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Sense of Humor in Romantic Relationships and Friendships

Lorena ANTONOVICI[1]

Abstract

This present investigation examined the degree to which humor, among various characteristics, is desired in two types of relational partners. We expected to find that humor would be perceived as more desirable (or necessary) for a romantic relationship than friendship. We also tested whether there were significant gender differences in assessing humor in these two types of relational partners. Additionally, we attempted to assess whether a lower discrepancy between the scores of the ideal and actual partner regarding sense of humor in romantic relationships, indicates a higher dyadic adjustment. The participants (n=120) indicated their preferences for various attributes (among which was sense of humor), in either an ideal partner, actual partner or best friend on a Five-point Likert-type scale. In order to assess dyadic adjustment, the participants filled in the revised Dyadic Adjustment Form [1]. Sense of humor was rated as a significantly more important (necessary) characteristic in romantic relationships than friendships. As regards to gender differences, no significant differences were found for sense of humor, and the discrepancy of assessment sense of humor in both cases (ideal partner vs actual partner) did not significantly correlate with global dyadic adjustment or with any of its dimensions. The results suggest that a sense of humor is a characteristic acknowledged as important across relationship types, and more in-depth investigations should be advanced.

Keywords: *humor, partners preferences, romantic ideal standards, dyadic adjustment.*

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1. Introduction

Regarding relational partners, we tend to consider, among other characteristics, a sense of humor. Although individuals often report that sense of humor is important for their relationships, researchers have not always managed to prove this hypothesis.

In studies that assess individual's romantic preferences, research participants (which are often younger and single) are usually asked to establish a hierarchy from a list of desirable traits in a partner. Previous studies have shown a significant link between initial romantic attraction and sense of humor [2],[3]. There is also evidence [4] suggesting that using humor to share experiences when individuals are at their first meetings, can lead to a greater closeness between them [4].

2. Problem Statement

Evolutionary perspectives

Starting from evolutionary theories [5] one recognize the importance of ambition and status as a part of the male reproductive values, while physical attractiveness is a key component of the female reproductive values. While men, due to their genetical structure, they still consider sex to be an important feature in the romantic relationship [6], women are more selective in terms of a partner [7]. Humor is among the tactics both sexes use in the intrasexual mate competition for the other sex [8]. However, the author failed to find gender differences in his study. Other studies have shown that the sense of humor is an important characteristic in interpersonal attraction to both sexes [5],[7],[9].

On the other hand, several studies [10] [11] have shown that only women prefer a sense of humor in a partner contrary to men. Although men report wanting a partner with a sense of humor, they do not appreciate a woman with humor as being more attractive. In initial attraction perceptions of the man's sociability, humor and creativity seem to be important [12]. Other studies show contradictory results. Both women and men want their partners to be physically attractive, intelligent, and warm and there is no great consideration for a sense of humor [13].

So far as we are aware, there has been little investigation into partners' preferences in Romanian samples. We were able to identify a study [14] that sustains evolutionary theories regarding mate choices. Thus, Romanian men are good resource providers and they are looking for partners in good health and fertility, while women prefer prosperity in men [14].

Ideal mate standards and relationship satisfaction

Ideal standards in romantic relationships can be used in partner's evaluation, due to the fact that it represents things that individual needs and expects from a romantic partner [15] [16]. Individual's impressions about their partners are rather a mirror image of themselves and their ideals than a reflection of partner's attributes [17]. The more the actual partner is further from the ideal, the individual is less satisfied with his partner and relationship [17],[18] and vice versa: if there is a congruence between ideal and actual partner, then the relationship satisfaction will increase [15],[17]. Major discrepancies between the ideal and actual partner can lead to discouragement, rejection, and dissatisfaction with the current relationship [19].

