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Self-esteem, Personality-Type and Gender as Factors in Self-disclosure among Adolescent Social Network Users

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Abstract

We investigated self-esteem, personality type and gender as factors in self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Participants were drawn from St Catharine's School and Anglican Grammar School. A total of three hundred and fifty (350) students (comprising SS1 and SS2)- 190(54.3%) females and 160 (45.7%) males participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 12-23 with a mean age of 17.5 years. The participants were selected using random sampling method. Three instruments were used for data collection: Index of self-esteem (ISE), Big Five Factors (dimensions) of Personality (BFI) and Self-Disclosure Index (SDI). The objectives of the study were to ascertain whether: 1) self-esteem would significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. 2) Personality type would significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. 3) Gender would significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Linear regression statistics was used to test the hypotheses and the results showed that self-esteem did not significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Agreeableness ($\beta = -.45, p < 0.01$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .32, p < 0.05$) significantly predicted self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Self-disclosure among adolescent social network users was not predicted by gender. Implications and limitations of the study were discussed and suggestions for further studies offered.

Keywords: *adolescence, gender, personality type, self-disclosure, self-esteem, social network users,*

Introduction

Internet development, including online communication and information exchange, has become the new social and technological revolution in recent time. The development of the World Wide Web (WWW) and its associated online facilities have led to an extraordinary leap in people's abilities to communicate and use information from even the most remote corners of the world. Online social networks (OSNs) such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram and

more recently- Snapchat, are some of the most famous and important online communication tools. They are also called social media platforms. They are increasingly used in people's daily communication, and this communication has become one of the most important online activities (Chang & Heo, 2014). They have unique capabilities and provide the means for effective and low cost social communication and interaction with current, old, and new friends (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

The internet has quickly become an integral part of adolescent life at such an astonishing rate. It is interesting to note that over time, the primary use of the internet has changed considerably. Whereas in earlier years and times, adolescents used the internet primarily for information seeking and entertainment, today, it is predominantly used for interpersonal communication (Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007; Valkenburg, & Soeters, 2001). This means that most adolescents now spend ceaseless hours "chatting" with other people, sharing pictures and videos and generally meeting new people. The electronic mail (E-mail) is hardly used anymore as adolescents consider it to be a technology for "old people" (Grinter, & Palen, 2002; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Most social media platforms have an avenue for private messages and these are utilized more regularly than mails. In recent years, these "Social Networking Sites" (afterwards referred to as SNS) have gained increasing popularity among internet users as they allow for both maintenance of relationships with "offline" friends and forming new connections with people one would not have met physically.

For instance, Facebook (a widely used SNS) can be used to demonstrate the most common characteristics of SNSs. Although SNSs have implemented a wide range of technical features, their main characteristics consist of visible profiles that display not only an 'articulated list of friends' (Boyd, & Ellison, 2007), but also detailed personal information. Having joined an SNS, the new member needs to create a profile to 'type oneself into being' (Sundén, 2003). To create the profile, the new member is asked to fill out forms with identifying information such as name, age/birthday, gender, hometown and/or location, religion, ethnicity, personal interests, contact information and an 'about me' section. Most SNSs also encourage users to upload a profile photo. Nobody is really forced to join an SNS, create a profile and reveal personal information; but can one, realistically speaking, remain unconnected? Aside from the so-called basic information about oneself as described above, Facebook encourages its users to also publish

contact details, details of personal interests and activities as well as details about educational background and work. Another typical characteristic of SNSs is the connection of users with people they already know in real life, that is, existing friends, or the connection to completely new people. All connections to other members are displayed in a list of friends/contacts/fans and are visible to anyone who has been allowed access to the profile by the user/profile owner. This list contains links to each friend's/contact's/fan's profile. The public display of connections is a crucial component of SNSs (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

One important feature of SNS (social network sites) is the user profile, where users can write practically anything about themselves, including personal and sensitive information. In the age of social media, textual information such as name, address and phone number is just the basic. These online systems make it easy to find someone's picture online, even if it is not intended to be shared publicly. The availability of easy uploads and sophisticated search engines have allowed for quick and relatively easy access to details of one's personal life leading to disclosing oneself; otherwise known as self-disclosure.

