GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MATE SELECTION CRITERIA AMONG MALAYSIAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine whether gender differences existed in the mate selection criteria of undergraduate students in a public university. The participants recruited in this study were 132 undergraduate students between the ages of 20 to 28 years and they were selected by purposive and random sampling. The test instrument used was a mate selection inventory made up of Sternberg's love components, McCrae's personality traits, David Buss's physical traits and mate selection traits from the work of Sprecher. The Cronbach's alpha value for this 62-item inventory was .79. The results showed significant gender differences in mate selection criteria. Males were found to prefer passion, agreeableness, symmetrical bone structure, slim waist size, good looks and youthfulness, and were more liberal about accepting people who were less educated, divorced, less successful and unemployed. Females were found to prefer a mate with a successful career, employed, educated and disliked the notion of marrying a divorcee, unemployed person, less successful and less educated than themselves.

Keywords: Mate selection, marriage, gender differences, undergraduates

Introduction

It is easy to see how people select their life-partner or the characteristics they want in the person they take from the bridal aisle to the grave. Most people meet someone in their working place and are attracted to characteristics which are similar or complementary to make them complete.

This process of mate selection has been there from the dawn of human civilization. Primitive male caveman known as 'hunter-gatherers' used to hunt not only for food but did compete with each other for building bigger and better quality caves and using clubs to obtain the woman of their dreams. It is interesting to note that at that time males had a set of defined traits they wanted in a mate which would ensure the survival of their ancestral lines or genes. Females with large breasts, thick lips, bigger waist to hip ratios meant greater reproductive potential. Women had the choice of selecting husbands from a wide selection of eligible mates including those who had an abundance of food, clothing or shelter. The evolutionary process of mate selection continued down across time and it was seen that males and females valued characteristics that were male defined traits and female defined traits.

Thus the important issue of how men and women choose their life-partners came into play. That is, whether there is a real gender difference due to the forces of nature

and societal role stereotypes or is it all due to random chance like collisions of atoms or molecules? There has been strong evidence that has come up in most journals by evolutionary psychologists proposing theories that help to explain human mate selection like the "Evolutionary theory and the Sociocultural perspective" (Sprecher, Sullivan, and Hatfield 1994). In brief, the evolutionary theory states that men and women through the process of evolution have developed "sex-specific evolved mechanisms becoming inbuilt genetically and environmental factors act as cues to yield sex-typed responses" (Buss and Kenrick 1998). In other words, men would go for women who were younger than them, had bigger breast and waist-to hip ratios which indicate good health, high reproductive capacity and fertility. Women, on the other hand, valued characteristics like ambition, success, career stability and being committed in the relationship (Furnham, Tan, and McManus 1998).

The topic of mate selection has been an important area that counselling and psychology has always emphasised, particularly in the area of developmental, family and marriage therapy. It has been shown that there are no real perfect happily married couples and lots of emotional and psychological problems come from the married couple not being able to understand and communicate with each other. According to most developmental psychologists there are two main perspectives on love and mate-selection strategies. The first perspective states that people on face to face contact get pulled to each other like magnets in the early stages of relationship formation (Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd, and Christopher, 1983). This perspective includes personality characteristics which are complementary, attitudes, beliefs, values, physical features like race, color, body mass index, symmetrical bone structure and first impressions as in passion, fatuous love, leads to greater romantic attraction between individuals. The second perspective considers romantic attraction to be more of a human strategic enterprise which includes the Evolutionary theory, sociocultural perspective, balance, equity and social-exchange theories which are main models explaining human mating strategies.

These two perspectives help to explain people mating strategies over time that men valuing youth and physical attractiveness for short-term mating but in the long-term value their mates to have kindness and warmth as well (Buss and Schmitt 1996). In most studies there is substantial evidence that men value physical attractiveness and youth to a greater extent and women placing more emphasis on wealthy successful men. Most research on mate-selection has always been on young adult males and females and few have been conducted on undergraduate students in universities.