Both sexes considered certain characteristics as important when looking for a partner [20], such as characteristics related to proximity and intimacy (ex. kindness, responsibility, loyalty) and attractiveness and social visibility (ex. physical attractiveness, financial resources, social status). Moreover, there were identified three factors related to the qualities of an ideal partner: warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status-resources [15]. Regarding gender differences, previous studies have shown that women make fewer compromises to adjust their ideal standards in romantic relationships than men [21]. When laughter and humor are perceived by the individual as ideals of a relationship, he will search for ideal partners which have a sense of humor and are more willing to offer this characteristic in the relationship [22]. Thus, humor can be considered a behavioral mechanism of confirmation from the partner, so that if our ideal self values the humor and this behavior is encouraged by the partner, humor becomes pregnant and we are closer to our ideal self [23].

Romantic relationships vs. Friendships

There are several similarities between same-gender friendships and heterosexual romantic relationships [24]. For example, both are voluntary and egalitarian relationships. On the other hand, there are notable differences. Overall young adults' friendships and same-gender friendships tend to be more enduring than romantic relationships [25]. In their early youth, most individuals spent considerable time with friends of the same gender and yet during adolescence when we build friendships, same-gender friendships are more fragile [25].

Studies which analyzed sense of humor focused both on characteristics of a friend and a romantic partner [26]. It was noted, however, that there is a higher preference for humor in a romantic partner than in a friend [5]. Regarding friendship, men identified humor, kindness,

and personality as important while women identified kindness as a priority [27]. In a study focusing on humor and social distance [28], it is suggested that humor as a form of interpersonal communication would be a good predictor of social status and preferences in friendships. In young adults, initiating friendships is based on shared interests and values, sense of humor, sexual orientation, musical tastes, and passions [29]. In another study which reports on friendships between men, among other types of social support men also ensure the need of humor to their friends [30]. Several studies identified some characteristics that could have both a friend and a romantic partner, which are: enthusiasm, good looking, and a good sense of humor, honesty, intelligence, kindness, sentimental and funny [26].

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

The main purpose of this study was to explore partner's preferences regarding sense of humor in romantic relationships and friendships. Our research started from the above mentioned studies and focusing primarily on the study of Sprecher and Regan [5]. Unlike Sprecher and Regan [5], we focused mainly on a sense of humor in romantic relationships and friendships and we also included in the analysis ideal romantic standards within romantic relationships. We aimed to investigate whether the sense of humor will be appreciated as a more desirable characteristic in a romantic partner than in a best friend. Furthermore, we explored whether there are significant gender differences in evaluating these preferences in a partner. Finally, we also investigated if the sense of humor is more important/ necessary in an ideal romantic partner rather than in an actual romantic partner and to what extent this discrepancy would correlate with dyadic adjustment.

4. Research Methods

Participants

We placed an invitation to participate in the research on Romanian Facebook young groups, to which we selected 120 participants. Survey data collected from a majority of the participating individuals indicated that they came from a wide range of educational and couple backgrounds.

We included in this study 120 Romanian young people with an average age of 26 years, of which 60 women (M = 25) and 60 men (M = 28 years). Most participants had high educational levels (58.7%), were unmarried (69.8%) and were involved in a relationship for 1-5 years (42.1%).

Procedure

Participants in the study were given a total of 14 characteristics you can identify in a person: physical attractiveness, intelligence, ambition, warmth and kindness, money/earning potential, expressiveness and openness, social status, sense of humor, exciting personality, similarity of background characteristics (e.g. race, religion, social class), similarity of attitudes and values, similarity of social skills (ex. interaction style), similarity of interests and leisure activities, complementarity/being opposites on personality characteristics [31] [32]. Then, they were asked to clarify the extent to which each characteristic is important for: 1. an ideal romantic partner 2. actual partner 3. a best friend. To control order effects, we used a partial counterbalancing technique. Thus, half of the participants (Females = 30, Males = 30) evaluated their partner's preferences in the order set out above (ideal partner, actual partner, and best friend), while the other half (Females = 30, Males = 30) received a reverse order. Participants were also asked to evaluate each characteristic on a 5-levels Likert scale: 1. This characteristic is not important to me. 2. I have a slight preference for this characteristic. 3. I have a moderate preference for this characteristic. 4. I have a strong preference for this characteristic. 5. This characteristic is a must.

