Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Government

There is strong pressure for individuals to become beautiful and to find a beautiful mate. Every day, people spend time andmoneyto become beautiful. We may not be aware of it but we are likely to have experienced or witnessed how people use time and seem to have insufficient time in making themselves beautiful. Teenage siblings race to use the bathroom first because a sibling takes an hour or more to prepare for school.

A range of beauty products clutter the bathroom cabinet or dresser with products used for different parts of the body or for various purposes and applied during the day and at night.

Couples pressure each other to hurry up so they would beat rush hour traffic and not be late for work. People put on make-up, shave or brush their teeth while racing in the motorway. Cosmetic surgery has become popular. These are just examples of how people invest time and money to meet the pressure of becoming beautiful. Beauty is also a strong consideration in looking for a partner or selecting a mate. Physical beauty is the initial determinant of attraction, which determines an individual's interest in another person. While perceptions of beauty depend on personal taste, social influences can sway choices and outcomes.

Even if a person finds someone attractive, if their friends or peers disagree then chances are they will not end up with that person. Acceptance of a partner by their peers is important to individuals. An interesting question is how far individuals consider social influences in selecting their partners and how well social influences on beauty standards in partner selection guarantee a good relationship. External Influences on Individual Perceptions

of Beauty Perceptions of beauty that individuals use in finding and selecting a partner depend on external influences.

These external influences not only affect ideas of a beautiful partner but also determine how well individuals meet the acceptable standards of a beautiful partner. The media as determinant of standards of beauty. The media is a social institution that creates ideas of beauty and influences individual self-perception (Engeln-Maddox & Miller, 2008). The media is the biggest source of ideas of beauty expressed through different venues such as print magazines, television commercials or shows, and online programs. Mass accessibility led to the exposure and consumption of media by many people.

Media also provides ideas of body image as a standard of beauty (Gallagher & Pecot-Hebert, 2007). Media changes the perception of individuals about themselves to make people desire the ideal standards of appearance and beauty. A study on the impact of media towards focus on appearance and beauty of African American girls showed that the portrayal of women as sex objects led to the greater consciousness and focus on personal appearance (Gordon, 2008). African American girls exposed to media portraying Black women as sex objects and who identified themselves with the characters in the media developed greater focus on their appearance.

Media also affects individual ideas of beauty by causing individuals to make self-evaluations of their attractiveness. A research on the link between media, body evaluation and perceptions of attractiveness of college men and women showed that those who had positive evaluations of their bodies relative to media ideals perceived themselves as attractive while those who

negatively evaluated their bodies reported negative effects on their self-esteem (Tyler, Lopez & Flores, 2009).

The impact of media on individual ideas of beauty depends on internalization of ideal beauty and dissatisfaction with one's body or looks. Internalization of ideal beauty means its acceptance and pursuit of this beauty standard (Dittmar, Halliwell & Stirling, 2009). The internationalization of thin models as ideal beauty influences decisions to undergo a physical makeover that could include cosmetic surgery (Heyes, 2007). Dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance also reinforces the impact of the ideal beauty on body image and self-perception (Engeln-Maddox, 2006).

Cultureas determinant of standards of beauty. People pursue standards of beauty prevailing in the culture to which they closely associate (Englis, Solomon & Ashmore, 1994). Having large eyes, breasts or hips depends on the beliefs of what constitutes beauty in women. In Africa, having large hips is beautiful because it represents fertility. In Latin America, women with large hips are beautiful with beauty showcased in dances. Changes in the beauty norms also cause shifts in individual ideas of beauty.

Standards of beauty within a cultural context are exemplified by patterns of consumption (Bloch & Richins, 1993). Different types of cosmetics, hair products, and beauty enhancement procedures are popular beauty commodities in different cultures. Innovations in product development, technological tools, and marketing strategies for these products are a continuous activity to create and meet demand. Peers as determinants of standards of beauty. Peers are agents of socialization (Campbell, 1980). Individuals learn about what constitutes beauty from peers.

Individual attitudes and behaviors towards beauty is a reflection of collective ideas of beauty. The extent of association or identification with a peer group leads to a stronger influence on beauty standards (Campbell, 1980). A study on changing racial stereotypes through peer groups showed that exposure to positive stereotypes about African Americans led to the development of positive stereotyping by the group and its individual members (Tan et al. , 2001). People consider and adjust to the attitudes and beliefs of their peer groups on a number of issues including ideal beauty.

Peers also influence perceptions of attractiveness of a potential mate. A study of social influences on interpersonal interaction showed that women were influenced by perceptions of their peers over the physical attractiveness of men as shown by personal ratings that considered initial feedback from other women (Graziano et al. , 1993). Peer Pressureand Fear of Judgment as Drivers of Likes and Dislikes Peer groups affect individual likes and dislikes by influencing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors toward beauty and related aspects.

Peer pressure and fear of judgment are determinants of individual likes and dislikes. Peer pressure. Individuals are susceptible to persuasion in making decisions and doing actions depending on collective attitudes and behavior of peers (Griskevicius, Cialdini & Goldstein, 2008). If most or all peers adopt a similar attitude and behave similarly towards something, the extent of persuasive influence of peers is higher. Peer pressure refers to the psychological strain experienced by individuals when comparing themselves with their peers (Daido, 2006).