Rosenfield (2000) defined self-disclosure as the communication process that grants access to secret and information. Today, there are millions of young people around the world who consciously disclose details of their lives in order to communicate and stay in touch with others (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). Self-disclosure on SNSs (social network sites) is often viewed as the amount and type of factual information shared on one's profile such as name, surname, address, phone number, preferences (Stutzman, Capra & Thompson, 2011; Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shittu, Laouris, & Arso, 2010; Tufekci, 2008; Walrave, Vanwesenbeeck, & Heirman, 2012). De Souza and Dick (2009) identified three factors which SNS users aged 12–18 years perceived as the strongest motive for self-disclosure: Peer pressure, interface design (i.e., blank boxes to enter the information) and the desire to present the self in a certain light. Thus, not only peer pressure but also perceived requests from provider might influence self-discloser.

Two alternative disclosure message strategies have been identified namely: verbal form and symbolic/non – verbal means of enacting self-disclosure in personal relationship (Greene, Derlega, Yep, & Petronio, 2003). If verbal disclosure might be burdensome, symbolic disclosure may be an effective and efficient way of communicating information about the self to intimates. Thus, the social benefits of self-disclosure depend, in part, on the reactions of the disclosure

target and others (third parties) who find out about the private information (Greene et al, 2003). The content of self-disclosure may include highly sensitive information, as well as less intimate, every day, or even superficial information (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006). However, information disclosure of oneself in human communication is important for various reasons. Firstly, it is essential in forming and maintaining personal relationships, Secondly, people continuously compare their disclosure patterns with their peers in order to validate their opinions, perceptions and values.

Besides, there are also a few identified mental health benefits associated with disclosing personal information to other individuals. Clinically, the effectiveness of therapy can be in part determined by how well the client is able to self-disclose (Rogers, Griffin, Wykle, & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The therapist cannot effectively do his or her job if the client does not feel comfortable sharing details about his or her life and worries. The more a client shares with a therapist, the closer and more comfortable the professional relationship becomes. Thus, as the client-therapist relationship strengthens, reports of liking also increase within the dyad (Rogers et al., 2009). It has been shown that self-disclosure is higher in anonymous CMC interactions than in similar face-to-face interactions (Joinson, 2001; Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2006). Generally, research suggests that the more information an individual knows about another, the more likely it is that the two will find common ground for which mutual liking can develop (Sprecher, Treger, & Wondra, 2012).

When it comes to self-disclosure, people are constantly weighing potential benefits and perceived risks (Petronio, 2002). Although they may be aware of positive outcomes, they are constantly discouraged by consideration of perceived risks. Thus, according to Petronio (2002), the resulting degree and content of self-disclosure is always a function of this risk-benefit ratio of particular situation. In line with this idea, Omarzu (2000) proposed in her disclosure-decision model that people decide what, how and whom they disclose according to perceived benefits and risks in particular situation. She considered self-disclosure strategic behaviour adjusted according to its perceived utility and potential risks.

Other types of self-disclosure risks were described by Petronio (2002), who distinguished high, moderate and low risks according to severity of perceived repercussion for opening up oneself to others. Petronio specified five (5) types of possible disadvantages of self-disclosures.

Security risks are associated with personal safety threats and disruption of power such as loss of a job associated with disclosed scam. Stigma risks involve information that has potential to discredit the person. Sharing opinions or thoughts that are not generally accepted can lead to negative evaluation and even exclusion from a group. Face risks are associated with compromising information with potential for embarrassment and loss of face. Relational risks represent situations where relationship is challenged due to self-disclosure, e.g., hurting the other person by expressing negative emotions toward him. Ultimately, role risks deal with situation where intimate self-disclosure is seen as highly inappropriate with regard to the social role of revealing person, such as intimate self-disclosure of formal supervisor. Petronio (2002) further argued that people try to minimize these risks while still utilizing beneficial gains of self-disclosure. But yet, most people do not know much about the content of risks they associate particularly with SNS self-disclosure but most times believe that SNS communications boosts their esteem to some perhaps good extent..

Self-esteem is described as a personal evaluation that an individual makes of him/herself, their own sense of worth, value, importance, or capabilities. Self-esteem is also known as the evaluative dimension of the self that includes feelings of worthiness, pride and encouragement; and is closely associated with self-consciousness (Mruk, 2006). Also, self-esteem is defined as a person's subjective appraisal of himself or herself as intrinsically positive or negative to some degree (Sedikides, & Greig, 2003). It is judgments of global self-worth and associated with the probability of success. Too little of self-esteem can leave one depressed, thus leading to weak or bad decisions and ultimately may restrict one from living to potential. Too much self-esteem could, on the other hand, lead to destruction.

