

The Criteria of Love: Trait Desirability of Filipino Youth on Mate Selection

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Abstract - *In choosing a life partner, making a 'good match' is what everyone hopes for. Usually we have the habit of thinking on how many potential mates are sitting around? And with that, how many would you be attracted and attached to, and how many person you'd probably never date? To find out the relevance of the claim, this quantitative study was designed to know the desirable traits being considered by the Filipino youth in selecting their potential mate, and how male and female differ in their preferences. A total of 400 Filipino university students with the age of 15 to 23 years old participated in the study through self-administered survey. General findings revealed that over the 6 trait dimensions: Physical Traits; Social Traits; Personality Traits; Skills; Achievements; and Spiritual Traits—male and female have significant difference in their trait preference in choosing their mate. Though there are traits that fall under the same degree of importance, women still have higher preference in mate selection criteria as compared to men in all traits. Overall, the trait preferences of the respondents were critically influenced by their sex. Nevertheless, this study clearly suggests the similarity that men and women put importance to traits which can help them develop and maintain an intimate and strong interpersonal relationship with their mate.*

Keywords: *mate selection criteria, trait desirability, sex differences, Filipino youth, Polytechnic University of the Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

During the young adulthood phase, we tend to experience frequent changes and desire for exploration about many aspects of life such as home, family, resources, school, work, and role [1]. Besides, young adulthood is the stage where we become much involved into sexually maturing body and feelings. Failure to sustain a romantic relationship at this stage might lead to hinder the development, and also can have serious negative implications on well-being.

Selecting a mate is one of the most important decisions in our life. It is widely believed that the formation and maintenance of serious, intimate relationships is a major developmental task during the stage of young adulthood [1]. For in the human society, the long-term bond of women and men end up and being formalized in marriages. In choosing a mate, remember that it is our life and we are responsible enough for it. An individual should analyze himself to know and be clear based on the

needs and values about what kind of life he/she ideally want and do what's best to be achieve it. This includes knowing what personality characteristics and values we want our partner to have [2]. And in this case, men and women have different trait preferences in choosing their potential partners.

There are two perspectives which explain the differentiation of male and female in human mate selection behavior: the Evolutionary Psychology perspective and the Socio Structural perspective.

Stated on the Evolutionary Psychology perspective, both sexes prefer partners who are successfully capable in terms of reproduction. This refers to the ability of bearing and nurturing a child, and raising a family [3]. However, the Socio Structural perspective explains that the different roles of men and women in the society also take place in choosing their potential mates [4].

These perspectives have been useful in interpreting and explaining the sex differences and human behavior in selecting mates. It helped in predicting the desirable traits for both sexes.

Researchers of mate selection have tried to assess what people want or consider in a mate than what they are willing to accept. In most studies, a woman's physical attractiveness, being healthy, and youthfulness were highly valued by men [5, 6]. The more attractive a woman is, the higher her chance not only to get married, but also being married to a man with high socio-economic status [7]. These characteristics directly refer to a woman's reproductive viability. Moreover, Buss [5] argued that men prefer partners who were younger than them. A woman's fertility is strongly related to her age, but not as to how much younger she is than her partner.

On the other hand, studies revealed that women strongly prefer partners who have good social status, good economic capability and a man who have strong commitment to family [5, 8, 9]. Hence, what women look for her partner is his willingness to fully exert his abilities in order to provide resources for the survival of their children. Likewise, it was concluded that when it comes to selecting a partner, women did not directly refer to the mate's material wealth. Instead, females are much concerned on the man's readiness to share his resources [10], [11]. Further, traits which indicate a man's ability to protect his spouse and his offspring (such as genetic health, physical attractiveness, and scent) were considered as important criteria by women.

The authors were interested to know the preferences of the Filipino youth in their choice of a possible mate. Understanding the modern Filipino youths' desired traits in a potential mate will explain a part on how the Philippines' society changes. The results of similar studies varied in each country or culture with each passing time. Former studies did not indicate whether the results of the mate selection criteria in other context are important to this period or if they have ever been important, also whether these criteria are applicable in the Philippines.

