

# MODULE 22

## APA Sample Manuscript

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The Effects of Salary on Willingness to Date

Kim J. Driggers and Tasha Helms

Oklahoma State University

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Author Note

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Abstract ←

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The present experiment tested the role of salary in date selection by men and women. Male and female college students ( $N = 150$ ) viewed pictures of the opposite sex and rated the target's attractiveness and their own willingness to date the target was varied among 3 conditions. The level of salary (i.e., \$20,000, \$60,000, and \$100,000) listed. Statistical analyses yielded support for the hypothesis that as the target's salary increased, a participant's willingness to date the target would also increase. That is, as salary increased, both men's and women's willingness to date a target increased. We also found a significant main effect for the sex of participants; as salary increased, women's willingness to date a person increased significantly more than men's willingness.



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→ The Effects of Salary on Willingness to Date

To properly review current research in the area of date selection, it is first necessary to highlight theories that form the foundations upon which this research was built. Scientists have studied human mate selection for over a century. Darwin (1871) proposed that physical attractiveness and survival attributes were the essence of mate selection (a.k.a. *natural selection*). Many anthropologists and biologists have, explained the factors of physical attractiveness and socioeconomic status (SES) on the basis of evolutionary principles. Often when selecting a mate, one's instinct is a driving factor. Men, according to sociobiologists, search for the most attractive woman to mate with in order to ensure reproductive success (Buss, 1987). Men thus must use physical appearance or related factors (e.g., age and health) to predict the fertility and genes of a woman. To men, mating with a highly attractive woman ensures that their offspring will have a "good" (i.e., viable) genetic makeup. Yet the suggested pattern for women is somewhat different. In terms of evolution, women are more selective than men in their mate selection. Women have more potential risks when choosing a mate (e.g., pregnancy, childbirth, child rearing) and thus concentrate more on a man's ability to provide for her and her offspring (Townsend & Levy, 1990b); hence commitment and the man's ability to offer resources are important factors when it comes to a woman's selection of a man.

In-text citation: author's name is followed by date in parentheses.

End-of-sentence citation: author's name and date are both in parentheses.

In parentheses multiple citations are separated by semicolons.

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Social psychologists explain these differences in mate selection as a social exchange between the sexes. Scientists have found the exchange of a man's security for an attractive woman is the basis of mate selection (Rusbult, 1980). Elder (1969) found that men's personal prestige ratings increased when they were paired with an attractive woman. However, ratings of women in Elder's study were based on physical attractiveness only. Therefore, women are exchanging attractiveness for the resources men can provide.

These diverse theories highlight the importance of physical attractiveness and SES. Research (Buss, 1987; Darwin, 1871; Elder, 1969; Rusbult, 1980; Townsend & Levy, 1990b) suggests that physical attractiveness is a better predictor of mate selection in men, and SES is a better predictor of mate selection in women. Current studies have also found that both of these attributes play an integral part in female and male mate selection (e.g., Buss, 1989; Davis, 1985; Goode, 1996; Hill, Nocks, & Gardner, 1987; Hudson & Henze, 1969; Joshi & Rai, 1989; Sprecher, 1989; Townsend & Levy, 1990a, 1990b).

Townsend and Levy (1990a) questioned participants regarding different types of relationships ranging from casual conversation to dating, sex, and other types of serious relationships. Participants rated their willingness to engage in these types of relationships based on a slide photograph of a person (face and torso were depicted in the picture). Results indicated that men and women were more likely

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to engage in all types of relationships when a person was physically attractive. Sprecher (1989), on the other hand, presented only a description of a person (e.g., occupation, salary, favorite color) as the stimulus. Sprecher also found that physical attractiveness played an important factor, even in the absence of visual stimuli.

Other current studies have noted SES as an important predictor of interpersonal attraction. SES includes factors such as career, salary, and the attitudes and behaviors attributed to the concerned person (Joshi & Rai, 1989). Research indicates SES is an important element among both sexes in terms of date selection (Bell 1976; Goode, 1996; Hill et al., 1987; Townsend & Levy, 1990b). For example Hill et al. found that attractiveness ratings by both men and women of an unattractive target of the opposite sex increased as their SES increases. Although important to both sexes, SES is even more important to women than to men in terms of date selection (Bell; Buss, 1987; Goode; Hill et al.; Nevid, 1984; Townsend & Levy, 1990a). Nevid (1984) asked participants to rate personal qualities (e.g., appearance, career, etc.) in terms of their degree of importance in determining their choice of a romantic partner. No visual stimuli were used when the participant determined the order of importance of qualities. Results indicated that women rated SES higher (i.e., as more important) than men in their ranking of importance qualities. Townsend and Levy (1990a, 199b) asked men and women

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how willing they were to enter into relationships after presenting them with a picture and description of a person. They found that SES was a better predictor for women than men when deciding whether or not to enter a serious relationship.