According to the Social Structural or Sociocultural perspective there is a gender-specific sex-role behaviour according to the roles males and females play in society. Traditionally, men because of the male dominant society have better access to educational and career opportunities and find it easier to compete in the rat-race and climb up the corporate ladder. Women on the other hand generally have less power and social status than men and control fewer physical assets thus resulting in a gender hierarchy or patriarchy. Due to this greater access to material resource and social status men are said to occupy most of the top positions in industry and accumulate lots of money. Women are forced into societal roles that are more nurturing and are the ones that get wined and dined (Eagly and Wood 1999). From this sex-role societal norms it can be seen that men and women demand different traits in a life-partner be it short-term or long-term mating patterns. This may still be true in underdeveloped and developing

countries where gender inequality is still apparent. From this sex-role societal norms it can be seen that men and women demand different traits in a life-partner be it short-term or long-term mating patterns.

The gender differences in mate selection have always been explained by the evolutionary models of human behavior (Sprecher, Sullivan and Hatfield 1994). Throughout time evolutionary psychologists have made clear distinctions as to how men and women differ in the traits they desire in a mate. Buss (1989) predicted men would prefer mates that signal their reproductive value includes good looks and youth while women would be attracted to mates that signal their potential for resource acquisition including ambition and social status. In studies dealing with mate-selection criteria examined through personal advertisements and the lonely hearts columns men are said to request physical attractiveness in a partner whereas women are more likely than men to offer it.

In a cross cultural study on mate preferences, Buss (1989) asked the ages of the participants preferred mate choice and men generally preferred mates who were younger and women preferred mates that were older than them by a few years. When asked in a mate selection questionnaire what they want in a life-partner, women expressed a greater preference for someone who has greater earning potential or social status and men are more likely to offer it. These were young adults in the 20-40 year age category who could possibly be students in universities, married, living in with each other or working in mainstream society.

Another study done on mate selection to determine gender differences amongst 160 undergraduate law students from the United States revealed interesting findings. Women had higher expectations of their life-partners especially for sexual relations compared to their male counterparts (Townsend, 1993). Women who earned more were more selective about their future life-partner and were not attracted by male models with youth and good looks. Women were generally choosier than men in picking partners for romantic-sexual relationships. Male law undergraduate students were more willing to have a sexual relationship with the prettier model irrespective of her socio-economic status. As the attractiveness of the model dropped, the male undergraduate law students were more unwilling to mate with her. This prompted a group of researchers to explore the yet-to-be studied scenario in Malaysia. Thus, this study was conducted using sampling from Malaysian undergraduate students irrespective of their field of study. The objective is to examine whether there is a difference in what they want in a future mate. This has an important implication on family and marriage counseling.

Objectives:

The objective of this research is to study the basis of mate selection preferences amongst Malaysian undergraduates, as well as to determine what set of criteria or values undergraduate university students have in selecting a mate. This study is aimed to investigate whether there is a significant gender difference in mate-selection criteria.

Research Questions

The concept of mate selection amongst undergraduate students is not a new topic and has been researched and highlighted both in many Western countries as well as in South

East Asia but in Malaysia the studies on mate selection were mainly isolated studies. The following research attempts to redress the issue by answering the following questions:

1. On what basis do undergraduate university students in Malaysia choose their life-partners?
2. What are the main criteria in mate-selection by Malaysian university undergraduates?
3. Is there significant gender difference in mate selection?

Methodology

In this study to investigate the mate selection criteria among undergraduate students, a survey research design was employed to gather the necessary data and to answer the research questions formulated. The independent variable in this study was gender and the dependent variables were intimacy component, passion component, commitment component, openness to experience, conscientious, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, body shape and structure, sexual orientation and mate selection traits from Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan, 1994.