Results of this study would be most significant to the Filipino men and women, not only to give an idea on the preferences of the opposite sex in selecting a partner, but also to encourage Filipino men and women to give proper attention in their mate selection because it is one of the most important and crucial decisions people make in their lifetime. Furthermore,

the study will be a help to the counselors in educating and encouraging the youth to be more cautious in choosing their mate, because engaging in a serious relationship at an early age may contribute to the increasing number of teenage pregnancy or marrying as a teenager could be the highest risk of separation [12].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the desirable traits of male and female Filipino youth through the students of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in the mate selection criteria. Moreover, to determine the differences of trait preferences of male and female respondents as to their sex. Additionally, this study was able to find out the respondents' socio-demographic profile.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research method. The study utilized the survey method to gather the data needed to answer the research problem and the objectives of the study.

Sample and sampling technique. The respondents were the students of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila that were enrolled in 1st Semester of the Academic Year 2015-2016. The respondents were randomly selected from 13 different colleges of the university. They were consisted of 153 male students and 243 female students within the age bracket of 15 to 23 years old.

Measures. Data Collection was done through the aid of questionnaire, which was adapted [10] and revised by the researchers containing 3 sections. The first part was about personal data, second part was an evaluative section of respondents' relationship and the third part elicited information on characteristics most desired by the students in their potential mate.

Procedure. The questionnaire were administered and collected in each college by the researchers using random sampling.

Statistics. The researchers used percentage and frequency to present the descriptive data while T- test for the independent means was utilized to test if there was a significant difference in the trait desirability of the respondents in terms of their sex difference.

The given composite scoring was used to interpret the result of the study: Very Important (VI) 4.51–5.00; Important (I) 3.51–4.50; Less Important (LI) 2.51–3.50; Not Important at all (NI) 1.51–2.50; Don't Care (DC) 1.00–1.50

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study shows the difference of male and female university students in their trait preference in choosing their potential mate. Desirable traits can be a result of good communication between men and women that forms equilibrium within the society. Thus, the desired traits chosen by male and female respondents in the mate selection criteria were the product of successive communicating between themselves and with their environment, which maintains the balance in the social system.

Table 1. Respondents' Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	157	39.3
Female	243	60.8
Total	400	100

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentile distribution of the respondents' sex. Majority of the respondents are female (60.8%) compared to male with 39.3%. The researchers did not consider the sexes of the entire population that is why there is an unequal number of respondents, male with 39.3 % and female with 60.8 % (female greater than male in sample) though it was almost close to the actual unequal ratio of male to female students in the university since there are more female students (24,396) than male students (16,938) enrolled on the 13 different colleges of the University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Overall, the university has a total number of 41,334 enrolled students for the 1st semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

The study was conducted in PUP Manila since it is a well-known state university and the largest in terms of student population in the Philippines [13].

Table 2. Physical Trait Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Physical Traits	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Is good looking	3.57	I	3.54	I
Has good taste in clothes	3.39	LI	3.63	I
Taller than me	2.36	NI	4.34	I
Muscular/Sexy	2.97	LI	3.14	LI
Has healthy teeth	3.86	I	3.96	I
Has fair complexion	3.26	LI	3.31	LI
Is neat and clean	4.51	VI	4.73	VI
\bar{x}	3.42	LI	3.81	I

On the Physical trait preference of the Male and Female University students as shown in Table 2, both sexes have the same verbal interpretation in almost all physical traits except that it is also important to the female respondents if their mate has good taste in clothes and is taller than them, in contrast to males that say it is less important if their mate has good taste in clothes and not important at all if their mate is taller than them.

It can be inferred in the results that male respondents give lesser significance to the Physical traits than females do. The conclusion is based on its grand weighted mean of 3.42 under the verbal interpretation of —Less Important that is lesser than the Female respondents with 3.81 mean under —Important. This contradicted that Men value physical attractiveness in a partner than women do [14, 15, 16].