Robinson and Cervone (2006) construed self-esteem as a permanent characteristic (trait self-esteem), as well as a temporary psychological condition (state self-esteem). Traits are often conceptualized as dispositional forces that create consistency in individual's experiences and actions; as such they carry the past into the present and across the diverse circumstances. Self-esteem is a basic requirement that has a significant importance in life processes, because it helps to the health and natural growth of person. In fact, self-esteem acts as a conscious-safety system and provides necessary resistance and capacity for a person's life.

According to Wellbeing Services (2015) in a book titled “*Issues with Self-Esteem?*”, it was noted that self-esteem includes the thoughts an individual has about his/her self and ones abilities, the kind of person one thinks he/she is and his/her expectations. Everyone has an opinion of themselves, therefore, everybody has self-esteem. The value one considers to have will vary from person to person. Life experiences play a significant role in determining whether one has healthy self-esteem or low self-esteem. If one’s life experiences have generally been positive, then it is likely that the beliefs the individual has about his/her self will also be positive and that one will have healthy self-esteem. On the other hand, if an individual’s life experiences have generally been negative, then, it is likely that the beliefs he/she has about him/her self will also be negative. It is these negative beliefs about oneself that forms low self-esteem. Most people have had a mixture of both positive and negative life experiences and tend to have a range of different beliefs about themselves which they can apply flexibly depending on the situation in which they find themselves. Self-esteem can affect all aspects of an individual’s live on a day-to-day basis, including how one thinks, feels and behaves. Self-esteem is important as it is considered to be a significant measure of an individual’s psychological wellbeing. When people have low self-esteem, they tend to have deep rooted negative beliefs about themselves and the type of person they are. These beliefs are often accepted as absolute facts about their identity. They tend to place little value, if any, on themselves as a person of worth. They are likely to be overly critical of themselves, their actions, and their abilities. People with low self-esteem tend to put themselves down, consider themselves to be inferior to others, doubt themselves, and blame themselves when things go wrong. People with low self-esteem may label themselves as ‘stupid’, ‘worthless’, ‘useless’, ‘unattractive’, ‘unlovable’ or ‘a failure’ to name a few.

Early life experiences play a significant role in the development of self-esteem. The experiences that one had and how one was treated in his/her childhood and adolescent years, will affect how the individual thinks of him/her self as an adult. Although the beliefs people have about themselves are, to a large extent, learned and formed in childhood and adolescence, what happens to people in their adult life can also affect their self-esteem. Some examples of things which may affect one’s self-esteem in adulthood include financial troubles, appearance, excessive or harsh criticism, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, chronic pain and illness, relationship difficulties, or traumatic events. Low self-esteem can also be a consequence of other

problems, for example, depression, long standing anxiety, or severe stress. If an individual thinks that the negative beliefs they have about themselves are a symptom of another problem, then tackling the root problem may be the most effective way to proceed. It is likely that when the root problem has been treated successfully, low self-esteem will no longer be an issue.

There are individual differences in social behaviour. People with low self-esteem are more likely to see the advantages of self-disclosing on social media rather than in person, but because their status updates 'tend' to express more negative and less positive effect, they tend to be perceived as less likeable (Forest & Wood, 2012). Furthermore, anxiously-attached individuals – who tend to have low self-esteem (Campbell & Marshall, 2011) post more information often about their romantic relationships to boost their own feeling self-worth and to refute others' impressions that their relationships are poor (Emery, Muise, Dix, & Le, 2014). The pattern of self-disclosure could be different when an aspect of personality trait combines with self esteem.

Brooker (2003) defines personality as the sum total or aggregate of the mental attitudes, traits and characteristics which distinguish a person. The Columbian Encyclopaedia (6th edition, 2012.) defined personality as “behaviour which though not necessarily right or wrong, is pleasing or offensive to other people and favourable or unfavourable to the individual's standing with his/her fellows. McCrae and Costa (2004) explained that in personality research the broad traits such as; Extroversion, Neuroticism, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness represent the most generally accepted dimensions of individual differences.