Finally, participants filled Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale, an adapted version for Romanian population [1]. The scale measures dyadic adjustment focusing on three components: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Participants respond on a 6-points Likert scale: A - always disagree to F - always agree (for the first six items regarding consensus) from A - never to F - all the time (for items 7-10 which measure satisfaction) from A - never to E - every day (for item 11, which measure cohesion) and A - never to F - several times a day (for 12 to 14 items which measures cohesion). In our study we evaluated both married and unmarried couples, with very little modifications in the enunciation of items – e.g. *marital* becomes *relational*.

5. Findings

5.1. The importance of humor in romantic relationships and friendships

In both romantic relationships and friendships, intelligence and sense of humor were rated as more desirable in a partner. While in romantic relationships (at both ideal and actual partner level) participants preferred warmth and kindness, intelligence, sense of humor and expressiveness and openness as the most important characteristics in a partner, in friendships, intelligence, similarity on attitudes and values, similarity on interests and leisure activities and sense of humor were judged to be the most desirable attributes a best friend could have.

To examine the importance of each characteristic rank in the two types of relationships (romantic vs. friendship), we used the Friedman test (Table 1). Scores were calculated as follows: average rank preferences of participants for each relationship type in part (romantic relationships: the ideal and actual partner; friendship: best friend). Participants desired their ideal partners to score higher on: warmth and kindness (Mrank = 10.55), intelligence (Mrank = 10.20), sense of humor (Mrank = 9.47) and expressiveness and openness (Mrank = 9.06). Similarly, participants desired their actual partner to score higher on: warmth and kindness (Mrank = 10.15), intelligence (Mrank = 10.11), sense of humor (Mrank = 9.35) and expressiveness and openness (Mrank = 8.93). On the other hand, participants suggested they would most want in a best friend the following characteristics: intelligence (Mrank = 10.04), similarity on attitudes and values (Mrank = 9.84), similarity on interests and leisure activities (Mrank = 9.03) and sense of humor (Mrank = 8.83). Among the examined characteristics, humor seems to have a central position both in romantic relationships (ideal or actual partner) and also in friendships.

Table 1. Partners preferences across relationship types

Characteristics	Ideal partner	Actual partner	Best friend
physical attractiveness	7.55(8)	8.17(7)	5.15(14)
intelligence	10.20(2)	10.11(2)	10.04(1)
ambition	8.07(7)	8.77(5)	8.23(6)
warmth and kindness	10.55(1)	10.15(1)	6.90(9)
money/ earning potential	4.10(14)	3.90(13)	6.08(11)
expressiveness and openness	9.06(4)	8.93(4)	7.27(8)
social status	4.19(13)	3.70(14)	6.30(10)

sense of humor	9.47(3)	9.35(3)	8.83(4)
exciting personality	8.32(6)	8.07(8)	8.11(7)
similarity of background	4.93(12)	5.20(12)	5.44(13)
similarity of attitudes and values	8.64(5)	8.45(6)	9.84(2)
similarity of social skills	6.38(10)	6.27(11)	5.53(12)
similarity of interests and leisure	7.33(9)	7.50(9)	9.03(3)
complementarity/ being opposites	6.22(11)	6.42(10)	8.25(5)

Note: (1) = Highest rank/ characteristic preferred the most → (14) = Lowest rank/ the last important characteristic

For examining the differences in evaluating the characteristics for each relational partner (ideal/ actual partner/ best friend), we used the Wilcoxon Test. We first present a series of descriptive data:

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the studied characteristics

Characteristics	Ideal partner Mean(SD)	Actual partner Mean(SD)	Best friend Mean(SD)
physical attractiveness	3.75(.89)	3.87(.82)	2.75(1.24)
intelligence	4.32(.75)	4.27(.70)	4.18(.82)
ambition	3.88(.89)	3.96(.79)	3.67(.96)
warmth and kindness	4.44(.69)	4.32(.83)	3.24(1.30)
money/ earning potential	2.78(1.15)	2.61(1.11)	3.03(1.24)
expressiveness and openness	*4.07(.75)*	3.98(.83)	3.37(1.20)
social status	2.83(1.14)	2.61(1.05)	3.12(1.16)
sense of humor	4.17(.83)	4.10(.78)	3.81(1.02)
exciting personality	3.93(.88)	3.81(.90)	3.62(1.02)
similarity of background	2.90(1.24)	2.93(1.31)	2.85(1.22)
similarity of attitudes and values	3.98(.88)	3.88(.87)	4.09(.96)
similarity of social skills	3.47(.89)	3.38(.91)	2.83(1.22)
similarity of interests and leisure	3.72(.84)	3.68(.86)	3.88(.95)
complementarity/ being opposites	3.40(.99)	3.41(1.04)	3.69(.92)

