

The Impact of Female Physical Attractiveness on Moral Decision-Making

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of female physical attractiveness and dilemma type on moral decision-making. Taking college students as subjects, using the classical dilemma paradigm, a 2 (face attractiveness: high, low) × 2 (dilemma type: self-involvement, non-self-involvement) two-factor mixed experimental design was used. The results showed that: (1) the gender of the subjects had no significant effect on moral decision-making, and both men and women were affected by the attractiveness of women's appearance; (2) in the self-involvement situation, the subjects' utilitarian choices were significantly lower than those in the non-self-involvement. (3) In the female protagonist situation with high physical attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices of the subjects was significantly lower than that in the low attractive female protagonist situation; (4) In the situation of high physical attractiveness, self-involved in dilemma The number of choices in utilitarianism was significantly less than the number of non-self involved in the dilemma. The results showed that the attractiveness of women's appearance can affect the judgment of others to a certain extent.

1. Introduction

Beauty is justice? In many cases, the appearance of others can influence people's judgment. In daily interpersonal communication, the first thing what people see is the appearance of others. Appearance is the first visual stimuli presented by others to individuals when they meet others, and it affects some of people's choices and thoughts. It is often assumed that individuals with high physical attractiveness seem to have more or better chances or outcomes than individuals with less attractive physical appearance. In interacting with others, the face of a character is an important clue for people to form the impression of others, and the attractiveness of the face is an important feature of the character's face. There is such a phenomenon in life that beautiful girls are always easy to be helped by others of the opposite sex. Likewise, we generally think that those who are relatively good-looking are good in heart and morals. Studies have shown that most people form the impression that "beauty is good", and people tend to have some positive thoughts, attitudes and beliefs about individuals with high physical attractiveness, such as they are more likely to be considered honest, credible, more friendly and more moral[1,2]. Physical attractiveness can affect

not only people's trust in others, but also political elections, and even a baby's physical attractiveness can affect the emotional experience of the caregiver and other adults, and the infant's attachment to the primary caregiver [3,4]. Therefore, it can be seen from previous research that people's perception and pursuit of beauty have a non-negligible impact on some of our judgments, decisions, and choices when we are unconscious.

As a common and mature norm of a society, decision-making morality reflects the cultural customs of a country to a certain extent. Moral decision-making means that when individuals deal with a large number of behavioral choices, they make judgments about the right and wrong of these behaviors, or make moral evaluations and choices on behavioral norms [5]. Greene et al. pointed out that people generally have two situations when making moral decisions, one is utilitarian choice and the other is deontological choice [6]. Utilitarianism means that when people make decisions, they often only focus on whether they can get benefits, and they don't care about morality. On the other hand, deontology is the opposite. People who hold deontology believe that decisions must be made with morality as the standard, and decisions that violate morality are negative. In the classic dilemma experiment, utilitarian choice is often seen as an important measure of moral decision-making. For example, some studies have examined the impact of emotional involvement on moral decision-making and found that when individuals are in high-emotional self-involvement, their utilitarian bias is lower than that of low-emotional self-involvement [7]. Another study used junior high school students as subjects to examine the impact of physical attractiveness on moral decision-making. In the "outsider" task, junior high school students were less likely to choose between pushing and pulling levers when faced with a highly attractive victim. That is, the utilitarian bias is lower [8].

By summarizing previous studies, it is not difficult to find that physical attractiveness is an important factor affecting social interaction. Studies have shown that individuals with relatively high physical attractiveness will receive more rewards and less punishment, and it has a moderating effect on the sense of fairness, and people will show more unfair behaviors towards individuals with high physical attractiveness [9]. Not only that, there is a correlation between physical attractiveness and positive social bias. When the bystanders present are women with high physical attractiveness, male subjects will contribute more to public goods, and they also spend more time in their spare time doing charitable acts of their own accord [10]. However, it is worth thinking about, is the attractiveness of women really their innate advantages? In which context this effect is more pronounced, and in other contexts it is difficult to play. At the same time, most of the previous studies used men as subjects to explore the influence of women's physical attractiveness on their social behavior, while ignoring women's subjects. At the same time, based on this, this study intends to use both men and women as subjects, using the classic dilemma paradigm, to examine the different effects of women's physical attractiveness on moral decision-making. The research hypotheses are as follows: Female physical attractiveness significantly affects moral decision-making, but no gender differences; Among different types of dilemmas, the choice of utilitarian bias in self-involved dilemmas is significantly lower than that in non-self-involved dilemmas; At the same time, under the condition of high appearance attractiveness, the utilitarian frequency of non-self-involved dilemma choices is significantly higher than that of self-involved dilemma choices.

