# THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS ON RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG EMERGING ADULTS IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated personality traits (Extra-version, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) as predictors of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. This study identified that there exists series of studies on risky sexual behaviour, with scarcity of such studies on emerging adults. Most of the previous studies have focused solely on adolescents, hence this study sets out to unravel risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults.

Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted and data was gathered from 341 emerging adults. More of the respondents 192 (56.3%) were males, while the other 149 (43.7%) were females. Data was gathered using standardised scales of measurement on risky sexual behaviour and personality traits. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression and t-test for independent samples.

Findings revealed that personality traits (Extra-version, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) jointly accounted for about 45% variance in risky sexual behaviour [R = .67; $R^2$ = .45; F (5, 235) = 109.24; P <.01]. However, only extra-version (β = .67; t = 14.78; P<.01) independently predicted risky sexual behaviour. Also, males reported highest on risky sexual behaviour (Mean = 65.34; SD = 14.32) compared to their female counterparts [t (339) = 8.32; p < .01]. However, demographic variables (Age and level of study) had neither joint nor independent influence on sexual risky behaviour among emerging adults [R = .21; $R^2$ = .04; F (2, 238) = 1.77; P > .01].

Based on the findings, it was concluded that extra-version is a significant predictor of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is therefore recommended that school management should make it a point of duty to conduct personality profiling of their students at the point of documentation and admission. This will ensure to keep track of their students, especially those with high level of extra-version in order to prevent them from been involved in risky sexual behaviour.

**Word-count:** 303

## Introduction

Emerging adulthood comprise of individuals between ages 18 and 25 years old. Some of the times, it extends to late twenties. Several authors have associated emerging adulthood to adolescence, especially late adolescence. This is because the expected behavioural patterns for late adolescence and emerging adulthood are similar. A period of early adulthood occupies a unique stage in every person's life. It is a period among human beings where lot physiological as well as anatomical changes have just taken place, resulting in reproductive maturity. Many emerging adults manage this transformation successfully while others experience major stress and find themselves in continuous engagement in behaviours they picked during their adolescent stage. During this stage as well, individuals seek to clarify who they are and form their own identity, build their confidence focus on self development, and increase their optimism and possibility in their future endeavours[i]. One of the constructs that forms the identity of emerging adult is their sexuality and sexual orientation, which includes engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

Risky sexual behaviours are defined as sexual activities that may expose an individual to the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV and unplanned pregnancies. Some of these behaviours include unprotected sexual intercourse, multiple sexual partners, forced or coerced sexual intercourse and sexual intercourse for reward. However, lack of knowledge about consequences of these negative behaviours and poverty has been identified as factors that increase the chances of adolescents engaging in risky sexual behaviours. Emerging adults face different challenges related to their sexuality which have an influence on their perception of the world and themselves. There has been increasing public health concern about the reducing age of initiation of individuals into sexual activities. The rate of risky sexual behaviours and the spread of STIs continue to be on the increase due to many factors including dearth of information regarding sexuality especially for emerging adultsi. Each year, approximately one million young women aged 18-25 become pregnant; while they are alluded to be old enough to be engaged in sexual activities, it is an age when most individuals are in tertiary institution, hence continually engage in activities they started during their adolescence, leading to the vast majority of unplanned pregnancies. Abstaining completely from sexual activity will eliminate these risks and where abstinence is not a reasonable choice or goal, preventive measures are imperative. The WHO**Error! Bookmark not defined.** observed that unsafe sex was second among the top ten risk factors in the global burden of all diseases globally. While acts such as initiation of sexual activity, engaging in sexual intercourse without protection and use of contraception, are common in teen age, emerging adults are faced with sexual identity, orientation, sexual health and safety. At emerging adulthood, individuals are expected to be more informed about the dangers of engaging in risky sexual behaviour, however, it is important to note that it remains an issue, given the data revealing that men and women between ages 20 and 24 are more than three times likely to be living with HIV[ii].

Identifying that majority of emerging adults falls in the category of tertiary institution students, the study sets to investigate the relationship which personality traits has with risky sexual behaviour among University of Ibadan students.

Personality is definite characteristics an individual exhibits; an enduring pattern of behaviour. Personality is further defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations and behaviours in various situations[iii]. Personality factors account for individual variations across setting; there are considerable individual differences in responses to unfavourable conditions with some people showing maladaptive responses, whereas others are more resilient to the same stressor. It is assumed to be inherent, relatively stable and unchanged throughout a person's life time. The

most commonly used personality trait to describe human behaviour is the Big Five personality.