Both men and women prefer better-looking partners [17]. But men displayed consistent and stronger preference for better-looking partners in which this study rejected since females has higher regards to this matter. However, the statistical difference of men and women for a better-looking partner is only modest. Another one is Height. Women prefer men who are taller than they are and in contrast, men prefer women who are smaller than they are. The result proves that Physical health, body structure, weight, dentition (teeth), height, and complexion are some of the many important factors in mate selection [12].

The Social Role theory stated that natural physical differences between male and female lead to other expectations aside from the cultural and societal differences and these can result to gender stereotyping and one of the influencing factors on the societal position of an individual [4].

Table 3. Social Trait Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Social Traits	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Lively	4.26	I	4.28	I
Communicative	4.37	I	4.54	VI
Sociable (extrovert)	3.79	I	3.95	I
Has sense of humor	4.43	I	4.64	VI
Popular among the opposite sex	2.61	I	2.75	LI
Faithful	4.88	VI	4.9	VI
Kind	4.68	VI	4.74	VI
Has similar native dialect	2.72	LI	2.99	LI
Has similar political ideology	2.8	LI	3.09	LI
\bar{x}	3.84	I	3.99	I

Male (3.84) and female (3.99) respondents show that Social traits were important for both sexes. Though looking at the means, it shows that females give higher importance to all social traits compared to males even though they fall under the same interval (3.51-4.50) since females have higher mean value.

Being friendly and socially active can increase the probability of finding the right partner and you will decrease the probability if you isolate yourself [2]. In addition, kindness is one of the top three characteristics that men and women preferred consensually [14].

Furthermore, a study in Serbia showed that both sexes highly prefer the traits such as being faithful—that is most preferred social trait for sexes, sincerity, tenderness, reliability, passion and carefulness. In contrast, the most undesirable traits for both sexes are those traits that have opposite implications to those they chose as desirable (for instance, conceitedness, selfishness, insecurity, aggressiveness, shyness) [10].

Table 4. Personality Trait Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Personality Traits	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Emotionally stable	4.17	I	4.45	I
Desire for home and children	4.23	I	4.63	VI
Confident	4.39	I	4.5	I
Sincere	4.68	VI	4.9	VI
Caring	4.75	VI	4.84	VI
Serious	4.38	I	4.65	VI
Intelligent	4.01	I	4.21	I
Independent	3.87	I	4.51	VI
Patient	4.5	I	4.81	VI
Courageous	4.32	I	4.62	VI
Dominant	3.09	LI	3.58	I
Passionate	4.27	I	4.48	I
Cheerful	4.41	I	4.4	I
Responsible	4.72	VI	4.92	VI
Trustworthy	4.78	VI	4.92	VI
Thrifty	3.93	I	4.15	I
Ambitious	3.85	I	4.15	I
Open-minded	4.55	VI	4.75	VI
Understanding	4.82	VI	4.88	VI
\bar{x}	4.3	I	4.54	VI

Results shows that male and female are both concerned with their potential mate's capability of being trustworthy. This trait can be directly referred as a factor for sexual fidelity. Previous study found out

that men have stronger preference for sexual fidelity more than women, presumably because males experience adultery much more than females do [9]. But in this study, both men and women prefer the trustworthy trait, which can refer to bring sexual fidelity on a relationship.

On the other hand, both sexes did not place too much importance on the trait being dominant, but still considered as an important factor. Generally, both men and women put high value to the potential mate's personality characteristics—it is a component for the both sexes' hope of having a partner whom they can develop an emotionally satisfying and intimate relationship with [18].

Furthermore, female have much favor to the personality traits which directly refers to the mate's capacity of providing resources and having control over it [15]. However, it is argued that men have high preference on personality characteristics which they can nurture a compatible relationship with [18]. Therefore, the difference of both sexes' preference is based on how they make certain attributes meaningful in their criteria of one's personality.

