not appeal to them. Before now, the concept and practice of online dating in this clime sounds very strange not until recently in the twentieth century (Siibak, 2010). There are also cultural factors such as moral values and parental influence, cautions and sternly warning of their children on the consequences of face-to-face dating (Nwoke, Ogba, & Ugwu, 2012; Ogba, Onyishi, & Chukwuoji, 2019) let alone online dating and relationships. The result of this study may not be surprising because prior now, online dating and relationship was either not known or was rarely practiced by very few as against our traditional

way dating. The result of this study that showed gender could not predict internet dating/relationship could equally be because both boys and girls of this clime may have shared greater concerns about privacy and identity disclosure on social media sites (Espan, 2013; Valkenburg, Sumter & Peter, 2018) and this may predispose them to interact with individuals they already know and trust in face-to-face dating and relationships. Toma, Hancock, & Ellison's, (2008) finding is consistent with the current result even though Toma, Hancock, & Ellison's, (2008) incorporated other variables like measures of anonymity, social desirability, and self-monitoring to identifying factors that contributed to deception in online dating. Our finding is unique as it has refuted extant western literatures (Sanjakapdzi, & Maximilians, 2014; Kapidzic, & Herring, 2014; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011; Siibak, 2010) and it is subject to further investigation by more interested Nigerian scholars.

The result of this study did not support the second hypothesis which stated that online self-presentation process would not significantly predict internet dating/relationship among Nigerian Undergraduates, therefore, the hypothesis was not confirmed. Although online dating and relationship may not have appealed the Nigerian undergraduates, that does not stop them from presenting themselves in an online attractive and self-pleasing manner. The result of this study is in consistent with the findings by Hitsch et al., (2010). The result indicated that undergraduate males and females present online physical attractiveness. This explained that both gender is influenced by what they see, in relation to physical attraction. According to (Donnelly, 2011; Siibak, 2010), those whose online self-presentation processes are more inclined to sex are more likely to going to have more dating and relationship requests. This was what Siibak (2010) referred to those both boys and girls who self-sexualize in their visual online presentations processes as self-commodification (Siibak, 2010). Self-commodification may also be intentional, as in the case of a teenage boy who operated a pornographic website featuring images of himself for several years (Leary, 2007). Other cases are less clear: Are 12-year-old-girls who post “slutty” pictures of themselves on Facebook (Williams, 2012; Ringrose, 2011) intending to advertise themselves as sexually available? It is in the case of such 12-year-old-girls that cultural background, morality, availability and exposure/access to internet facilities, etc become strong viable factors encouraging online dating/relationship by the nature of online presentation processes.

Thus, in consistent with our finding, Berscheid, Walster & Walster (2011) found that online self-presentation processes are made in physical attractive manner that may likely encourage online dating and relationships. The result suggests that self-presentation processes play an important role in the online dating and relationships as it helps individuals search for their best match; though this has to be done with caution as most information presented online about self may be false.

Implication of the Study

Males as much as females proportionately engage in online/internet dating and relationships. One major implication of the finding is the key role online self-presentation process plays in internet dating/relationship. The findings suggest that self-presentation enhances attractiveness. Those who present themselves to look very attractive while going out whether for an event or for a date happens to become the center of attention and attraction amongst the opposite sex, in the society today, the world rewards beauty and people look at individuals who look beautiful, smart and attractive as those who are rich and have good health, good genes, intelligent and successful even when one is not so intelligent. One can easily desire to connect with or get into contact with even those whom they are attracted to, but have little or no good memories with. When individual presents themselves to seem perfect in front of others, they get good rapport with people, get more valuable knowledge from them and they have a good self efficacy. When self-presentation is effective, it can help individuals build their esteem higher and make them much more conscious of their circle.

Also, people who present themselves to look really attractive and well presented tend to command a high social status. This implies that an individual attractiveness depends mostly on his/her outer-look, self-presentation process and intelligence, which differentiates and make such individual outstand among their peer groups. People usually present a better part of themselves on the internet.

Limitations of Study

A recognizable limitation of this study is the fact that the study was only limited to University undergraduates, as the researchers only gathered participants from the University environment. So it should be interpreted with caution. It was not easy to convince the participants to participate in the study. Some of them were reluctant to participate. Even though some eventually participated, they did it after prolonged persuasive conviction. The information

provided by the participants may not reflect their true selves and the exact picture of their situation in effort to please the researchers or the desire to conceal certain information they consider private. This in one way or the other could affect the findings. As a survey research, we cannot establish a cause-effect relationship in our findings.

Recommendation for Further Research

Future research interests are encouraged to use a diverse sample of participants for a research of this nature. This will give greater significance to their findings. It is also possible that variables such as self-esteem, social network experience, ego and cross cultural variances can affect internet dating/relationship. This can be studied by future researchers.

Conclusion

We therefore conclude from our finding that as much as there may be proportionate gender impact in online dating and relationships, the manner of self-presentation processes determine dating and relationship activity. That is to say that attractive online self-presentation process showcases attractiveness which suggests the way one presents his/herself in a relationship activity, and invariably determines the choice of whether or not he/she will be attracted for a date/relationship.

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