

# Positive relationship between physical attractiveness and intimate relationships



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In daily life, it is common that people somewhat have a greater preference towards beautiful and attractive things and objects. For example, people are willing to pay for what they deemed as beautiful such as garment and clothes. Other than that, celebrities are required to have good and pleasant looking in order to attract the audience. Since attractiveness play an important role in daily life, could it be a crucial criteria in an intimate relationship? Nowadays, most of the people from all walks of life experience the gradual processes of having a crush on somebody, engaging into an intimate relationship, and eventually getting married with their loved one. However, some relationships might turn out to be broken relationships which are common in the society. There is a combination of different components that constitute to an intimate relationship. However, what would be the crucial one in maintaining a positive intimate relationship? McNulty, Neff and Karney (2008) stated that physical attractiveness play an important role on developing an intimate relationship. Physical attractiveness is beneficial for people to maintain a positive intimate relationship.

#### Definition

Physical attractiveness is determined by good and pleasant physical features which consist of comprising attractive facial features, body shape, hair style, appropriate height, appropriate weight, and self-care. Masculinity is a potent determinant for male attractiveness while femininity is an important determinant for female attractiveness (Mehrabian & Blum, 1997). Intimate relationship is defined as a close and warm interpersonal relationship. It can be a dating relationship, courting relationship, marriage, friendship as well as relationship between family members. The relationship of romantic dyad will

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be the main concern is the in this paper. In an intimate relationship, partners are emotionally attached and dependent on each other. They are bonded together they loved each other. Physical attractiveness may indeed serves as an important determinant of relationship status. (Gortmaker, Must, Perrin, Sobol & Dietz, 1993). The romantic relationships regarding physically attractiveness of an individual are reach the contentment of one another in a relationship.

### Love-is-blind-bias

There is a positive illusion in intimate relationships namely love-is-blind-bias. Both men and women have a tendency to perceive their romantic partner as more physically attractive than themselves. The impact of love-is-blind-bias is stronger during the initial stage of an intimate relationship. It can help to maintain the new relationship as new relationship is somewhat more fragile than a long term established relationship. Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek, & Furnham (2009) supported that love-is-blind-bias does exist in romantic relationship. This bias is beneficial as it enhances self-esteem and maintains the satisfaction of a romantic relationship. The love-is-blind-bias tends to cease as the romantic dyads know each other better in a long term relationship. Anyhow, some of the individuals are not affected by this bias in their relationship. In the study, extroverts were found to be more likely to have love-is-blind bias. This is because extraverts are more sociable and hence they tend to perceive others positively.

### Equity Theory and Matching Hypothesis

Equity theory and matching hypothesis suggested that both men and women tend to find a mate that are of the same attractive level with them. Romantic dyads that are similar in physical attractiveness are predicted to have a better relationship. Byrne (1961) stated that there might be some risks associating with dissimilarity in physical attractiveness between partners as people tend to find partner who is match with their physical attractiveness level. The less attractive partner will constantly worrying his or her partner that he or she will get a better potential mate and exit from their current relationship. Attractive individuals are normally surrounded with more opposite-sexed friends and thus their partner will have lower sense of security in their relationship (White, 1980). Moreover, the less attractive partner have to compensate their partner as they are considered as over benefited in the relationship. The compensation could be having a better financial ability, higher agreement or putting greater efforts in the relationship. A successful negotiation will lead them to have a good and satisfying relationship. On the other hand, if they failed to negotiate, the relationship might end up with broken relationship. To avoid from these problems, some people prefer to choose a mate who has the similar physical attractiveness level with them. Anyhow, a study conducted on middle-age couples does not support that the equity theory is correlated with marital adjustment (McNulty, Neff & Karney, 2008). The satisfaction and behaviors of both spouses were not affected although there is dissimilarity of physical attractiveness.

In America, Whites are normally ranked higher than Blacks and the racial discrimination is much more extreme in the past society. Although they are

claimed to have different status, yet there are existence of Black-White relationship. The intimate relationship between Blacks and Whites hence aroused the interest of researchers. Most of them wanted to find out the exchange variables in Black-White relationship as Whites is ranked higher. The exchange variables would be the variables that attracted Whites into an intimate relationship with Blacks. Murstein, Merighi & Malloy (1989) studied about the Black-White relationship in which physical attractiveness serve as the exchange variable. Twenty interracial couples which consist of black men with white women and white men with black women were recruited for the study. The subjects were required to complete a survey form and rate the attractiveness of themselves as well as their partner. The researchers hypothesized that Black partner would have higher level of physical attractiveness compared to White partner. The hypothesis was partially supported as Black men are reported to be more attractive than their white partner but Black women are reported as less attractive than their white partner. However, the sample size of this study was relatively small and hence it is less convincing to represent all the Black-White couples. Feinman and Gill (1978) found that female with lighter coloration is preferred while male with darker coloration is preferred. Thus, Black men and White women are attracted to each other and this finding supported support the previous study.