Table 5. Skills Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Skills	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Has Etiquette	4.29	I	4.45	I
Ability to Produce a child	3.99	I	3.99	I
Artistic	3.55	I	3.74	I
Athletic	3.17	LI	3.45	LI
Leadership skills	3.58	I	3.93	I
Ability to do household tasks	4.2	I	4.48	I
\bar{x}	3.8	I	4	I

Male respondents preferred a mate who has Etiquette the most followed by the Ability to do household task. On the other hand, the most important trait desired by female respondents in the Skills dimension is the Ability to do household tasks seconded by Etiquette. The two sexes put importance on both traits but with a different level. Whereas, both sexes have less preference on an Athletic mate.

Previous study associated the good cook or good housekeeper with the word Commitment. It shows that a woman being a good housekeeper expresses a good deal of commitment to her partner. Thus, men

find it desirable if women know how to deal with housekeeping and likewise, male respondents put importance to it because it shows that females are much committed to them [7].

However, the results above contradicted the result of a study [19] which states that the men's ability to household task is unimportant to women. Meanwhile, the result of the table above said otherwise. The female respondents of PUP Manila desired a mate who is able to do household tasks. Therefore, for female respondents of this study, gender roles are changing and flexible.

Additionally, Alice Eagly argued that cultural and social norms dictate the distinctions between male and female roles. We could infer, that men perceived having etiquette and the ability to do household tasks as women's role in the society. Women were viewed as the ones who should have the role of being professional in her actions (etiquette) and skilled in household tasks [20].

Table 6. Achievements Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Achievements	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Has similar educational background	3.24	LI	3.65	I
Is well educated	4.08	I	4.49	I
Has high income	3.02	LI	3.82	I
Is financially stable	3.47	LI	4.36	I
Is successful in job	3.62	I	4.21	I
Is popular in his/her career	2.88	LI	3.26	LI
Receives awards and recognitions	2.9	LI	3.15	LI
\bar{x}	3.32	LI	3.85	I

Both sexes preferred someone who is well educated. Male respondents subsequently prefer a mate who is successful in her job, on the other hand, female respondents subsequently prefer a mate who is financially stable. As an overall, achievements are less important for male than female. This proves previous study and showed that women significantly favored education and the capacity of men to earn money [14].

In contrast, men are perceived as ambitious, assertive, have high-paying job and acquiring resources. They are usually the providers economically. Thus, women preferred men who are financially stable because according to a study [21],

potential mates who are good financial prospects have a clear sign of acquiring resources together with industriousness and hard work.

Feingold [21] reported that women regarded socio-economic status more important than men because they prefer partners that will take care of them financially. Men on the other hand preferred women who are less educated and less earning than them which is contradicted by our results which revealed that male students of PUP Manila preferred females nowadays who can provide for themselves [22].

In another study by Westman [21], among university students financial success was the most important variable women seek in their potential partners. Women said to have less power and less access to resources in the society compared to men that possessed more power, dominance and stability. Women in return, seek a mate that can fill the insufficiency in their role in the society [14].

It is said that men have little preference in partners with successful job than females do [17]. Likewise, it is also found that men preferred women who has no steady job, who had less earning, and who had less education [22].

These claims are opposite with the result of table above, which reported that male respondents of PUP Sta. Mesa, Manila have a high preference with women who are well-educated and successful in their job. Education can be a signal for earnings potential [22] and Success in job is directly referring to a mate's material wealth [10]. Therefore, male respondents are indirectly looking for their mate's potential in earning, wealth and status.

Therefore, as an overall assessment, male university students give lesser importance on the achievement traits of their mate than females do.

Table 7. Spiritual Trait Preference of Male and Female Respondents

Spiritual Traits	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Values Purity	4.33	I	4.58	VI
God fearing	4.49	I	4.85	VI
Prayerful	4.32	I	4.71	VI
Similar religious background	3.62	I	4.09	I
Attends church activities	3.76	I	4.29	I
\bar{x}	4.1	I	4.5	I

Both men and women put high preference on a partner who values the purity of a person and oneself, is God-fearing, and prayerful.

These results reflected Hatfield's study [23] that cultural values is an important factor to affect one's mate preferences. For instance, Filipinos put so much worth of their religious beliefs.