Neuroticism (N) refers to the degree to which a person responds to stress. Neuroticism is characterized by anxiety and sensitivity to threat. Neurotic individuals may use social media, for instance Facebook, to seek the attention and social support that may be missing from their real, personal lives offline (Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009). They often tend to use social media platforms to validate their lives or give a semblance of meaning that they lack in reality. Accordingly, neuroticism is positively associated with frequency of social media use (Correa, Hinsley, & de Zuniga, 2010), the use of social media for social purposes (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012), and engaging in emotional disclosure on Facebook, such as venting about personal dramas (Seidman, 2013) or the activities in one's life- for instance, their relationships with friends or their school activities and even marriage. Extroversion (E) refers to the degree to which a person can tolerate sensory stimulation from people and situations. People

who are extraverted are gregarious, talkative, and cheerful. They tend to use social media as a tool to communicate and socialize (Seidman, 2013), as reflected in their more frequent use of social media (Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzmann, & Gaddis, 2011), greater number of social media friends (Amichai-Hamburger, & Vinitzky, 2010), and preference for features of social media that allow for active social contribution, such as status updates (Ryan & Xenos, 2011).

Openness (O) refers to the degree to which people are open to new experiences. People who are high in openness tend to be creative, intellectual, and curious. Openness is positively associated with frequency of social media use (Correa et al., 2010), and use social media for finding and disseminating information, but not for socializing (Hughes et al., 2012). Agreeableness (A) refers to the degree to which people relate to others with tolerance and acceptance. People who are high in agreeableness tend to be cooperative, helpful, and interpersonally successful. Agreeableness is positively associated with posting on social media to communicate and connect with others and negatively associated with posting to seek attention (Seidman, 2013) or to badmouth others (Stoughton, Thompson, & Meade, 2013). The interpersonal focus of agreeable people and their use of Facebook for communication may inspire more frequent updates about their social activities and significant relationships. Finally, Conscientiousness (C) refers to the degree to which one works towards goals in an industrious, disciplined, and dependable fashion. Conscientiousness describes people who are organized, responsible, and hard-working. They tend to use Facebook less frequently than people who are lower in conscientiousness (Gosling et al., 2011), but when they do use it, conscientious individuals are diligent and discreet: they have more Facebook friends (Amichai-Hamburger, & Vinitzky, 2010), they avoid badmouthing people (Stoughton et al., 2013), and they are less likely to post on Facebook to seek attention or acceptance (Seidman, 2013). They are more reserved and cautious with the kind of information they divulge to the media. Irrespective of the personality dimension and self-esteem, gender has been linked to self-disclosure.

Gender is defined by Santrock (2003) as a socio-cultural dimension of being male or female. Myers (2002) defines gender as the characteristic whether biologically or socially influenced, by which people define male or female. Brooker (2003) defines gender as a term more than just biological sex, but encompasses the socially constructed views of feminine and masculine behaviour within individual cultural groups. There is the question of gender differences in self-

disclosure. Most of the literature on gender differences in SNSs focuses on gender identity (Manago et al., 2008), self-presentation (Magnuson & Dundes, 2008) and personal interests such as friendship or dating (Thelwall, 2008). Acquisti and Gross (2006) are an exception in that they examined usage differences between male and female Facebook members. Their results suggested that female members were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation, personal address and mobile phone number than male members. It is thus, important to examine the type of information disclosed by users, especially young people, and assess whether males disclose different types of information than females do. Research findings on gender differences in self-disclosure are mixed (Kisilevich, Ang, & Last, 2011; Valkenburg, Sumter & Peter, 2018). Women self-disclose to enhance a relationship, while men self-disclose relative to their control and vulnerabilities (Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris & Arsoy, 2010). Men initially disclose more in heterosexual relationships, while women tend to put more emphasis on intimate communication with same sex friends than men do (Barry, 2006). Also, girls are noted for usually disclosing their problems to their mothers, while boys reveal more about bad grades, behavioural conflicts and other issues to both parents (Sheldon, 2013). Men are more likely to disclose their phone numbers; women are more likely to display their favourite music and books, as well as their religion (Tufekci, 2008). Gender is not a significant variable for explaining self-disclosure in online chatting (Cho, 2007).

Masculine and feminine cultures and individuals generally differ in how they communicate with others. For example, feminine people tend to self-disclose more often than masculine people, and in more intimate details. Likewise, feminine people tend to communicate more affection, and with greater intimacy and confidence than masculine people. Generally speaking, feminine people communicate more and prioritize communication more than masculine people. Masculine people form friendships with other masculine people based on common interests, while feminine people build friendships with other feminine people based on mutual support. However, both genders initiate opposite-gender friendships based on the same factors. These factors include proximity, acceptance, effort, communication, common interests, affection and novelty. In contrast, feminine people are more likely to communicate weakness and vulnerability. In fact, they may seek out friendships more in these times. It has also been discovered that feminine people tend to communicate better with each other face-to-face, for instance: meeting together to

talk over lunch, see a movie together, or go shopping together, etc (España, 2013; Ybarra, Alexander & Mitchell, 2005).