Table 3. Partner preferences when the discrepancy between partners was examined

Characteristics	Z	*I-A*	I-F	A-F
physical attractiveness		-1.73	-6.45**	-7.37**
intelligence		-1.12	-1.79	-.76
ambition		-1.09	-2.40*	-2.93**
warmth and kindness		-1.71	-7.10**	-6.69**
money/ earning potential		-2.04*	-2.00*	-3.12**

expressiveness and openness	*-1.34*	-4.81**	-4.37**
social status	-2.54*	-2.26*	-3.86**
sense of humor	-1.40	-3.47**	-2.91**
exciting personality	-1.95	-3.27**	-1.76
similarity of background	-.07	-.64	-.82
similarity of attitudes and values	-1.59	-1.06	-2.03*
similarity of social skills	-1.25	-4.70**	-4.26**
similarity of interests and leisure	-.63	-1.47	-2.01*
complementarity/ being opposites	-.02	-3.10**	-2.75**

Note: I= ideal partner; A= actual partner; F= best friend

As we can notice in the above mentions, there had been few significant differences in romantic relationships when evaluating the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual partner's scores. These ones are referring to the earning potential and social status. For the earning potential characteristic, the results indicated a significant difference, $z = -2.04$, $p < .050$. The mean rank favoring the earning potential for the actual partner was 22.64, while the mean rank favoring the earning potential for the ideal partner was 29.11. For the social status characteristic, the results also indicated a significant difference, $z = -2.54$, $p < .050$. The mean rank favoring the social status for the actual partner was 22.61, while the mean rank favoring the social status for the ideal partner was 27.85. Thus, both earning potential and social status characteristics were evaluated as being significantly more important for an ideal partner contrary to the actual partner.

Regarding relational partners, partner discrepancy ratings between ideal partner and best friend were even more significant for the following characteristics: physical attraction ($z = -6.45$, $p < .01$), ambition ($z = -2.40$, $p < .05$), warmth and kindness ($z = -7.10$, $p < .01$), earning potential ($z = -2.00$, $p < .05$), expressiveness and openness ($z = -4.81$, $p < .01$), social status ($z = -2.26$, $p < .05$), sense of humor ($z = -3.47$, $p < .01$), exciting personality ($z = -3.27$, $p < .01$), similarity on social skills ($z = -4.70$, $p < .01$) complementarity/ being opposites ($z = -3.10$, $p < .01$). Specifically, participants preferred that their partner in an ideal couple score higher on: physical attractiveness, ambition, warmth and kindness, expressiveness and openness, sense of humor, exciting personality similarity on social skills than their best friend. On the other side, in friendships, participants preferred that their best friend scores higher on: earning potential, social status, complementarity/ being opposites unlike those in romantic relationships (the dimension ideal partner). The effect size for the characteristic that we are interested in, that being the sense of humor, was $r = -0.31$, which indicates a medium effect size.