### Impacts of Physical Attractiveness on Intimate Relationship

Several researches asserted that physical attractiveness have impacts on dating preferences (Feingold, 1990; Hadjistavropoulos & Genest, 1994), dating relationship and marital adjustment (McNulty, Neff & Karney, 2008; <https://assignbuster.com/positive-relationship-between-physical-attractiveness-and-intimate-relationships/>)

Murstein & Christy, 1976). Specifically, attractive individuals are preferred as dating partner and liked by strangers compared to the unattractive one. One possible explanation may be the first impression on others is judged based on their outward appearance. This is because people have limited knowledge about that particular person except for their physical appearance (Dion, Berscheid & Walster, 1972). People tend to have positive stereotypes toward good looking individuals. The attractive individuals are judged mentally and physically healthy as well as have a better personality (Langlois et al., 1986). They are normally judged as an individual who are gentler, more intelligent, and friendly and so forth. However, people tend to underreport the importance of physical attractiveness when they are choosing their dating partner. Reason being might be people do not want to be evaluated negatively due to their discrimination on others. Most of the people want to be judged as loving and kind person in order to be accepted by others. Nevertheless, Hadjistavropoulos and Genest (1994) found that people are more willing to admit the importance of physical attractiveness on choosing their dating partners when they are connecting to a lie detector like apparatus. This proved that some people might be giving a response that is acceptable by others rather than telling the truth.

Some of the people might engage into a romantic relationship in order to gain a higher level of self-esteem and sense of belongingness. They also believed that they are loved and supported by their partner all the time. Sanchez, Good, Kwang & Saltzman (2008) suggested there is an existence of positive relationship between physical attractiveness and relationship success. Hence, individual who engaged into an intimate relationship may

view themselves as a more attractive person. On the other hand, people might experience body shame in their relationship. Body shame is influenced by relationship contingency through mate urgency. People who experience body shame will perceive their own physical appearance at a lower level compare to the culture physical attractiveness requirement. Single men and women might think that being physically attractive is one of the requirements to start a new intimate relationship. Besides that, they might be having a greater concern over their physical appearance, thus they experience greater body shame. . The shamefulness of themselves might be their impetus for encourage them to improve themselves in order to get a better-half.

A cross-cultural data supported that physical attractiveness is more important for men in choosing their mates (Buss, 1989). Compared to dating partner, individuals are believed to be more earnest on choosing their spouse. To investigate whether physical attractiveness continue to have an impact on married couple, a research was done on newlywed married couple (McNulty, Neff & Karney, 2008). The facial attractiveness of both spouses was judged based on observer's ratings. Result concluded that both husbands and wives will behave positively in their marriage if the husbands were less attractive compared to their wives. Contradictory, both spouses behaved negatively if the wives were more attractive than their husbands. Attractive husbands were found to have a lower level of marriage satisfaction as compared to unattractive husbands. The results highlighted that when wives were more attractive than husbands, they were more likely to have a loving and satisfying marriage.

Upon entered into marriage, relationship of both spouses are affected by many other factors such as responsibilities on doing housework, paying bills, taking care of children, buying groceries and others. It is expected that the importance of physical attractiveness of both spouses decline gradually. To examine the impact of physical attractiveness on long term established marriage, a research on middle-aged couple was conducted. The researchers found that both spouses are matched for attractiveness and equity theory was supported. The second finding was consistent with another research (McNulty, Neff & Karney, 2008) which men will have better marriage adjustment if their wives were more attractive than themselves. A man who perceived his wife as superior to him would think that he has a good bargain to marry an attractive woman. The researches on marital satisfaction and marital adjustment showed that physical attractiveness continue to affect the romantic dyads even after their marriage. Basically, many researchers concluded physical attractiveness of partner enormous on men compared to women. Anyhow, a different result was concluded in a study that women are actually more emphasis the importance of physical attractiveness compared to men (Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975). However, the magnitude of impacts might be decreases significantly as the spouses get older. Both of them are not attractive as previously and the inner beauty is much more important for long term partners. The effect is especially huge on men compared to women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, physical attractiveness serves as a predictor of intimate relationship. Love-is-blind-bias does exist in an intimate relationship but it <https://assignbuster.com/positive-relationship-between-physical-attractiveness-and-intimate-relationships/>



decline gradually. Equity theory suggested that individuals have a tendency to find an intimate mate who is as attractive as them. Conflicts are more likely to occur when there is a dissimilarity of physical attractiveness. The less attractive partner is normally required to have some exchange variables that serve as compensation for the attractive partner. There is an important finding that when men are less attractive in a relationship, both of the partners tend to behave positively and have a greater satisfaction in their relationship. The consistency of the findings is unsure as most of the studies were done in western culture. Perhaps more studies should be conducted in other cultures as well.