Self-disclosure has become a major problem among social network users. People tend to disclose private information more when they are online compared to when they are offline: and this might endanger their lives because no one knows who is out to hurt (physically or emotionally) other people. This could account for why there have been more death cases in our society as bad boys, ritualists, cultists, ‘yahoo boys’, etc have recently either hidden under or used SNSs to trap their victims. What they normally do is to disclose false information about themselves to their innocent victim who discloses genuine information about him/herself in return. Because these bad boys disclose false information of themselves, they are often usually difficult (if not impossible) to be traced at the event of any hurt or attack to their supposedly friend. This has become a social malady that led to this study. Again, from the literatures reviewed, it was observed that most studies on this domain were conducted in Western cultures/contexts. Therefore, it will be important to have an African (Nigerian) version of the study especially with the rapid influence of SNS (social network site) in Nigeria where even the under-aged are now exposed to SNSs, and where there seem to be less or no policy or control (both from parents and governments) on the use of SNSs. The result of this study will either refute or support the extant western findings and thus reveal whether African (Nigerian) context has different influence on SNS. To this end, the study seeks to investigate the influence of self-esteem, personality type and gender on self-disclosure among adolescents social network users. This study is anchored on the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954); an expansion from the tradition of symbolic interactions which states that people’s self-evaluations whether explicit or implicit are presumably formed through interactions with significant others, peers, family, etc. We hypothesized that:

- 1) self-esteem would not significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users
- 2). personality type would not significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users.
- 3). Gender would not significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users.

Method

Participants

Participants were 350 (three hundred) secondary school students (consisting of 160 (45.7%) males and 190 (54.3%) females) within ages 12-23years with a mean age of 17.5years. Participants were drawn from 2 randomly selected institutions in Nsukka- Anglican Secondary School, Nsukka (it is an all-boys school) and ST Catharine's Comprehensive Secondary School, Nsukka (it is an all girl's school). Purposive sampling method was used to select the classes (SS1-SS2) and students were conveniently sampled.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data for the study. They were the Index of Self-esteem (ISE) (Hudson, 1982), the Big Five Factors of personality (Mc Crae & Costa, 2004) and the Self-Disclosure Inventory (SDI) (Miller, Berg & Archer, 1983).

Index of Self-esteem (ISE)

This is a standard psychological assessment tool developed by Hudson (1982) and validated for use with Nigerian samples by Onighaiye (1996). The 25-item questionnaire measures self-perceived and self-evaluative components of self-concept which is the sum total of the self-perceived and other perceived views of the self-held by a person. It is scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (most or all of the time). Out of the 25 items, 12 items (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23 and 25) according to ISE manual are scored in a reverse direction while the other 13 items (1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24) are directly scored. The total score is then compared with the norm for interpretation.

Hudson (1982) obtained a co-efficient alpha of .93 and a two-hour test re-test co-efficient alpha of .92. Onighaiye (1996) obtained a co-efficient alpha of .90 and two-hour test re-test co-efficient of .89. Onighaiye further validated the instrument for Nigerian samples with the norm as follows: Males-30.09, females-32.04. The norm serves as the basis for separating participants into high self-esteem and low self-esteem groups. Scores higher than the norm indicates low self-esteem, and the lower a score is below the norm, the higher the self-esteem. Pilot study was

conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument for the present study and the results yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Big Five Factors (dimensions) of Personality (BFI)

This 44 item questionnaire was developed by Mc Crae & Costa in 2004. It was designed to measure an individual on the big five factors (dimensions) of personality (Goldberg, 1993). Each of the factors is then further divided into personality facets. The big five dimensions include Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness to experience. Across the five subscales, the authors obtained a convergent validity correlation of .75. However, Extroversion and Agreeableness are reliable with Cronbach's alpha of .92. John and Srivastava (1999) also reported convergence validity correlation of Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness as .88, .83 for openness and .67 for neuroticism.

The Big-Five is scored along a 5-point Likert scale response options ranging from Disagree strongly (1), Disagree a little (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree a Little (4) to Agree Strongly (5). Sample items on the Big Five Scale includes: "I see myself as someone who is a talkative", "...tend to be lazy", "...can be moody", etc. The five dimensions of the scale with their respective items include: 8 items of Extroversion (1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, and 36), 9 items of Agreeableness (2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, and 42), 9 items of Conscientiousness (3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38, and 43), 8 items of Neuroticism (4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, and 39), and 10 items of Openness (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 41, and 44). The inventory has both direct and reverse scoring pattern. 16 items numbering: 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 41, and 43 are scored reversely whereas 28 items numbering: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, and 44 are directly scored. A high score on each scale indicates a high personality trait on that particular dimension. Participants are expected to indicate on each item by choosing a number from 1-5 that best describes them. The items that are awarded a score range from 1-5 on reverse would be scored on opposite (i.e 5-1).