The comparison between the actual partner and the best friend has also indicated a series of significant differences regarding the following characteristics: physical attractiveness ($z = -7.37$, $p < .01$), ambition ($z = -2.93$, $p < .01$), warmth and kindness ($z = -6.69$, $p < .01$), earning potential ($z = -3.12$, $p < .01$), expressiveness and openness ($z = -4.37$, $p < .01$), social status ($z = -3.86$, $p < .01$), sense of humor ($z = -2.91$, $p < .01$), similarity on attitudes and values ($z = -2.03$, $p < .05$), similarity on social skills ($z = -4.26$, $p < .01$), similarity on interests and leisure activities ($z = -2.01$, $p < .05$), complementarity/ being opposites ($z = -2.75$, $p < .01$). Therefore, the participants evaluated as being significantly more important to the actual partner characteristics such as physical attractiveness, ambition, warmth and kindness, expressiveness and openness, sense of humor, similarity on social skills, compared to those of a best friend. On the other hand, the earning potential, social status, similarity on attitudes and values, similarity on interests and leisure activities, complementarity/ being opposites, were evaluated as being significantly more important (necessary) in friendships, compared to romantic relationships (actual partner). The effect size for the characteristic that we are interested in, that being the sense of humor, was $r = -0.26$, which indicates a medium effect size.

5.2. Gender differences in evaluating humor across relationship types

Regarding gender differences, were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U Test (Table 4). The Results were significant for just five of the fourteen characteristics evaluated across relationship types, these being: ambition, earning potential, social status, warmth and kindness, intelligence.

Table 4. Gender differences in evaluating humor across relationship types

Characteristics Actual partner	Males Mean rank	Females Mean rank	U	P
physical attractiveness	63.19	57.81	1638.50	.363
intelligence	61.28	59.72	1753.00	.787
ambition	52.88	68.12	1343.00	.009
warmth and kindness	57.72	63.28	1633.00	.336
money/ earning potential	46.04	74.96	932.50	.000
expressiveness and openness	58.57	62.43	1684.00	.511
social status	49.25	71.50	1125.00	.000
sense of humor	57.14	63.86	1598.50	.259
exciting personality	59.22	61.78	1723.00	.670
similarity of background	55.73	65.28	1513.50	.124
similarity of attitudes and values	58.62	62.38	1687.00	.523
similarity of social skills	56.41	64.59	1554.50	.163

similarity of interests and leisure	55.07	65.93	1474.00	.068
complementarity/ being opposites	58.09	62.92	1655.00	.423

Table 5. Gender differences in expressing the preferences for the ideal partner

Characteristics Ideal partner	Males Mean rank	Females Mean rank	U	P
physical attractiveness	63.43	57.58	1624.50	.328
intelligence	59.35	61.65	1731.00	.690
ambition	56.07	64.93	1534.00	.135
warmth and kindness	54.63	66.38	1447.50	.037
money/ earning potential	46.98	74.02	989.00	.000
expressiveness and openness	57.85	63.15	1641.00	.355
social status	50.28	70.73	1186.50	.001
sense of humor	58.29	62.71	1667.50	.455
exciting personality	59.33	61.68	1729.50	.696
similarity of background	57.77	63.23	1636.00	.376
similarity of attitudes and values	57.70	63.30	1632.00	.346
similarity of social skills	55.38	65.63	1492.50	.086
similarity of interests and leisure	59.38	61.62	1733.00	.705
complementarity/ being opposites	59.19	61.81	1721.50	.663

Table 6. Gender differences in expressing the preferences for the best friend

Characteristics Best friend	Males Mean rank	Females Mean rank	U	p
physical attractiveness	61.73	59.28	1726.50	.692
intelligence	67.09	53.91	1404.50	.023
ambition	59.87	61.13	1762.00	.834
warmth and kindness	55.82	65.18	1519.00	.131
money/ earning potential	56.56	64.44	1563.50	.203
expressiveness and openness	61.37	59.63	1748.00	.778
social status	58.71	62.29	1692.50	.558
sense of humor	60.68	60.33	1789.50	.954
exciting personality	64.03	56.97	1588.00	.243
similarity of background	58.04	62.96	1652.50	.426
similarity of attitudes and values	58.53	62.47	1682.00	.507
similarity of social skills	55.91	65.09	1524.50	.137
similarity of interests and leisure	58.63	62.37	1688.00	.537
complementarity/ being opposites	58.93	62.07	1706.00	.602

Hence, in evaluating the actual partner, women considered significantly more important (M= 68.12) the fact that the actual partner is ambitious, compared to men (M= 52.88), U= 1343, p= .009. Also, women (M= 74.96) considered significantly more important the earning potential for the actual partner, unlike men (M= 46.04), U= 932.50, p= .000. Another significantly more important characteristic for women (M= 71.75) than for men (M= 49.25) in evaluating the actual partner was the social status, U= 1125, p= .000.