Sample

All participants recruited in this survey were undergraduate students between the ages of 20-28 years comprising all the different races, religions and sampled from the faculties of Engineering, Education, Social Sciences and Islamic Studies in a public university. The sample size was 132 students, adequate for *t*-test analyses, so that results obtained could be generalizable. Samples were purposively and randomly selected across the campus to get an accurate representation of race, religion, geographical location and socioeconomic status. The sample consisted of 44 male and 88 female undergraduate students from a public university in Malaysia.

Instruments

The instrument used in this survey study was a self-developed mate-selection inventory with information taken from various journals like Robert S. Sternberg's Triangular theory of love, Costa and McCrae's NEO-P-IR Revised 5 Factor personality test (OCEAN), traits taken from the National Study on Mate Selection by Sprecher, Hatfield, and Sullivan (1994) and physical traits taken from David Buss's (1996) work on mate selection.
	A pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of this mate selection inventory. This study sampled 29 people with 17 males, 12 females all being from faculties around the University of Malaya campus. They were all about 22 years of age fitting nicely into the undergraduate definition. The items were scored based on the 5-point Likert Scale with 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. In the pilot study, due to limitations of time, participants were recruited through simple random sampling. It was discovered that most of the students could easily understand terms in the questionnaire but took on average 20-25 minutes to complete the test instrument.

Table 1
Internal Consistency of all the Test Items from the Pilot Test

Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items
Sternberg's Love Items (15 items)	.774	.764
OCEAN-5 Factors (20 items)	.755	.756
Body Shape (5 items)	.649 (removed 1 item)	
Sexual Orientation (2 items)	.203	.207 (both items removed)
Sprecher's (23 items)	.741	.729

On determining the internal consistency of all 65 test items it was noted that 3 test items where 2 items from the sexual orientation category and 1 item from the body shape category was affecting the reliability scores and thus these 3 test items were removed from the test instrument making it a 62 item inventory. The overall reliability for this new 62-items inventory was .789.

Data Collection

Volunteer respondents were recuited through verbal communication. Data were collected from participants in the foyers, classrooms and canteen. The respondents were given about 20-35 minutes to fill up the research questionnaire as there were 62 items in the test instrument.

Results

All questionnaires were collected back and scores for all 62 test items were totaled for all 132 students and data were grouped into headings such as intimacy total, passion total and commitment total. Mean scores were calculated and a comparison of mean scores was done. SPSS was used and an independent sample *t*-test was done to determine whether there were significant gender differences in mate selection criteria.

Gender and Intimacy, Passion and Commitment

A comparison between gender and Sternberg's three components of love namely, intimacy, passion and commitment were made using *t*-tests to determine whether there were significant gender differences. Each component comprised 25 items on a 5-point Likert Scale. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Gender and Intimacy, Passion and Commitment Scores

	Gender	Mean	SD	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Intimacy	Male	22.02	2.12	0.80	158	0.42
	Female	21.70	2.52			
Passion	Male	16.17	2.89	2.62	158	0.01
	Female	14.98	2.70			
Commitment	Male	19.85	2.75	0.60	158	0.55
	Female	19.55	3.10			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There was a significant gender difference in the mean scores for the passion component of love with males scoring higher mean scores (*M* = 16.17, *SD* = 2.89) compared to female undergraduates (*M* = 14.98, *SD* = 2.70) and this difference was significant *t*(158) = 2.62, *p* < .05. No significant gender differences were observed for the components of intimacy and commitment, indicating both sexes gave high importance to both these components. For both components of intimacy and commitment, males scores higher than females. The mean score for males (*M* = 19.85, *SD* = 2.75) and the females (*M* = 19.55, *SD* = 3.10) for component of commitment. The means score for males (*M* = 22.02, *SD* = 2.12) and the females (*M* = 21.70, *SD* = 2.52) for the components of intimacy.