According to Russell's [24] article, Philippines is mainly the only one Christian country in the Asia, where approximately 85% are Roman Catholic, 10% are Islam, and the rest of the 5% consisting of other religions. Also, Filipinos practice their religious beliefs so well, that they have variety of forms of Christianity which was exercised well today. Therefore, both men and women pay much importance on spiritual characteristics of a person, even when it comes on their mate selection.

Therefore, both men and women pay much importance on spiritual characteristics of a person, even when it comes on their mate selection. As Maliki [12] stated in her study, some people are still very particular when it comes to a potential mate's demographic profile. Some prefer those who practice the same religion as theirs.

This can be inferred that by some means, people differ on how much they consider the religion as a factor in their mate selection.

Table 8. Summary of Trait Dimensions of Male and Female Respondents

Trait Dimensions	Male		Female	
	\bar{x}	Int.	\bar{x}	Int.
Physical	3.42	LI	3.81	I
Social	3.84	I	3.99	I
Personality	4.3	I	4.54	VI
Skills	3.8	I	4	I
Achievements	3.32	LI	3.85	I
Spiritual	4.1	I	4.5	I

The table 8 shows the summary of the six (6) trait dimensions in mate selection criteria with its weighted mean and corresponding verbal interpretations. The higher the mean of each trait means the higher the level of importance given by the respondents.

Overall, the result shows that both male and female respondents give the highest importance to their mates' personality traits followed by spiritual traits, while achievement traits, for male and physical traits, for female is the least they prefer. In all six (6) trait dimensions based on their means, female

university students consistently have higher trait preference in selecting their mate compared to males.

This reflected the study of Maliki that good character trait such as supportiveness, emotional characteristics, and personality traits predominate physical attractiveness [12]. This is for the reason of a person who possesses good characteristics will bring better marriage than those of who are just physically attractive. Furthermore, people with good characteristics are more adaptable and much acceptable in a family. Another factor that considered as important is religion. Marriage partners should have the same beliefs in religion since it can be very disruptive in their marriage life if they differ in religious beliefs. On the other hand, being in the same religion can bind the relationship of married couple.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As a conclusion, both men and women put importance to Physical traits. As for men, good-looking women were attractive for them because it is a possible indicator of good reproductive health. Meanwhile, women perceived good appearance as man's likeliness of having better opportunities in job and a lesser chance of having an illness.

On the other hand, in the preference of Social traits, it can be inferred that men and women prefer a mate possessing qualities which they can develop a healthy relationship when it comes to communication and socializing.

When it comes to Personality traits, it was revealed that men and women have high preference on a partner which is trustworthy. Being understanding, caring, responsible and sincere are also considered. These Personality traits are pointers of a healthy and a faithful relationship that is why they are the essentials building a strong and intimate relationship with the potential mate.

Under Skills, both men and women desired a mate who has etiquette and has the ability to do a household task or chores. Both skills show being responsible and it said to maintain a happy relationship and marriage.

When talking about a mate's achievement, male find it desirable if their partners are well-educated and who are successful in their job. Further, women seek partners who are well-educated, and at the same time, a partner who is financially stable. These results are quite surprising, as stated from the previous studies, men favor partners who have lower educational profile than them. However, as for the women, they

consider potential mates who have the qualities of providing resources for the household.

And lastly, as to their spiritual traits both male and female respondents prefer a mate who values purity, God-fearing and prayerful. This result is affected by cultural values because it can affect a person's choice of a mate; and religion, as a part of the cultural values, has the capability to bind the marriage life of a couple. Furthermore, religion is a big part of the Filipino culture, therefore having these spiritual characteristics is highly considered in the mate selection of Filipino men and women.

The study would like to recommend for both male and female Filipino youth to put importance and effort in valuing their Physical, Social, Personality and Spiritual traits and also, their skills and achievements. Nowadays, male and female Filipino youth want to have the most and the best out of their potential mates and that is why Filipino youth should be competitive to be eligible in Human mate selection process.

Furthermore, researchers would like to recommend an extended socio-demographic profile that could affect the result of the study in terms of school (public/private), order in the family (oldest/middle/youngest), if the respondent is in a broken family or not and lastly, socio-economic status.

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