Research has been conducted that focuses on examining the correlations between the Big-Five Personality Traits and risky sexual behaviors[iv]. The Big-Five Personality model consists of five different personality traits that could correlate with risky sexual behavior and pornography consumption: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Extraversion measures one's level of sociability; neuroticism relates to emotional stability and adjustment; openness to experience relates to one's intellectual curiosity, ability to consider different alternatives and try new activities; agreeableness measures ones interpersonal style; contentiousness relates to one's ability to control his or her impulses[v].

Emerging adulthood can be alluded to as the time of experimenting with new things and investigating potential outcomes immediately after adolescence. This influences individuals to take part in assortment of risky behaviors. Risky behaviors shown by emerging adults incorporate smoking behavior, substance/liquor misuse, sexual behavior and frequently, risky sexual behavior. The most widely recognized and endemic among emerging adults as of late in Nigeria is risky sexual behavior. Participating in risky sexual behavior has expanded a considerable measure of unwanted pregnancies and reaching of sexually transmitted diseases, for example, HIV/AIDs, gonorrhea, among different diseases.[vi]

As a report, over 40% of school understudies showed to be associated with sexual intercourse; in any case, more young males take part in sexual behavior than females[vii]. What is more, over 12% of young men and 10% of young ladies revealed having no less than three (3) sexual accomplices. To be particular, females who are youthful most occasions take part in sexual intercourse with no less than two (2) male companions who are more established than them. Research has demonstrated that a few young people are not just starting intercourse at an early age and with numerous accomplices, however they are additionally neglecting to reliably and viably utilize condoms and contraceptives[viii].

It is a point to take note of that risky sexual behaviors put youngsters out of extent in danger for sexually transmitted infections (STI). As indicated, gauges recommend that regardless of the way that youngsters whose ages gone 18 to 24 years speak to just more than 20 percent of the sexually experienced populace on the planet[ix], they likewise have half of people with new instances of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). What is more, risky sexual behavior puts emerging adults in danger for spontaneous pregnancy, Human Immune Virus (HIV) and consequent hazard connected to premature birth. As indicated by an examination showed that there were 31.3 births per 1,000 emerging adults, which speaks to a 8% diminish from the earlier year[x]. Be that as it may, even with this decrease, ladies ages 18 to 25 still have the most noteworthy rate of unintended pregnancy of all age gatherings[xi].

As indicated by an examination, more HIV/AIDS patients' age in sub-Saharan Africa extended somewhere in the range of 17 and 20 years of age, representing 65% of people with HIV/AIDS (constructive)[xii]. This has being ascribed to the rate at which youths get associated with risky sexual behavior without being checked.

Another after-effect of risky sexual behavior emerging adults is unwanted pregnancy. Pregnancy is viewed as a thing of happiness which call for festivity in the general public most particularly when it happens inside marriage. This turns out the other route round when pregnancy happen outside wedlock, it realizes social shame to both the guardians of pregnant young people and the youngsters themselves, especially among the Yoruba culture of South-western Nigeria where they grimace at pregnancy outside wedlock particularly when someone who is not yet married gets pregnant. This causes disgrace upon both the family and the young lady.

This study identified that there exists series of studies on risky behaviour, with substance abuse ranking highest most research work, followed by sexual behaviour and then risky sexual behaviour. In addition, more of the research work on risky sexual behaviour has reported mostly prevalence of risky sexual behaviour, with little reporting the precipitating factors of risky sexual behaviour. Existing research work on predictors of risky sexual behaviour has reported inconsistencies in their findings. Therefore, this study will be carried out to fill this literature gap and contribute to existing research work on how personality traits contributes to risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The rationale behind the choice of research design was premised on the fact that the study will focus on a particular population having different socio-demographic characteristics within a particular period in time. The independent variable is personality traits, while the dependent variable is risky sexual behaviour.

### Research Setting

The study was carried out in Ibadan. Ibadan is the capital and most populous city of Oyo State, in Nigeria. It is the third-largest city by population in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano, with a total population of 3,649,000 as of 2021, and over 6 million people within its metropolitan area. It is the country's largest city by geographical area.

Ibadan comprised of six (6) universities; University of Ibadan, Lead City University, Dominican University, Oyo State Technical University, Kola Daisi University, and Precious Cornerstone University. Specifically, the study will be conducted in University of Ibadan, being the only public university in Ibadan with large number of students in Ibadan.

### Participants

The study participants included University of Ibadan undergraduate students. This included students across eleven (11) faculties. The Slovin sample size formula was used to get the sample size for this study. The calculation is shown below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N.e^2}$$

N = Population size = 16,454 (Bscholarly, 2023)
e = error margin (0.05)

**Therefore**, $\quad$ n = 16,454 / 1 + 16,454 (0.05$^2$)
$\qquad\qquad$ n = 16,454 / 1 + 41.14
$\qquad\qquad$ n = 16,454 / 42.14
$\qquad\qquad$ n = 390.46

### Sampling Technique

The study adopted purposive sampling technique. This is because the researcher already identified the University setting to visit for the purpose of data gathering. Although data was gathered from 380 participants, only 341 were valid for analysis.