Gender and the Five Factor Personality Traits

Comparisons between gender and Costa's and McCrae's 5-factor personality traits were done to determine whether gender differences existed in the selection of these personality traits in human mating preferences. The five traits are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. There were 4 items for each trait on a 5-point Likert Scale. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Gender and the 5-Factor Personality Traits

Gender	Gender	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig (2-tailed)
Openness to Experience	Male	13.78	2.26	0.11	158	0.92
	Female	13.74	2.02			
Conscientiousness	Male	15.29	1.86	0.57	158	0.57
	Female	15.10	2.10			
Extroversion	Male	14.19	2.49	1.33	158	0.19
	Female	13.67	2.29	2.29		
Agreeableness	Male	16.19	2.09	2.36	158	0.02
	Female	15.42	1.94			
Neuroticism	Male	14.17	2.29	-0.03	158	0.98
	Female	14.18	1.86			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There was a significant gender difference in the mean score of the agreeableness personality trait with male undergraduates having higher mean score ($M = 16.19$, $SD = 2.09$) than their female counterparts ($M = 15.42$, $SD = 1.94$) and the results were significant $t(158) = 2.36$, $p < .05$ level of significance.

There were no significant gender differences for all the other 4 personality traits of conscientiousness, neuroticism, extroversion and openness to experience, with both sexes giving equal importance to all these traits. For the component of openness to experience, conscientiousness and extroversion, males score higher than females. For the openness to experience, mean scores for males ($M = 13.78$, $SD = 2.26$) and for the females ($M = 13.74$, $SD = 2.02$). Males have a mean of 15.29 ($SD = 1.86$) and the females have a means of 15.10 ($SD = 2.10$) for the components of conscientiousness. Meanwhile, mean scores for males ($M = 14.19$, $SD = 2.49$) and females ($M = 13.67$, $SD = 2.29$) in the components of extroversion. Females have a higher mean scores ($M = 14.18$, $SD = 1.86$) for the components of neuroticism compared males ($M = 14.17$, $SD = 2.29$).

Gender and Body Shape and Size Factors

Comparisons between gender and David Buss's (1996) body shape and size factors were made to determine whether there were gender differences in the selection of these physical factors in human mating preferences among Malaysian undergraduates. There was only one item for each of the physical factors measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Gender and Body Shape and Size Factors

	Gender	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig (2-tailed)
Mate same size	Male	2.78	1.08	-0.36	158	.72
	Female	2.83	0.76			
Mate big hips	Male	2.71	1.08	1.77	158	.08
	Female	2.45	0.74			
Mate small waist	Male	2.91	1.00	1.95	158	.05
	Female	2.64	0.74			
Mate symmetrical	Male	3.24	0.97	2.23	158	.03
bone structure	Female	2.94	0.75			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

Table 4 shows that there was a significant gender difference in the categories of mate with symmetrical bone structure $t(158) = 2.23$, $p < .05$, and mate with small waist size $t(158) = 1.95$, $p < .05$ at the .05 level of significance with male undergraduates having higher mean scores compared to their female counterparts. Male undergraduates having

higher mean score (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 0.97) than their female counterparts (*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.75) in the categories of mate with symmetrical bone structure and the means score of (*M* = 2.91, *SD* = 1.00) than their female counterparts (*M* = 2.64, *SD* = 0.74) in the categories of mate with small waist. There were no significant gender differences in the other categories of mate with same size and big hips with equal importance given by both sexes to these categories.

Gender and Age Related Factors

This part compares gender and Sprecher, Hatfield, and Sullivan's (1994) age-related factors to determine whether there were gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preference. The results are as displayed in Table 5.

