An investigation on mate preferences with emphasize on the role of personality characters

Fatemeh Sadat Dibaja, Ozra Etemadi*, Fateme Bahrami, Mohammadreza Abedi and Maryamsadat Fatehizade

This study investigated the relationships between Big-Five personality traits and mate preferences in Isfahan, Iran. The sample consisted of 225 single girls and boys that they were volunteer to complete the research measures. They completed of Neo-FFI-3 to evaluate personality traits and Iranian cultural preference questionnaire. To response to research question, data was examined in two steps. The first step was to examine the intercorrelate relations matrix among dependent and independent variables. The results showed extraversion is related to attractive appearance, educational level, no having sexy relations with opposite sex in single period, and no having addiction. Also attractive appearance and no having too close relations with each other family is correlated with neuroticism and conscientiousness. Also extraversion can predict attractive appearance and no having addiction preferences. Neuroticism can predict no having too close relations with mate families preference. Other variables, although contributing to the overall variance, were not significant predictors in our focused and cultural preferences.

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1. Introduction

Human mating is the process whereby an individual seeks out another individual with the intention of forming to a long–term intimate relationship or marriage, but sometimes for casual relationship or friendship. The human desire for companionship is one of the strongest human drives. The mating process encompasses the social and cultural processes where by one person may meet another to assess suitability, the courtship process and the process of forming an interpersonal relationship. Mate preferences in humans are associated with understanding on why one human chooses or chooses not to mate with another human and their reasoning why. The most documented theory of human mating
is that likes attract likes that men and women become coupled with those who are similar to
themselves (Buss, 1989; Thissen & Gregg, 1980).

A preliminary review of literatures shows different human mate selection perspectives that
psychologists have examined, such as the selection strategies that people have developed to evaluate
potential mates (Eagly & wood, 1999; Feingold, 1992) and the criteria that men and women seek in a
mate (e.g., Howard et al., 1987; Schmitt et al., 2001, Li et al., 2010). Confer et al. (2010) studied
The role of parent was examined too (Periloux et al., 2011). However many researchers have studied
different factors (e.g., Haselton et al., 2005; Shackelford et al., 2005) and, in Iran, few studies have
investigated human mating preferences. Rajabi et al. (2011) showed religion, behavior characters and
social skills are important in mating among Iranian.

In this paper, we investigate multiple relationships among big five personality factors with mate
preferences (physical attractiveness, physical health, education, economical status, no having sex with
opposite sex in single time, no having close relationships with family in law, no having history of
delinquency and violation, mutal family agreeable to their marriage). This research provides the first
empirical tests of whether personality traits play important role in mate preferences. Some studied
preferences are cultural variables and particularly belong to Iranian culture (such as no having sex
relationships with opposite sex in single period or mutal family agreeable to their marriage). The
following shows the goal of the research:

Determination of multiple relations among big five personality with mate preferences

2. Big five personality factors

The big five personality factors model (MaCare & Costa, 1997) represents the dominant
conceptualization of personality structure. This model is included five relatively independent
dimensions including Neuroticism, Extraversion, openness to experiences, Agreeableness and
Conscientiousness reside at the highest level of the personality hierarchy. Extraversion reflects
tendencies associated with being assertive, talkative, and sociable (Barrick & Mount, 1991).
Neuroticism reflects the tendency to experience distress (McCare & John, 1992). It includes being
anxious, depressed, emotional, worried and insecure (Barric, & Mount, 1991). Openness to
experience is associated with being scientific and artistic creativity, divergent thinking and political
liberalism (Judge et al., 2002). The behavioral tendencies typically associated with it include being
imaginative cultured, intelligent and artistically sensitive. Agreeableness is the fourth factor, which
describes tendencies typically associated with this factor includes good – natured, courteous,
cooperative and tolerant. The final factor is conscientiousness. The typical behaviors associated with
conscientiousness comprise being hard working, achievement – oriented, and preserving (Barrack &
Mount, 1991). We investigated whether big five personality traits have correlated with mate
preferences.

3. Method

3.1 Sample Selection

The data for this cross – sectional study came from the statistical population of all youth in Isfahan
over the period 2011–2012. The sample comprised 225 single girls and boys who were volunteers to
complete the research measures. They completed of Neo- FFI-3 to evaluate personality traits and
Iranian cultural preference questionnaire. The mean age was 22.5 and standard deviations of 4.21.

3.2. Measurement Instruments

Big-Five personality traits questionnaire. In this study short form of Big-Five personality traits were
used (McCrea & Costa, 1992). This questionnaire has 60 items. Participants were asked to indicate
their response to each item on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher scores indicated higher levels of each dimension. Costa and McCrae reported internal consistency coefficient alphas ranging from 0.68 to 0.86 and provide extensive validity data. In the present study, internal consistency was assessed. Cronbach's alpha for the present sample were 0.58 (Neuroticism), 0.73 (Extraversion), 0.60 (Openness to Experience), (Agreeableness) 0.54 and (Conscientiousness) 0.82.

3.3. Preferences questionnaire

We used a questionnaire that it included, Iranian cultured items (e.g. Mutual family agreeable to their marriage and general items (e.g. beautiful appearance). Participants respond to items by endorsing their degree of their agreement with every preferences on a 5- point , like – type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Its internal consistency calculated by Cranach Alpha. It was acceptable (as .85) Table 1 shows items of this questionnaire.