Eze, (2012) replicated the Five-Factor structure on Nigerian University Students using the Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax Rotation. Eze (2012) also reported that some of the items had double loadings but that those double loadings were lower than the mean convergent loading

obtained by Rammstedt and John (2007). Pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument for the present study and the results yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .77.

Self-disclosure Index (SDI)

SDI is a 10-item self-report measure developed by Miller, Berg and Archer (1983). It is designed to measure a participants' willingness to disclose personal information that is not necessarily distressing. It contains items describing a range of personal issues that could be disclosed such as emotions or relationships. Participants are expected to rate the context of their disclosure on each situation on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (discuss not at all) to 5 (discuss fully and completely). Scores ranging from 10-50, and a higher score reflect higher tendencies to self-disclosure and a score of 30 as the dividing point. Miller, et al (1983) report internal consistency ranges from .86 to .93: and Cronbach's alpha of .86. Pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument for the present study and the results yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .77.

Procedure

A letter of permission was collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; to the secondary schools for their consent and possible permission to conduct a study with their students. The researchers administered about 363 copies of the questionnaires to the participants during a scheduled visit to the schools after proper explanation of the procedure to the participants and informed consent was obtained. Two trained research assistants assisted in administering and collecting the questionnaires. No monetary reward was given for participating in the study, but the participants were verbally appreciated at the end of the exercise. Out of the 363 copies of the scale shared among the students, all the scales were recovered but 350 copies were completely and correctly filled, 13 copies were wrongly completed and were discarded.

Design and Statistics

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Regression was used for data analysis. Regression analysis was considered most suitable for this study because the present study involved a number of variables that have more than two dimensions and it is only the regression analysis that illustrates the respective contributions of each of these dimensions.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in two tables as illustrated this section. The correlations of the demographic variables in Table 1 and the table of regression analysis for testing the hypotheses (Tables 2):

Table 1: Correlations of the demographic variables as well as self-esteem, personality dimensions and gender on self-disclosure

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Gender	1												
2 Age	-.19**	1											
3 Ethnicity	-.11*	.02*	1										
4 Class	-.34**	.40**	.02	1									
5 Religion	.06	.04	.12*	.04*	1								
6 ATI	.16**	.12*	.04	.06	.07	1							
7 SelfEst	.06	.09	-.07	.05	.04	.03	1						
8 Extra	.17**	.07	-.11*	.02	-.03	.07	.11*	1					
9 Agree	.08	.02	-.06	.06	-.12	.03	.16**	.28**	1				
10 Consc	.09	.04	-.05	.04	-.03	.06	.19**	.33**	.92**	1			
11 Neuro	.20**	-.02	.09	-.76	.05	.03	.23**	.25**	.40**	.43**	1		
12 Openn	.03	-.07	-.12	-.11*	.02	-.05	.16**	.40**	.25**	.28**	.30**	1	
13 SDis	-.09	-.02	.03	-.07	.00	-.13*	.10	.01	.12*	-.05	.02	.05	1

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

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

ATI= Access to Internet; SDis = Self-Disclosure

Table of correlation above illustrated that age significantly had a negative correlation with gender ($r = -.19$, $p < 0.01$). Ethnicity significantly had a negative correlation with gender ($r = -.11$, $p < 0.05$) but a positive correlation with age ($r = -.02$, $p < 0.05$). Class of study also significantly had a negative correlation with gender ($r = -.34$, $p < 0.01$) and a positive correlation with age ($r = -.40$, $p < 0.01$). Religion significantly correlated with ethnicity ($r = -.12$, $p < 0.05$) and class of study ($r = -.04$, $p < 0.05$). Access-to-Internet significantly correlated with age ($r = -.16$, $p < 0.01$) and gender ($r = -.12$, $p < 0.05$). Self-esteem did not correlate with any the IVs. Extraversion significantly correlated with age ($r = -.17$, $p < 0.01$), ethnicity ($r = -.11$, $p < 0.01$), self-esteem ($r = -.11$, $p < 0.01$). Conscientiousness significantly correlated with self-esteem ($r =$

