

[Abstract] Instrumentality and physical attractiveness are both socially desirable traits. The aim of this study is to investigate the preference in friendship formation when there is a trade-off between the two characteristics. 202 participants (63 males; mean age = 20.43) were recruited to rate their preferences in befriending with an attractive but less instrumental target of opposite sex and with a non-attractive but more instrumental target of opposite sex, in two randomly assigned academic goal conditions that differ in the importance of performance. The results show that people would like to befriend more with a physically attractive but less instrumental target of opposite sex, even under the condition in which the instrumentality should be evaluated more. It is concluded that the physical attractiveness could dominate over the instrumentality in opposite-sex friendship formation, when the difference in the levels of instrumentality is small.

Introduction

There are many factors affecting friendship formation. According to the interdependent theory, relationships are formed with respect to the rewards and costs that individuals would build relationships with whom can provide benefits greater than the expenditure (Campbell, Holderness, & Riggs, 2015). In other words, those who can provide greater rewards are more interpersonally attractive and more