Table 5
Gender and Age Related Factors

	Gender	Mean	*SD*	*t*	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Age not important	Male	2.76	1.22	-1.13	158	.26
	Female	2.98	1.14			
Older by 8 years	Male	2.03	1.11	-1.98	158	.27
	Female	2.35	0.87			
Younger by 8 years	Male	2.66	1.24	4.51	158	.00
	Female	1.92	0.83			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There was a significant gender difference in the younger by 8 years category where male undergraduates had higher mean scores (*M* = 2.66, *SD* = 1.24) compared to their female counterparts (*M* = 1.92, *SD* = 0.83) and these results were significant *t*(158) = 4.51, *p* < .05. There were no significant gender differences in the categories of age not being important and older by 8 years, indicating no significant differentiation by both sexes. Thus it can be seen that male undergraduates preferred their future mate to be younger than themselves as compared to their female counterparts where age was taken to be not important in mate selection.

Gender and Attractiveness Related Factors

This section compares gender and Sprecher, Hatfield, and Sullivan's (1994) attractiveness-related factors to determine whether or not there were gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Gender and Attractiveness Related Factors

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Attracted to good looks	Male	3.88	0.93	2.38	158	.02
	Female	3.51	0.99			
Want good looking mate	Male	3.44	0.93	2.30	158	.02
	Female	3.10	0.89			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There were gender differences in both categories of being attracted to good looks $t(158) = 2.38$, $p < .05$ and wanting a good looking mate $t(158) = 2.30$, $p < .05$. Male undergraduates ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.93$) had higher mean scores for the categories of attracted to good looks compared to their female counterparts ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.99$) and males had a mean score of 3.44 ($SD = 0.93$) compared to females with the mean score of 3.10 ($SD = 0.89$) in the categories of wanting a good looking mate.

Gender and Religious Factor Traits

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) religious factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 7
Gender and Religious Factor Traits

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Prefer same religion	Male	4.08	0.88	-1.48	158	0.14
	Female	4.30	0.88			
Not marry other religions	Male	3.46	1.25	-0.41	158	0.68
	Female	3.53	1.09			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There were no significant gender differences in both categories of preferring to marry someone of the same religion and not wanting to marry someone from another religion. This indicates that male and female undergraduates were similar in preferring to marry someone from their religion and not wanting a person from a different religious background.

Gender and Ethnic Factor Traits

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) ethnic factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were signifcant gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 8
Gender and Ethnic Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Prefer mate own race	Male	3.63	1.08	0.15	158	.88
	Female	3.60	0.89			
Prefer mate from different race	Male	2.95	1.14	0.37	158	.72
	Female	2.89	0.86			
Race not factor in mate choice Male	3.17	1.29	0.33	158	.74	
	Female	3.11	0.99			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

There were no significant gender differences in all three categories indicating that both male and female undergraduates were similar in their preference for people of their own racial origin and not prefering a mate from a different racial origin. The category of race not being a factor in mate selection had intermediate scores possibly indicating that there is some racial harmony and acceptance by students of different ethnic backgrounds.

Gender and Educational Factors

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) educational factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were significant gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 9
Gender and Educational Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Prefer more educated mate	Male	3.05	0.90	-4.42	158	.00
	Female	3.69	0.88			
Prefer less educated mate	Male	3.00	0.93	4.50	158	.00
	Female	2.29	0.86			
Educational level not important	Male	3.08	1.21	2.45	158	.02
	Female	2.62	1.11			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

It was shown here that there was a significant gender difference in all three categories of preferring a more educated mate $t(158) = -4.42$, $p < .05$, educational status being unimportant $t(158) = 2.45$, $p < .05$ and preferring a less educated mate $t(158) = 4.50$, $p < .05$ level of significance. It was interesting that males in two categories were shown to have higher mean scores than females and only in the category of preferring a more educated mate did females score higher means than males. Males having higher mean of 3.00 ($SD = 0.93$) compared to females having a mean of 2.29 ($SD = 0.86$) in the categories of preferring a less educated mate and for the categories of educational level not important, males having a mean of 3.08 ($SD = 1.21$) and females having a mean of 2.62 ($SD = 1.11$). On the other hand, females scored higher in the mean scores ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.88$) compared to males ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.90$) in the categories of preferring a more educated mate.