The previously mentioned studies have evaluated the importance of SES in combination with other attributes. Moreover, SES typically has been studied as a global construct, it has never been broken down into its counterparts (i.e., career, salary, attitudes, and behaviors) for evaluation. What are the effects of salary alone on mate selection? How important is salary alone in the overall effect of SES? The present study examined the significance of salary on willingness to date. In order to eliminate the influence of physical attractiveness on ratings, the pictures used in the present study were considered low in physical attractiveness. The independent variable was the salary associated with the photo (three levels: \$20,000, \$60,000, and \$100,000). The dependent variable was the participant's willingness to date a person. The primary hypothesis was that the participant's willingness to date a person would increase as the target's salary increases. Based on previous research, we hypothesized that this relation would be stronger for women.

When there are three to five authors, use the first author's name followed by "et al." for subsequent citations.

**Method****Participants**

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The participants in this study consisted of 150 college students (75 men, 75 women) attending a large Midwestern university. The average age of participants was 21 years. The ethnic background of participants varied, with 71% of the sampling being Caucasian, 14% Asian American, 8% African American, and 7% Native American. Researchers accessed participants from the college library, dormitories, the student union, and laundry facilities. In these facilities, researchers accessed 55 participants at student organizational meetings, 75 participants at the university library, and the remaining 20 participants in the mezzanines of the dormitories. Only three participants approached refused to participate. Participants were assigned to conditions ( $n = 50$  each condition) based on the order in which they were approached by the experimenters.

**Materials**

The materials for the present study consisted of two pictures (one man, one woman) with a short description posted below each picture, and a questionnaire packet (i.e., informed consent sheet, short description of study, and questionnaire). A pre-testing group of 20 students selected the pictures used in this experiment. The pretest group selected the most unattractive male and female picture out of 30 different photographs. The male and female pictures the pretest

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group selected most often as unattractive were used in this study to control for attractiveness. The pictures focused on the faces and upper torso of a Caucasian man and a Caucasian woman separately, both dressed in casual clothes. Included in the short description paired with the picture was the person's age (i.e., 24), occupation (i.e., business field), pets (i.e., none), and marital status (i.e., single), with the only manipulated variable being salary. The salary values were \$20,000, \$60,000, and \$100,000. The short descriptions were the same for both the female and male conditions.

The seven questions in the survey measured the participant's perception of the target's attractiveness and popularity and the participant's willingness to date the target individual. These questions were based on a 7-point Likert scale with the anchors being 1 (*not willing*) and 7 (*extremely willing*). The focus question in this study was "How willing would you be to go on a date with this person?" The other questions were fillers to distract the participant from determining the true purpose of the research.

**Procedure**

The three salary levels defined the three conditions for both the male and female groups. Each participant experienced only one of the three conditions, receiving a picture of the opposite sex. Each condition utilized the same female and male picture.

One of us was present for each individual participant and each of us tested 75 participants. We told the participants that the purpose of the study was to assess individuals' perceptions. Once the participant finished reading the brief description of the study and signed the informed consent, we presented the participant with a picture that included one of the short descriptions below it. Participants were allotted 1 min to look at the picture, but they generally looked at it for 30 s or less. After reading the description of the person and observing the picture, the participant responded to the questionnaire. Once completed, the questionnaire and picture were gathered, and the participant was debriefed.

## Results

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We analyzed the scores of the focus question (willingness to date), in each condition, to determine any significant differences that might exist between conditions and sex. There was a significant increase in willingness to date across salary levels for both men and women (see Figure 1). Effects of sex and salary level were analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). A main effect for sex was found to be significant,  $F(1, 150) = 4.58, p < .05$ , with women ( $M = 3.27, SD = 2.07$ ) receiving higher ratings than men ( $M = 2.97, SD = 1.68$ ). A main effect for salary level was significant,  $F(1, 150) = 294.96, p < .01$ , with scores increasing as salary increased. An interaction between sex and condition was also

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significant,  $F(2, 150) = 5.40, p < .01$ . Subsequent analyses, indicated that men and women did not differ at the two lower salary levels; however, the willingness scores of the women were significantly higher than those of the men for the highest (\$100,000) salary level  $t(48) = 3.213, p < .05$ .