Also, related to evaluating the ideal partner, women considered significantly more important the earning potential (M= 74.02) unlike men (M= 46.98), U= 989, p= .000, but also the social status (M= 70.73), compared to men (M= 50.28), U= 1186.50, p= .001. Along these characteristics, women appreciated to a larger extend the importance of warmth and kindness (M= 66.38), compared to men (M= 54.63), U= 1447.50, p= .037.

Referring to evaluating the friendship itself, this time men appreciated intelligence as being a significantly more important characteristic of a best friend (M= 67.09), compared to women (M= 53.91), U= 1404.50, p= .023.

5.3. Humor evaluation and dyadic adjustment in romantic relationships

In order to examine if a high discrepancy between evaluations of actual and ideal partner is significantly and negatively linked with dyadic adjustment, we used the revised version of DAS which is an adapted version of Romanian population [1]. The scale has good internal consistency in our study, both for the dyadic adjustment globally (14 items, α= .85) and for its dimensions: consensus (6 items, α= .83), satisfaction (4 items, α= .72), cohesion (4 items, α= .70). For verifying this hypothesis, we used Spearman correlation. The discrepancy was computed by subtracting the ideal partner's scores from actual partner's scores on the same measure.

Table 7. Spearman's correlation between the discrepancy in characteristics and the Revised DAS scale

Characteristics	Consensus	Satisfaction	Cohesion	Dyadic adjustment
physical attractiveness	-.11	-.16	-.01	-.13
intelligence	.29**	.03	.14	.20*
ambition	.10	.00	.08	.11
warmth and kindness	.11	-.13	-.07	-.03
money/ earning potential	.15	-.02	.02	.06

expressiveness and openness	*-.01*	.07	-.02	.01
social status	.14	-.06	.10	.07
sense of humor	.10	.04	.00	.04
exciting personality	.14	.04	-.00	.10
similarity of background	.01	.00	.04	.05
similarity of attitudes and values	.09	-.11	.06	.01
	.08	.14	.00	.09
similarity of social skills	-.00	.07	.01	.04
similarity of interests and leisure	.02	-.15	-.09	-.10
complementarity/being opposites				

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The discrepancy evaluation for the sense of humor in both instances (ideal partner vs. actual partner) did not correlate significantly with global dyadic adjustment or any of its dimensions, as we expected. Instead, we could identify a discrepancy evaluation for intelligence which significantly correlated with consensus (r_s= .29, p< .01) and with dyadic adjustment (r_s= .20, p< .05). This suggests that the higher the discrepancy evaluation between the ideal partner and the actual partner for the intelligence characteristic is, the more partners find easily a consensus and are more adjusted to the relationship. To get a broader picture of the results obtained, we analyzed the data by gender of participants. We summarize the data obtained below (Table 8. Table 9):

Table 8. Spearman's correlation between the discrepancy in characteristics and the Revised DAS scale for males

Characteristics	Consensus	Satisfaction	Cohesion	Dyadic adjustment
physical attractiveness	-.03	-.03	-.03	.08
Intelligence	.20	-.01	.11	.13
Ambition	.10	-.04	.21	.17
warmth and kindness	.08	-.18	-.07	-.07
money/ earning potential	.03	-.04	.05	.02
expressiveness and openness	*-.05*	.01	-.13	-.09
social status	.10	-.03	.28*	.14
sense of humor	.00	-.13	-.17	-.14
exciting personality	.24	.08	.00	.15
similarity of background	-.14	-.11	-.04	-.10
similarity of attitudes and values	.00	-.15	.17	.02
	.14	.17	.17	.19
similarity of social skills	.07	.12	.09	.11
similarity of interests and leisure	.07	-.19	-.01	-.09

complementarity/being opposites				

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9. Spearman's correlation between the discrepancy in characteristics and the Revised DAS scale for females