Table 1
Items of mate preference ratings

| 1. Beautiful appearance |
| 2. Physical Heath |
| 3. Educational status |
| 4. Economic status |
| 5. No having sexy relationships with opposite sex in his / her single period. |
| 6. No having too close relations or dependency with her/his families. |
| 7. No having history of delinquency and misdoing. |
| 8. No having addiction |
| 9. Mutual family agreeable to their marriage |

4. Result

To response to research questions, data was examined in two steps. The first step was to examine the intercorrelate relations matrix among dependent and independent variables summarized in Table 3. The results showed attractive appearance was significantly and positively associated with extraversion (r= .264, p<.05) meaningfully and negatively with neuroticism (r= -.203, p< .05).

Educational level was significantly and positively associated with extraversion (r= .236, p< .05) and significantly and negatively associated with psychosis (r= -.310, p< .05). No having sexy relations with opposite sex in single periods was associated significantly with extraversion (r= .237, p<.95). No having too close relationships with each other families was related significantly and negatively with neuroticism (r= -.278, p< .05) and significantly and positively with conscientiousness (r=.272, P<.05). No having addiction was significantly and meaningfully with extraversion (r= .224, p<.05) other variable had no meaningful correlations.

4.1 Predicting Mate Preferences

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to response research questions in relation to predicting mate preferences. Beautiful appearance was entered as the dependent variable and big five factors were entered as the independent variables. Summary data were presented in Table 4. The results indicated a significant model fit, F=5.12 p=.028 and that the independent variable (extraversion) included in the model was able to account for 8.7 of the variance (R²=.087). No having too close relationships with couple families were entered as dependent variable and big factors were entered as independent variables.
The results indicated a significant model fit, $F= 4.52$, $P= .038$ and that the independent variable neuroticism included in the model was able to account for 7.7% of the variance ($R^2= .077$). No having addiction was entered as dependent variable and big five factors were entered as independent variables. The results showed a significant model fit, $F=5.12$, $p=.028$ and that the independent variable (extraversion) included in the model was to account for 8.7% of the variance ($R^2= .087$)

Table 2
Means and standard Deviations for dependent and independent variables

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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
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<td>2.23</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.64</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.98</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>225</td>
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</table>

1. Attractive appearance  
2. Physical Health  
3. Educational level  
4. Economic status  
5. No having sex relationships with opposite sex in single periods.  
6. Having zoo close relationships with each other families.  
7. No having history of delinquency and misdoing.  
8. No having addiction  
9. Mutual families agreeable to the their marriage  
10. Neuroticism  
11. Extraversion  
12. Openness to experience  
13. Agreeableness  
14. Conscientiousness

Table 3
Pearson correlations among dependent and independent variables

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.310”</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.278’</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.035</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>.211</td>
<td>.236’</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>.234’</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.294’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.240’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.982</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.095</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
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<td>.213</td>
<td>.339”</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.272’</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.027</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: “=p<0.01    *=p<0.05

Table 4
Stepwise multiple regressions of mate preferences based on personality characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>2.008</td>
<td>.005</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>.016</td>
<td>-.278</td>
<td>-.2012</td>
<td>.038</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion

About 90% of all people in all societies marry at some point in their lives (Buss, 1985; Vandenberg, 1972). Many researches have investigated the characteristics that men and women prefer in a long-term relationships (e.g. Okami & Shackelford, 2001; Buss, 2003). We wanted to know whether big five personality traits have any role in mate preferences. Although some research has examined personality mate preferences (e.g. Botwin et al., 1997; Lokaszewski & Roney, 2009; Norman et al., 2011), the role of personality traits has not been in focus of research attention.
Our results showed extraversion is related to attractive appearance, educational level, no having sexy relations with opposite sex in single period, and no having addiction. Also attractive appearance and no having too close relations with each other family is correlated with neuroticism and conscientiousness. In addition, extraversion can predict attractive appearance and no having addiction preferences. Neuroticism can predict no having too close relations with mate families preference. Other variables, although contributing to the overall variance, were not significant predictors in our focused and cultural preferences.

How can we explain these finding? It seems that extroverted individuals have some which traits such as being assertive, talkative and sociable (Barrik., & Mount, 1991) which cause they prefer some especial mate preferences (attractive appearance and no having addiction). Perhaps, their repeated social experiences cause they pay attention to pointed preferences.

As pointed In Iranian culture wife’s and husband’s family or family in law play important role in marital satisfaction. There for many girls and boys, the types of their relations with their family in law are important. Neuroticism can predict having too close relations with each other family preference. Neuroticism points to the tendency to experience distress (Costa., & McCrae, 1995). It includes being anxious, depressed, emotional and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It seem neurotic individuals need additional support from their families and families in law.

Therefore, negative correlation between neuroticism and no having too close relations with each other family preference is not surprisingly.

The person correlation results show conscientiousness is correlated positively with no having too close relations with each other family preference. The trait included sub traits such as being achievement – oriented and hard – waking (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It seems the pointed sub traits because the individuals need more time for themselves. Therefore they avoid from family enmeshment.

In summery, it seems that beside universal mate preferences, Iranian culture has included some especial mate preferences. We open new window in culture specific mate preferences. In the other hand, we paid to the factors that they could have role in mate preferences. These findings may present an important basic contribution to the mate preferences via its attention to underling factors in mate preferences.

Study limitations: The results of this study were limited by self – report nature of the instruments and its sampling. Results based upon a small sample for one area of Iran. All the participants were Muslim even though there are Christians and other minority religions in Iran. Hoverer, we suggest that future research examines other correlated variables with mate preference which may be determining in variance of mating.

References


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