### Instruments

Data will be gathered through the means of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of four sections; Sections A, B, C and D.

### SECTION A: Demographic Information

This section consisted of socio-demographic items which required the participants to respond to. Socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, level of study, family background, parental marital status and home environment.

**SECTION B: Risky Sex Scale**

The Risky Sex Scale was adapted in this study. The scale has 14-item developed by O'Hara et al.[xiii], which assesses the prevalence of sexual risk behavior among a sample of college students. The scale has the following dimensions; risky sex expectancy, risky sex behaviors and gender-based sexual risk perception. Response to the items ranged as follows; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and Strongly Agree. The Cronbach's alpha estimates were .85 for the RSE subscale; .78 for the RSB subscale, and .64 for the GSRP subscale. All three RSS subscales were significantly intercorrelated: RSE with RSB, r = .66, p < .01; RSE with GSRP, r = .16, p < .05; and RSB with GSRP, r = .25, p < .01.

**SECTION C: Big-five personality**

This comprise of a 10-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI) developed by Gosling et al.[xiv] for measuring Big-Five personality dimensions. The 10-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI) includes two items for each of the Big-Five personality dimensions. It is a 5-point Likert response format, the response categories ranging from 1:'disagree strongly' up to 5:'agree strongly'. As a measure of the Big-Five dimensions of personality, the TIPI has been validated against standard Big-Five instruments. The Test–retest reliability is therefore a more appropriate reliability measure for such brief scales. They were 0.77 for Extraversion, 0.71 for Agreeableness, 0.76 for Conscientiousness, 0.70 for Emotional Stability and 0.62 for Openness, indicating that the scale provides a stable measure of personality over time. Hence, we chose to adopt the TIPI rather than a longer personality measure to reduce transient measurement errors resulting from participant fatigue, frustration and boredom associated with completing several survey instruments in combination with a lengthy experimental session. However, this study reports the following local reliability of the scale; extraversion α= .69; neuroticism α= .70; agreeableness α= .78; conscientiousness α= .79 and openness to experience α= .76.

**Data Analysis**

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized in this study. Descriptive statistics included the use of simple frequencies and percentages, graphs and charts. Hypotheses one and three were tested using multiple regression analysis, while hypothesis two was tested using t-test for independent sample.

**Results**

This section presents results of gathered data on the personality predictors of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in the University of Ibadan. Data was gathered from 341 students and results is presented in sub-sections.

**Table 1: Zero-Order correlation summary table showing results on the relationship between personality traits and risky sexual behaviour**

| SN | Variables | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----|-----------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | Risky Sexual Behaviour | 62.36 | 12.24 | - | | | | | |
| 2 | Extraversion | 7.21 | 3.22 | .67** | - | | | | |
| 3 | Neuroticism | 5.49 | 2.98 | -.02 | -.03 | - | | | |
| 4 | Openness to experience | 6.43 | 1.98 | -.13* | .11 | .06 | - | | |
| 5 | Agreeableness | 5.58 | 2.09 | -.08 | .07 | .06 | .06 | - | |
| 6 | Conscientiousness | 4.85 | 3.01 | .06 | .04 | .10 | -.06 | -.03 | - |

*** Significant at 0.01*

** Significant at 0.05*

Table 4.1 presents results on the inter-relationship between personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is shown that risky sexual behaviour had significant relationship with extraversion (r = .67; p < .01). The direction of

the relationship is positive, therefore implies that the higher the extraversion of emerging adults, the higher their risky sexual behaviour.

Also, it is shown on table 4.1 that there exists significant relationship between risky sexual behaviour and openness to experience (r = -.13; p < .05). The direction of the relationship is negative, hence, means that the higher the openness to experience, of emerging adults, the lower their risky sexual behaviour.

However, it is shown that risky sexual behaviour has no significant relationship with neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness (p > .05).

**Hypothesis one**

Personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) will jointly and independently predict risky sexual behaviour of emerging adults in University of Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented on Table 4.2;

**Table 2: Multiple regression analysis summary table showing results on the influence of personality traits on risky sexual behaviour**

| Criterion | Predictors | β | t | P | R | R² | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Risky sexual behaviour | Extraversion | .67 | 14.78 | < .01 | .67 | .45 | 109.24 | <.01 |
| | Neuroticism | .19 | 1.21 | > .05 | | | | |
| | Openness to experience | .01 | .10 | > .05 | | | | |
| | Agreeableness | .13 | 1.22 | > .05 | | | | |
| | Conscientiousness | .99 | .09 | > .05 | | | | |

Table 4.2 presents results on the joint and independent influence of personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) on risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is presented on Table 4.2 that personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) were significant joint predictors of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults [R = .67; $R^2$ = .45; F (5, 235) = 109.24; P <.01]. Further, personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) jointly accounted for about 45% variance in risky sexual behaviour. However, only extraversion (β = .67; t = 14.78; P<.01) independently predicted risky sexual behaviour. This confirms the stated hypothesis, hence was retained in this study.