-.19, $p < 0.01$), extraversion ($r = -.33$, $p < 0.01$), agreeableness ($r = -.92$, $p < 0.01$). Neuroticism significantly correlated with age ($r = -.20$, $p < 0.01$), self-esteem ($r = -.23$, $p < 0.01$), extraversion ($r = -.25$, $p < 0.01$), agreeableness ($r = -.40$, $p < 0.01$), and conscientiousness ($r = -.43$, $p < 0.01$). Openness to experience significantly correlated with class of study ($r = -.11$, $p < 0.01$), self-esteem ($r = .16$, $p < 0.01$), extraversion ($r = .40$, $p < 0.01$), agreeableness ($r = .25$, $p < 0.01$), conscientiousness ($r = .28$, $p < 0.01$), and neuroticism ($r = .30$, $p < 0.01$). Self-Disclosure significantly correlated with access-to-internet ($r = -.13$, $p < 0.01$) and agreeableness ($r = .12$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2: Beta (β) Contribution of the self-esteem, personality dimensions and gender on self-disclosure

Model	B	Std Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig
Constant	22.73	4.70		4.84	.00
Self-esteem	.07	.04	.07	1.57	.12
Extra	.00	.11	.00	.02	1.0
Agreea	-.77	.22	-.45	-3.42	.00
Conscien	.53	.23	.32	2.34	.02
Neuro	.09	.11	.05	.80	.44
Openness	.08	.09	.05	.86	.38
Gender	-1.35	.86	-.09	-1.58	.12

Dependent Variable: Self_Dis

The result in Table 2 above illustrated that self-esteem is not a significant predictor of self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. While agreeableness negatively predicted SNSs ($\beta = -.45$, $p < 0.01$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .32$, $p < 0.05$) positively predicted self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Self-disclosure among adolescent social network users is not predicted by gender. However, results indicated that a significant 6% variations in self-disclosure among adolescent social network users were contributed by the predictor variables [$\Delta R^2 = .06$, $F(7, 342) = 7.70$, $p = .01$].

Discussion

The study investigated self-esteem, personality type and gender as predictors of self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. It was hypothesized that self-esteem would not predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. The first hypothesis which stated that self-esteem would not predict self-disclosure among social network users was confirmed. This means that subjective appraisal of oneself is not a predictor of self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Previous findings on the relationship between these two variables seem to have been consistent (Seamon, 2003; Pineiro, 2016; Soroya, 2010). In this study, self-esteem was used as a composite score. In other words, it was not categorized into two levels: low self-esteem and high self-esteem (as against the theoretical explanations), and each level regressed into self-disclosure. This could account for why self-esteem was not a significant predictor of self-disclosure among social network users. Other studies (Pineiro, 2016; Soroya, 2010) which found a significant predictive relationship compared each level of self-esteem with their respective variables.

This study also found personality type to be a significant predictor of self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. Hence, the second hypothesis that stated that there would be no significant relationship between personality type and self-disclosure among adolescent social network users was not supported. This finding is consistent with Penedo, Gonzalez, Dahn, Antoni, Malow, Costa and Schneiderman (2003), who reported a positive correlation between personality traits (extraversion) and quality of life. In their submission, extraversion was significantly associated with better quality of life including the ability to self-disclose, while introversion was associated with poor quality of life. Agreeableness measures one's tendency to be kind, empathetic, trusting, cooperative and sympathetic. Research has shown that individuals with an agreeable personality tend to have better relationships and are also better at relationships

than others- hence their ability to disclose more than others. Persons who are conscientious are careful, vigilant and they take obligations to others seriously. They are very efficient and organized, as opposed to easy going and disorderly. They think carefully before doing things. Some of these features of a conscientious personality type could be the reasons why they disclose more information online and form interpersonal relationships with strangers.

The result of this study however supported the third hypothesis which stated that gender would not be a significant predictor of self-disclosure among adolescent social network users". The finding reveals that gender did not significantly predict self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. This indicates that being male or female is not a factor in self-disclosure among adolescent social network users. This finding agrees with Armistead, Morse, Forehand, Morse and Clark (1999) who found no gender difference in self-disclosure. However, this finding disagrees with Barry (2006) who found that men initially disclose more than women in heterosexual relationship. Dindia and Allen's (1992) study that who found that women more than men tend to disclose overall, though may be affected by the situation disagrees with the result of the present study. Furthermore, this result runs contrary with previous studies (Espana, 2013, Taraszow et al, 2010). Many studies found that in general, females are high disclosers when compared to males in some situations like the traditional social interaction. However, in an online setting, it was found that self-disclosure was of greater concern to women than men. It was claimed that males were more likely than females to use technology (Vekiri & Chronaki, 2008), and felt more comfortable with technology (Hargittai & Shafer, 2006). These results in men revealing more

information online than offline, and could potentially offset the gender differences in offline information disclosure. For instance, a study on Facebook showed no gender differences in information disclosure (Nosko, Wood & Molema, 2009).