Gender and Marital Factors

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) marital factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were significant gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 10
Gender and Mean Marital Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Past divorce not important	Male	2.80	1.05	0.38	158	.70
	Female	2.73	1.00			
Rule out divorced people	Male	2.93	0.91	0.01	158	.99
	Female	2.93	0.85			
Accept people with children	Male	3.02	0.97	2.90	158	.00
	Female	2.60	0.80			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

It is shown here that there was a significant gender difference in the category of accepting people with children as life partners with male undergraduates having higher mean scores ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.97$) compared to females ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(158) = 2.90$, $p < .05$ at the .05 level of significance. For the other two categories there were no gender differences with both males and females giving equal importance to past divorce as unimportant and ruling out divorced people as mates.

Gender and Employment Factors

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) employment factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 11
Gender and Mean Employment Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Marry someone unemployed	Male	3.24	0.99	9.53	158	.00
	Female	1.86	0.81			
Employment status not important	Male	3.32	0.99	8.41	158	.00
	Female	2.06	0.87			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

It is shown here that there were significant gender differences in both categories of marrying someone unemployed $t(158) = 9.53$, $p < .05$ and employment status not being important $t(158) = 8.41$, $p < .05$ with male undergraduates having higher mean scores compared to females. For both of these categories, males (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 0.99) scored higher than females (*M* = 1.86, *SD* = 0.81) in the categories of marrying someone unemployed and in the categories of employment status not important, males having a mean score of 3.32 (*SD* = 0.99) compared with females with the mean score of 2.06 (*SD* = 0.87). It is seen that male undergraduates were more accepting in marrying an unemployed person and viewing employment status as not important compared to their female counterparts.

Gender and Earning Capacity Factors

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) earning capacity factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were significant gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 12
Gender and Mean Earning Capacity Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Prefer mate earned more	Male	3.17	0.97	-4.16	158	.00
	Female	3.78	0.86			
Not mind if mate earned less	Male	3.73	0.81	6.34	158	.00
	Female	2.81	0.92			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

It is shown here that there was a significant gender difference in both categories of preferring to marry a person who earned more $t(158) = -4.16$, $p < .05$ and not bothered if mate earned less than them $t(158) = 6.34$, $p < .05$. From the above results female undergraduates were found to be more materialistic preferring their mate to be earning more than them (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 0.86). Male undergraduates were found not to mind marrying someone who earned less than them (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 0.81) suggesting they preferred to work and be the breadwinner in the family.

Gender and Career Related Factors

Gender and Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan's (1994) career related factor traits mean scores were compared to determine whether there were gender differences in the selection of these factors in human mating preferences.

Table 13
Gender and Mean Career Related Factors in Mate Selection

	Gender	Mean	*SD*	*t*	df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Choose mate successful career	Male	3.22	0.84	-5.34	158	.00
	Female	3.91	0.76			
Successful career not important	Male	3.49	0.99	5.42	158	.00
	Female	2.64	0.93			
Job prestige not a factor	Male	3.54	1.02	3.21	158	.00
	Female	3.04	0.92			

n (male) = 44, *n* (female) = 88

It is shown here that there was a significant gender difference in all three categories of preferring a more successful mate $t(158) = -5.34$, $p < .05$, job prestige not being a factor $t(158) = 3.21$, $p < .05$ and a successful career being unimportant $t(158) = 5.42$, $p < .05$ in mate choice. Males ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.99$) scored higher in mean scores of categories of successful career not important compared to female ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.93$) and for the categories of job prestige not a factor, males ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.02$) scored higher compared females ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.92$). On the other hand, females ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.76$) scored higher in the categories of choosing mate with successful career compared to males ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.84$). From the above results it was seen that for male undergraduates, their life-partner need not have a successful career nor job prestige. However, female students wanted a mate with a successful career as shown by the mean scores.