2. Material and Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 141 college students were recruited in this study, of which 97.43% came from WeChat and QQ invitations, and 2.57% came from on-site invitations. Among them, 89 subjects were

invited to participate in the preparatory experiment to select the picture materials required for the formal experiment. The remaining 52 subjects participated in the formal experiment, including 26 males and 26 females, with an average age of 20.53 years. All subjects were from the same university and had normal vision and reading ability.

2.2. Experimental Design

The study adopted a 2 (face attractiveness: high, low) \times 2 (dilemma type: self-involvement, non-self-involvement) two-factor mixed experimental design. Among them, facial attractiveness is a between-subject variable, used as a manipulation index for appearance attractiveness, dilemma type is a within-subject variable, and the number of subjects' utilitarian decision-making is used as a dependent variable. In addition, for research purposes, gender was considered only as a demographic variable.

2.3. Experimental Material

2.3.1. Face Attractive Photos

The pictures used to measure the attractiveness of faces are all from the Internet, and the subjects are not familiar with the faces in the pictures, and there are no public figures such as celebrities, as shown in Figure 1. All face pictures (64 in total) are neutral expressions, and the eyes are straight ahead. First of all, in the preliminary experiment, 89 college students were invited to rate the attractiveness of the women in the picture materials through the questionnaire method (the scoring standard was 1 to 7 points), and then the average was calculated, according to the scores from high to low (or from low to high) and select 10 high suction and low attractive pictures each. Among them, ten high-attraction pictures are selected from high to bottom according to the mean (the average of ten high-attraction pictures was 5.49); And ten pictures of low physical attractiveness are selected from low to high by the mean (the mean of ten low attractive pictures is 2.68).



Figure 1: Examples of face attractive photos

2.3.2. Moral Dilemma Materials

The moral dilemma materials designed by Greene et al. are used, in which the types of dilemmas are divided into personal involvement in moral dilemmas and impersonal involvement in moral dilemmas, and five of each dilemma are used as experimental situation materials[11]. The number of words for each dilemma is controlled between 150-200 words. The 10 moral dilemma materials

in the experiment are presented randomly. After each dilemma is presented, there will be two options of "yes" and "no", and the subjects need to make a choice. "Yes" represent the choice of utilitarian tendencies; "No" represent the choice of deontological tendencies. An example of "personal involvement" is as follows: Suppose you work the night shift in a hospital. There was a sudden explosion in the building next to it, and the explosion released toxic gas, which entered the hospital along the ventilation duct. There are two wards linked to this ventilation duct, one of which has five patients, but the other has one patient (this patient is the person in the picture). If you don't do anything, the smoke will follow the ventilation ducts into the rooms of the five patients on the left, and they will also die. The only way to save the five was to twist the switch. But twist the switch and the poisonous gas will be redirected into the room of a patient on the right, causing the patient to die. Will you turn this switch on?

2.3.3. Experimental Procedure

The experiments were written by E-prime software and completed by the subjects in the laboratory. The whole experiment is divided into four stages: instruction language, reading in difficult situations, picture presentation, and response selection, as shown in Figure 2. First, the subjects read a paragraph of instruction before the formal experiment, and then they can press the space bar to enter the situation presentation stage; In this stage, a situation is presented to the subjects in the form of text. After reading the situation, press the space bar to enter the picture presentation stage. At this stage, a picture of the protagonist in the situation will appear in the middle of the computer screen. Finally, the subjects press the space bar to enter the decision-making stage. There are two options in the decision-making stage (Q means “yes”, P means “no”). After making a decision, the subjects can move on to the next question, and the experiment ends when all answers are completed. After the experiment is over, a certain gift will be given as a reward.