No gender difference in self-disclosure as reported in this study agrees with Ignatius

and Kokkonen (2007) that it is sex role identity that plays a large part in the amount of

information one chooses to reveal to another. This is because androgenous people disclose

more intimately across contexts than do notably masculine and feminine people.

This could

explain why there is no gender difference in self-disclosure as found in the present study.

Implication of the Study

Self-esteem and gender are not factors in self-disclosure among adolescent social network users whereas personality type (of agreeableness and conscientiousness) is a strong factor in self-disclosure. Much research has been done on the positive effects of self-disclosing from a discloser's perspective such as relieving loneliness (Buechel & Berger, 2012; Lee, Noh, & Koo, 2013), strengthening relational closeness and so on. Practically speaking, frequent posting on social media is good for others to have a feeling of familiarity with oneself, but it does not necessarily lead to social attraction. Especially when such public posts are perceived as inappropriate or could lead to negative beliefs, posting may decrease social attraction. Merely by reading several posts that are embedded in a stream of other news, social media users can form

an impression of the discloser and develop a feeling of closeness (at least when the posts are perceived as appropriate).

Individuals (with agreeable and conscientious personality types) who disclose more to people online are more likely to get favours or solutions to some problems they may be facing because of their ability to express themselves and build interpersonal relationships but in reverse, they pay less attention to the potential privacy risks that irrelevant self-disclosure can cause. According to the social exchange theory, individuals disclose information to others because of the benefits they are likely to get from the relationship. This is the rationale behind why most of these bad boys, ritualists, cultists, ‘yahoo boys’ lure their victim to online affairs. When people are not getting any benefit from a relationship, they terminate it. This equally explains why both parties (bad boys, ritualists, cultists, ‘yahoo boys’ and their victim-if still alive) terminate their interaction.

Limitations of Study

A study of this nature is usually faced with a number limitation. First, this study is neither a longitudinal study nor a cause-effect study but a cross-sectional one and this form of study (cross-sectional) yields limited results with a problem of generalization. Secondly, the sample size (n=350) is too small. It does not represent the number of students in Enugu State, let alone Nigeria as a whole. This study used only adolescents therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to everybody including working class individuals, Civil servants and even aged people as they too use SNSs. Hence, generalization is a major flaw in this type of study. Also, other factors that affect people’s self-disclosure on Facebook might have been overlooked.

Recommendation for Further Research

For future studies, it is recommended that future research should investigating the levels of awareness young people have when disclosing information about themselves that can potentially harm them in more ways than one. The current study investigated the self-disclosure among adolescent social network users of participants from Nigeria (Enugu State to be precise). To achieve greater generalizability, future research would benefit from the consideration of a greater diversity of cultural context; for example, this could include research on the OSN self-disclosure of people from more complex and unique cultures such as East Asian countries. Future research might include other cultural or cross-regional factors that affect self-disclosure on OSNs. Such

factors might include collectivism vs individualism, femininity vs masculinity. With some Islamic nations, the future research might also consider other social values and norms such as the tribe system, gender segregation and gender rules, religion, family honor. Further studies in this area should adopt a longitudinal design method of research to enhance the comparison of pre-morbid self-esteem and self-disclosure data with the morbid data for better cause-effect explanation. Future studies could attempt to identify additional factors and theories related to this domain; for example, they could focus more on psychological aspects such as participants' propensity for seeking attention, seeking popularity and so on. Further studies should use a higher number of participants. This would make the results more valid. It is recommended that social media users should be cautious when disclosing intimate self-information publicly on social media, but it would be nice if one can disclose information in a narrative way.

Conclusion

Adolescents use social networks because it appeals their personality especially the agreeable and conscientious type but do not do so on the basis of their self-esteem and gender identification or inclination. Social psychologists should help to educate parents, other teachers (significant others) and children on the dangers of disclosing information to strangers. The earlier this inculcation begins, the more it becomes a part of the children's lives. The parents might even go as far as seizing phones of their wards when it is found that unnecessary and sensitive information is being disclosed.

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