Characteristics	Consensus	Satisfaction	Cohesion	Dyadic adjustment
physical attractiveness	-.23	-.25	-.00	-.19
intelligence	.32*	.06	.16	.25*
ambition	.10	.03	-.01	.08
warmth and kindness	.14	-.08	-.07	.01
money/ earning potential	.24	-.00	-.01	.10
expressiveness and openness	*-.01*	.13	.06	.08
social status	.17	-.11	-.05	.02
sense of humor	.21	.24	.18	.24
exciting personality	.04	-.00	.00	.05
similarity of background	.16	.12	.14	.22
similarity of attitudes and values	.18	-.05	-.05	.02
	.02	.11	-.14	.00
similarity of social skills	-.08	.04	-.05	-.01
similarity of interests and leisure	.01	-.10	-.17	-.09
complementarity/being opposites				

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Not even as a result of statistical analysis taking into account the participants' gender, the discrepancy evaluation for the sense of humor in both instances (ideal partner vs. actual partner) did not correlate significantly with the global dyadic adjustment or any of its dimensions, as we expected. For the male participants, the discrepancy scores related to the social status characteristic correlated significantly and positively with cohesion (r_s = .28, p <.05). Thus, the higher the discrepancy scores for this characteristic, the greater the cohesion.

Regarding the female participants, the physical attractiveness characteristic correlated significantly and negatively with relationship satisfaction (r_s = -.25, p <.05). Therefore, the fewer discrepancy scores between the physical attractiveness evaluations, the higher the relationship satisfaction is for women. On the other hand, the discrepancy scores between intelligence evaluation were significantly and positively correlated with consensus (r_s = .32, p <.05) and dyadic adjustment (r_s = .25, p <.05). Thus, the higher the discrepancy evaluation between the ideal and the actual

partner for the intelligence characteristic, the more easily women will find a consensus and will be more adjusted to their relationship.

6. Discussions

Across all types of relationships, intelligence and sense of humor were judged to be the most desirable attributes a partner could have. Previous research also identified these characteristics that could have both a friend and a romantic partner but also some different ones: enthusiasm, good looking, having a good sense of humor, honesty, intelligence, kindness, sentimental and witty [26]. Sprecher and Regan [5] also identified a sense of humor as a high-valued characteristic across relationship types but also characteristics, such as warmth and kindness, expressiveness and openness. However, the authors conducted their study to a significantly higher number of participants (n = 700), and it is known that partner preferences assume cultural influences [31].

The obtained results suggest that humor is a characteristic recognized as important across the analyzed relationship types. Both in romantic relationships (rank 3), and in friendships (rank 4), sense of humor was among the first preferences of the participants. Although there were no significant differences in romantic relationships between ideal and actual partner evaluation on humor, the results showed a clear difference between the evaluations of romantic relationships and friendships. The participants in the study considered the sense of humor significantly more important in a romantic relationship (actual or ideal) than in a friendship. Previous studies [5] also indicated that humor was perceived as more important (necessary) in romantic relationships compared with friendships.

The participants in our study chose warmth and kindness, intelligence, sense of humor, expressiveness and openness as the most desirable characteristics in romantic relationships (ideal/ actual partner) and in the friendships they had a preference for intelligence, similarity of attitudes and values, similarity on interests and leisure activities and sense of humor. Other characteristics (e.g. physical attractiveness) were also significantly more important in romantic relationships than in friendships, as already shown by Buss [33]. Regarding building friendships among young adults, most respondents to a survey considered relevant the following attributes on the groundwork of which they constituted their first allies in college: shared interests and values, sense of humor, sexual orientation, musical preferences and passions [29].