If there is a significant gap, then a person feels greater pressure to consider and adopt the common beliefs and practices of the peer group. Fear of judgment. Fear is an emotional state that has a direct relationship with threat avoidance (Maner & Gerend, 2007). In peer groups, fear could emerge in the form of apprehensions over judgments from peers that affect acceptability and support from the group as well as anticipation of conflict with the group. The fear drives individuals to avoid the cause of the fear.

A way of avoiding the outcomes feared is to comply with group peer beliefs and activities. Physical and Inner Beauty Beauty could be visible or non-visible or both (Fatovic-Ferencic, Durrigl & Holubar, 2003) Visible beauty is physical and observable by sight. Non-visible beauty refers to characteristics or values that may not be viewable but observable throughpersonality, attitudes, decisions and behaviors. Physical beauty and inner beauty are interrelated but one component could dominate the other. A person may be beautiful on the outside but not beautiful on the inside.

While the common perception of beauty is as physical attribute, beauty comprises the balance between the physical and non-physical components. Informed judgments. With beauty having physical and non-physical components, making judgments requires knowing someone first. A study on the length of acquaintance with consensus over personality judgments showed that the longer one knows and interacts with a person, the more accurate the personal judgment is with the consensus over the personality judgment (Biesanz, West & Millevoi, 2007).

Time is a factor in knowing a person. Judgments on beauty, covering both physical and inner beauty, require time to know a person. Physical beauty

can be judged immediately based on first impression but judgments on overall beauty require knowing the individual first. Cognitive autonomy. Decision-making on life-changing personal matters such as having a relationship or selecting a partner are done individually. Although, external influences are important, people should learn to balance autonomous thinking with social influences.

Cognitive autonomy is an important quality especially for young people and adults who face difficult life choices. This concept refer to the ability to evaluate ideas, express opinions, make decisions, use comparative assessments, and do self-evaluations (Beckert, 2007). Developing cognitive autonomy enables individuals to balance personal preferences with external influences. Self-efficacy. Individuals have varying needs and objectives. Although external feedback can help individuals, developing self-efficacy is important for individuals to make a plan and act to achieve their owngoals.

Individuals have a close understanding of what they want to achieve and self-efficacy is the factor that mediates planning and goal fulfillment (Lippke et al. , 2009). Other people may not have the same extent of understanding of the person's goals and plans. The plan to enter into a relationship is achievable through self-efficacy. The Current Study The study will investigate the concept of beauty, including the distinction of inner and outer beauty, based on the perspectives of a representative sample of senior students at the university.

Views and experiences of the pressures of being beautiful and finding the perfect partner based on standards of beauty will also be gathered. The study will then determine the extent that individuals weigh personal taste

and social ideals of beauty, particularly peer influences, in finding the perfect partner and the extent that the balance contributes to the success in finding the perfect mate. Hypotheses 1. University students achieve greater balance between personal taste and social ideals of beauty in finding a life partner when beauty is considered as having inner and outer components.

2. A balance between personal taste and social ideals of beauty contributes to the greater success in finding a partner. Method Participants The participants will be 60 randomly selected senior students at the university, evenly distributed between males and females. Senior students are those currently enrolled and expected to graduate after completing the current semester and one more semester. Senior university students will be selected as participants because they are likely to encounter the issue of finding a perfect partner as they neargraduationand while establishing their careers.

Having males and females as participants would determine any differences between perceptions of beauty, pressure of achieving beauty, and selection of the perfect life partner based on beauty. The participants have to bring with them two of their closest peers to provide an assessment of the physical attributes and perceived personality typology of partner choices. The selection of the respondents will be made by coordinating with the school registry to identify senior university students. Of the list obtained, 30 males and 30 females will be randomly selected.

They will be contacted to seek their permission and schedule a session together with two of their closest friends to participate in the quasi-experiment and answer the questionnaire. Those selected who refused to participate will be replaced by randomly selecting from the list until 60

respondents are completed. Materials The data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire with closed questions requiring the selection of a range of answers including yes/no, ranking a list of items, selecting a single answer from a given list, and rating based on extent of agreement or disagreement.

The questions or statements cover the four topics on concept of beauty, pressures of being beautiful, finding a lifetime partner based on personal and/or peer ideas of beauty, and extent that personal and/or peer ideals of beauty contribute to the success in finding the perfect partner. Procedure The quasi-experiment will start with the selected participants going over pictures with basic information and personality descriptions of thirty men for women participants and thirty women for male participants. The graduation pictures of individuals wearing togas will be taken from yearbooks to control other visual factors such as clothing.

The pictures will be selected to consider diverse physical and personality attributes based on the yearbook descriptions. The respondents will be asked to select one person from the set of pictures as a potential partner. They will rate the physical attributes and perceived personality traits of the person in the picture. Their friends will view the pictures, select one picture they think is the perfect partner for their friend, and rate the physical features and perceived personality type. The participant will be shown the choice of their peers and explanations for the choice.

The participants are given the chance to decide whether to retain their choice or select the choice of their peers. Regardless of their choice, the participants will be asked to answer the questionnaire. The responses will be

analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize responses, t-test to determine differences in responses as influenced by gender, and correlation to determine the relationship between variables.

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