Discussion

According to Sternberg (1986), people have three components of love which are intimacy, passion and commitment. In young adults, intimacy and passion are said to have an interactive effect; in this study both were important for male undergraduates in mate selection. However it was not the same with female undergraduates who seemed to be operating more on a cognitive perspective giving importance only to intimacy and commitment components. This research study also found that males preferred a more agreeable partner which is similar to previous research where females are supposed to be agreeable, conscientious and males extraverted and open to ideas. This is based on the evolutionary model where women are supposed to be quiet and subservient to their husband who is to be dominant.

Besides, this was in support of previous research that men and women would attach a greater importance to physical traits such as facial attractiveness, thinness, narrow waist size and youth. For men physical traits in women indicate a woman's fertility status and looks for women indicate the health and success state of the man concerned (Hamida, Mineka, and Bailey 1998). Previous research by Akbar Husain and Firdous (1990) in showed that male and female undergraduates had significantly higher liking for high and medium attractive mates respectively. Men more often than women preferred their mates to be physically attractive.

The research finding showed that there was a significant gender difference in the category of younger than 8 years where males had higher mean scores than female undergraduate students. According to the research done by Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan (1994), men were more willing to marry someone who was younger than them by 5 years or more. This goes hand in hand with the evolutionary and socio cultural perspective theories which predicts that evolutionary forces predict that men would prefer mates that signal their reproductive value like youth and good looks. Women would prefer traits that show that these men can provide for the family like good job and ambition (Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan 1994).

There was a significant gender difference with males scoring higher means than females in the categories of being attracted to good looks and wanting a good looking mate. This again was significant with the research done by Sprecher, Hatfield, and Sullivan where men would go for traits like youth and good looks whereas females would prefer men with ambition and high earning capacity. Hence, this may suggest that women should groom well themselve in order to attract the men.

Besides, there was no significant gender difference with both males and females in preferring a mate of their own race and disliking the concept of marrying a person from another racial background. In general, a person's race influences his or her life in many aspects including beliefs, values and upbringing of children. Hence, similarly race mate is more likely to have common values, goals and aspirations which lead to quality enhancement of their love relationship.

Male undergraduates preferred a mate who was less educated than themselves and education was not a factor in mate selection. Females preferred mates who were more educated than themselves. Besides, males were more willing to marry someone who was unemployed compared to females and males did not take employment status as a criteria for mate selection There was a significant gender difference in that females preferred their mate to earn more than themselves and males did not mind if their mate earned less than them. This was in support of past research where women would go for traits such as good job and successful career which indicates the potential for resource acquisition (Sprecher, Hatfield and Sullivan 1994). This may link to the unreadiness from educated females to accept mates with lower education and lower career prospect compared to educated males.

Futhermore, there was a significant gender difference here in that males were more willing to accept people with children from past marriages in comparison to females who were more unwilling to do so. This was in contrast to past research in that it was women who were consistently more willing than men to marry someone who had been married before or has children (South 1991). From the findings, educated males seem to take the stand to be more open in their choices of mate selection whereas educated females narrowed down their choices. Morever, females outnumber males at most

universites in Malaysia and the ratio of female to male students is 2 to 1. All these factors may contributing to the increase of unmarried, single educated females.

Counselling Implication

There is a vast literature on mate-selection studies particularly in the west with regard to gender differences. However there has not been any significant study done in Malaysia on gender differences in mate selection criteria. These results serve as a source of information that can be utilized in family and marriage counseling. The counselor can use the information obtained in this study to help foster closer relationship as this information can be used to help young people gain a better understanding into why they think and feel this way about each other.

Conclusion

The results of this study have revealed the gender differences in Malaysian undergraduates' mate selection criteria. The findings showed significant gender differences in mate preferences. These results support past research that gender differences in mate selection is an evolutionary process. However, further studies need to be replicated with larger sample size to make it generalizable to the Malaysian undergraduate population.

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Notes

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