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## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the significance of salary on date selection preferences, while holding status and attractiveness constant. The first hypothesis was that participants' willingness to date a person would increase as the target's salary increased. We also hypothesized that this relationship would be stronger for women. The data supported both hypotheses. Participants' willingness-to-date ratings increased as salary increased, and women were more willing than men to engage in a dating relationship, at least at the highest salary level.

Although evolutionary principles were not tested in this experiment, the results do overlap with findings based on these principles. Evolutionists have found that in terms of mate selection, women hold SES as a more important element than men. Thus, a woman may seek out a mate that has high SES in order to ensure support for her family (Townsend & Levy, 1990b). These results support these evolutionary principles in that women's willingness-to-date ratings did increase significantly more than men's ratings as salary increased.



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One contradictory result of the present study to these principles is that men's ratings also increased as salary increased, although not as much as women's. A possible explanation may be that this finding is due to an environmental influence because in today's society SES is an important attribute to both men and women (Bell, 1976; Goode, 1996; Hill et al., 1987; Townsend & Levy). Thus evolutionary principles may explain the significant difference in men and women's willingness ratings, whereas environmental influences might account for the significant importance overall of SES to both men and women.

The findings presented in this study were not consistent with social psychology theories of mate selection. A common view is that mate selection is a social exchange between the man and the woman (i.e., man's security in exchange for an attractive woman; Rusbult, 1980). If this social exchange theory played a significant part in mate selection, men's ratings of the women would have been consistent across conditions because there was no change in attractiveness.

Although past studies (Goode, 1996; Hill et al., 1987; Joshi & Rai, 1989; Sprecher, 1989; Townsend & Levy, 1990b) have tested the role of physical attractiveness and other attributes combined, this study isolated the influence of salary. SES was found to be a significant factor in these past studies when combined with other attributes. After isolating salary as a single variable to be tested in date selection, the present findings were similar to past studies that combined

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salary with other attributes (Goode; Hill et al.; Joshi & Rai; Sprecher; Townsend & Levy).

This study was a partial replication of Townsend and Levy's study (1990b). The present study used the same format of questions (i.e., willingness to engage in specific relationships based on a Likert scale response), similar stimuli (i.e., pictures), and also similar methods of analysis. Their results indicated that SES in combination with other attributes (e.g., appearance, personality characteristics, etc.) was an important predictor of date selection in both men and women, but more so for women. This study supported past evidence when identifying the differences between men and women in the role of salary in date selection (Bell, 1976; Buss, 1987; Goode, 1996; Hill et al., 1987; Nevid, 1984; Townsend & Levy, 1990a).

Although the present findings support past research, the design involved a sample of college students whose responses were to hypothetical relationships with hypothetical partners, in only one region of the United States. A replication of this study with a sample encompassing a larger region or multiple regions would help to further support this hypothesis for the purpose of generalization to a more diverse population. Also, personal SES factors of the participants might influence ratings of the target. Controlling for this variable in future studies would broaden the knowledge of this attribute in date selection.



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Other methods need to be developed to continue to test the role of SES in date selection. Showing a video of a person or having a person-to-person interaction are suggestions for future stimuli to further test this hypothesis. Future studies could also evaluate the impact of the participants' personal SES in their selections of romantic partners. If a participant has a high income, how important is that attribute to that person when selecting a date? Another future study might also investigate the importance of salary among lesbian and gay male relationships.

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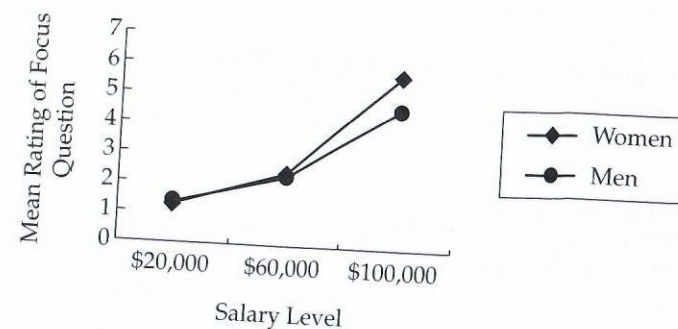


Figure 1. Mean rating of male and female participants for each conditions (\$20,000, \$60,000, \$100,000) on focus question ("How willing would you be to go on a date with this person?").