**Hypothesis two**

Males will significantly report higher on risky sexual behaviour compared to their female counterparts. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented on Table 4.3;

**Table 3: t-test for independent sample summary table showing results on gender differences in risky sexual behaviour**

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | t | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 192 | 65.34 | 14.32 | | | |
| | | | | 8.32 | 339 | < .01 |
| Female | 149 | 44.98 | 10.22 | | | |

Table 4.3 presents results on gender differences in risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is shown that there exists significant gender differences in

risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan [t (339) = 8.32; p < .01]. Specifically, males reported highest on risky sexual behaviour (Mean = 65.34; SD = 14.32) compared to their female counterparts (Mean = 44.98; SD = 10.22). This confirms the stated hypothesis, hence was retained in this study.

**Hypothesis three**

Demographic factors (Age and level of study) will jointly and independently predict risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented on Table 4.4;

**Table 4: Multiple regression summary table showing demographic predictors of sexual Risky behaviour**

| Criterion | Predictors | β | t | P | R | R² | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Age | .32 | 1.67 | > .05 | | | | |
| Risky sexual behaviour | | | | | .21 | .04 | 1.77 | > .05 |
| | Level of study | .17 | .11 | > .05 | | | | |

Table 4.4 presents results on the joint and independent influence of demographic variables (Age and level of study) on risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is presented on Table 4.4 that demographic variables (Age and level of study) had neither joint nor independent influence on sexual risky behaviour among emerging adults [R = .21; R² = .04; F (2, 238) = 1.77; P > .01]. This negates the stated hypothesis, hence was rejected in this study.

**Discussion**

This study examined the role of personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) in the risky sexual behaviour of emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It was discovered that risky sexual behaviour had significant relationship with extraversion. The direction of the relationship is positive, therefore implies that the higher the extraversion of emerging adults, the higher their risky sexual behaviour. Also, it was found that there exists significant relationship between risky sexual behaviour and openness to experience. The direction of the relationship is negative, hence, means that the higher the openness to experience, of emerging adults, the lower their risky sexual behaviour.

Hypothesis one stated that personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) will jointly and independently predict risky sexual behaviour of emerging adults in University of Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and it was discovered that personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) were significant joint predictors of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults. Further, personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) jointly accounted for about 45% variance in risky sexual behaviour. However, only extraversion independently predicted risky sexual behaviour. This confirms the stated hypothesis, hence was retained in this study.

Hypothesis two stated that males will significantly report higher on risky sexual behaviour compared to their female counterparts. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and it was found that there exists significant gender differences in risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. Specifically, males reported highest on risky

sexual behaviour compared to their female counterparts. This confirms the stated hypothesis, hence was retained in this study.

Hypothesis three stated that demographic factors (Age and level of study) will jointly and independently predict risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and it was found that demographic variables (Age and level of study) had neither joint nor independent influence on sexual risky behaviour among emerging adults. This negates the stated hypothesis, hence was rejected in this study.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study;

Firstly, it was found that personality traits (Extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) were significant joint predictors of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. However, only extraversion had significant independent influence on risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults.

Also, this study concludes that there exists significant gender differences in risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. Males reported highest on risky sexual behaviour than their female counterparts.

Finallym it could be concluded from this study that demographic factors (Age and level of study) had neither joint nor independent influence on risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

Firstly, it was found that having high level of extraversion is tantamount to having higher levels of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in University of Ibadan. It is therefore recommended that school management should make it a point of duty to conduct personality profiling of their students at the point of documentation and admission. This will ensure to keep track of their students, especially those with high level of extraversion in order to prevent them from been involved in risky sexual behaviour.

Also, it is recommended that school management carry out periodic assessment of students with focus on their level of risky sexual behaviour. This will help in many ways, including reducing the spread of sexually transmitted infections and diseases. It will also reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies among emerging adults.

Finally, it is recommended that more studies should be carried out on other factors that could contribute to the rate of risky sexual behaviour among emerging adults in Universities. This will help make more practical recommendations and solutions to reduce spread of STIs, STDs and teenage pregnancies.

## Limitations of the study

The study was limited by various factors. Firstly, the study was carried out among University of Ibadan emerging adults. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to other institutions with high number of emerging adults. The study was also limited to Ibadan, which also makes it difficult to generalise the findings to other cities and states. Future studies should also consider utilised mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approach.

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