The participants also distinguished between romantic relationships (ideal/ actual partner) and friendships. Thus, the participants considered it significantly more important for an ideal partner to have characteristics such as physical attractiveness, ambition, warmth and kindness, expressiveness and openness, sense of humor, exciting personality and similarity of social skills compared to a best friend. On the other hand, the characteristics considered more important (necessary) in friendships were: earning potential, social status, complementarity / being opposites on personality characteristics unlike romantic relationships (ideal partner dimension). Regarding an actual partner, the participants rated as significantly more important in an actual partner characteristic such as: physical attractiveness, ambition, warmth and kindness, expressiveness and openness, sense of humor, the similarity of social skills compared to a best friend. The earning potential, social status, similarity of attitudes and values, similarity of interests and leisure activities, complementarity / being opposites on personality characteristics were instead evaluated as significantly more important (necessary) in friendships than in romantic relationships (actual partner dimension). Sprecher and Regan's study [5] showed similar results, but also a series of differences. Thus, the participants preferred physical attractiveness, social status or other personality characteristics, such as warmth, expressiveness, humor, intelligence in a romantic partner compared to friendships [5].

Regarding gender differences, we failed to obtain significant differences related to humor in the two types of analyzed relationships. Our results confirm the previous study of Sprecher and Regan[5]. Other characteristics experienced a substantial impact in this regard: ambition, earning potential, social status, warmth and kindness and intelligence. According to previous evolutionary theories [33],[34], women considered significantly more important for a romantic partner to be ambitious, to have an earning potential, a social status but also to be warm and kind. A study by Rusu and Bencic [14] on the Romanian population supports evolutionary theories related to partner choices. Therefore, Romanian men are resource bidders, looking for a partner in good health and fertility, while women turn to attributes indicating prosperity [14].

Previous studies show that in couple relationships, both women and men found kindness and understanding, but also intelligence among the most important characteristics in a romantic partner [33],[35]. Considering friendships, men found intelligence as being significantly more important than women. In friendships, men also identified humor, kindness, and personality as important while women considered kindness as a priority [27].

In romantic relationships, major discrepancies between the ideal and the actual partner can lead to discouragement, rejection, and dissatisfaction in the current relationship [19]. The discrepancy evaluation of sense of humor in both instances (ideal and actual partner) did not correlate significantly with global dyadic adjustment or with any of its dimensions. There are several studies [22],[23] which show the importance of humor in the context of romantic ideal standards. On the other hand, the discrepancy between the actual and ideal partner's scores for the following characteristics: physical attractiveness, intelligence, social status, exciting personality, complementary/ being opposites on personality characteristics, correlated significantly with dyadic adjustment. Regarding men, evaluation discrepancy for the characteristics, social status, and similarity in attitudes and values, correlated significantly, but in a positive way with cohesion and evaluation discrepancies for exciting personality characteristics significantly and positively correlated with consensus. Regarding women, when the physical attractiveness discrepancy rate was lower, the scores for consensus, satisfaction, and dyadic adjustment were higher. On the other hand, the higher the intelligence and financial potential discrepancy scores, the higher the consensus. Both women and men [20] appreciated as important to a potential partner the characteristics relating to proximity and intimacy (e..g kindness, responsibility, loyalty) and characteristics related to the attractiveness and social visibility (ex. physical attractiveness, financial resources, social status). Fletcher et al. [15] identified three factors related to the qualities of an ideal partner: warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status-resources. Both sexes [20] appreciated as important to a potential partner characteristic relating to proximity and intimacy (ex. kindness, responsibility, loyalty) and characteristics related to the attractiveness and social visibility (ex. physical attractiveness, financial resources, social status).

In conclusion, the results of our study showed that humor is rated as a significant more important/necessary characteristic in romantic relationships compared to friendships. However, we were unable to achieve significant gender differences regarding humor across relationship types, other characteristics being considered more important/ necessary (ambition, earning potential, social status, warmth and kindness, intelligence). Nor the evaluation discrepancy for the sense of humor characteristic did not correlate significantly with dyadic adjustment or with any of its dimensions. A limitation of the study was the small sample size (n = 120), and in analyzing friendships we did not differentiate between friends gender of these relationships, which could have had implications for our study. We presume that most of the participants considered a friend of the same sex.

We believe that the non-parametric methods used were appropriate to our study; however, we do not dispute the lower statistical value of these methods. Further research could take into account these considerations and by extending these matters they might bring more clarity in this area. So far as we are aware, there has been little investigation into partners' preferences in Romanian samples [14], therefore this study also constitutes an important step towards understanding the particularities of the Romanian population in the context of the partners' preferences.

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