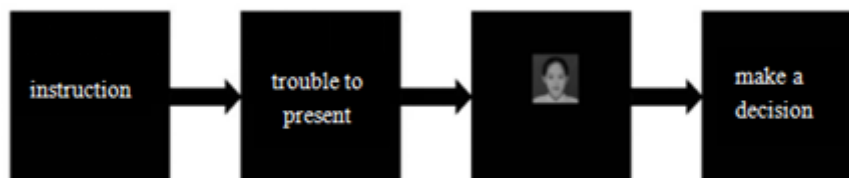


Figure 2: Experimental procedure

3. Result

The average number of utilitarian choices of the subjects under different experimental conditions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard deviations of the number of utilitarian choices under each experimental condition

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>
sex	male	26	6.31±2.81
	female	26	6.88±2.18
self-involvement	high attractiveness	26	2.12±1.24
	low attractiveness	26	3.85±1.12
non-self-involvement	high attractiveness	26	3.12±1.21
	low attractiveness	26	4.12±1.21

The results showed that the average number of male subjects was 6.31, and the standard deviation was 2.81; the average number of female subjects was 6.88, and the standard deviation was 2.18. There was no significant difference in the utilitarian times between the two ($F=2.80, P>0.05$), indicating that there was no gender difference in the subjects' moral decision-making. Further repeated measures analysis showed that the interaction between gender and physical attractiveness and dilemma type was not significant ($F_{(\text{sex} \times \text{attractiveness})}=0.038, P>0.05$; $F_{(\text{sex} \times \text{dilemma Type})}=0.14, P>0.05$; $F_{(\text{sex} \times \text{attraction} \times \text{dilemma Type})}=2.61, P>0.05$).

Two-factor repeated-measures ANOVA was performed with female appearance attractiveness and type of moral dilemma as independent variables and the number of utilitarian choices as dependent variables. The results showed that the main effect of female physical attractiveness was significant ($F=25.28, P<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.30$). Compared with low physical attractiveness, when subjects faced women with high physical attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices they made significantly decreased. The main effect of dilemma type is significant ($F=16.59, P<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.25$). The number of utilitarian choices in the self-involvement situation is significantly more than that in the self-involvement situation. The interaction between female physical attractiveness and dilemma type is significant ($F=5.50, P<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.10$). The further simple effect found that under the condition of high physical attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices in self-involved dilemmas was significantly less than that in non-self-involved dilemmas ($P<0.001$), in Figure 3.

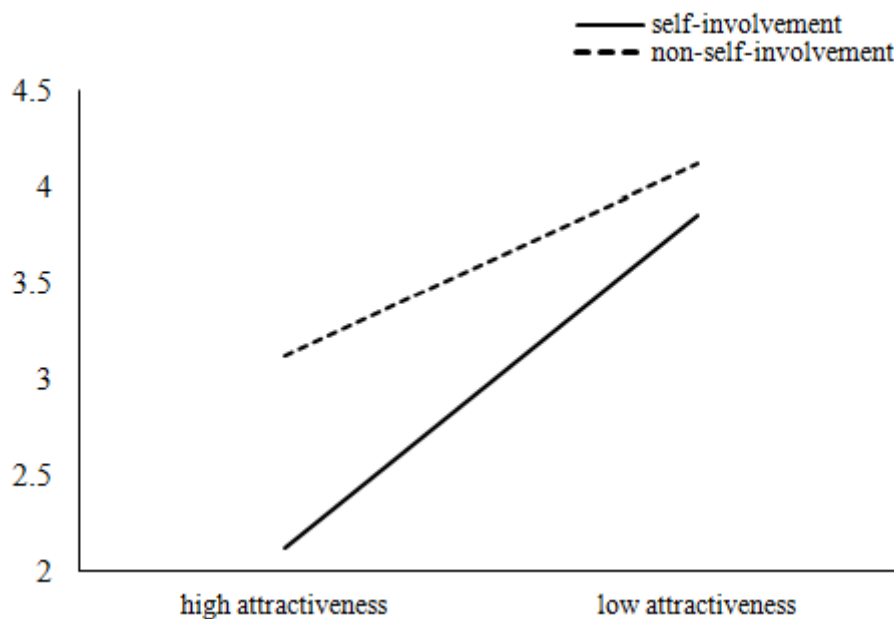


Figure 3: The impact of dilemma type and physical attractiveness on moral decision making

4. Discussion

This study examines the impact of women's physical attractiveness on moral decision-making in different dilemma types. The results show that there is no gender difference in ethical decision-making; Under different conditions of physical attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices significantly decreased when subjects faced pictures of women with high physical attractiveness; In different dilemma types, the number of utilitarian choices made by subjects in the non-self-involved situation is significantly higher than that in the self-involved situation; At the same time, under the condition of high appearance attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices in self-involved dilemmas is significantly less than that in non-self-involved dilemmas.

4.1. There is No Gender Difference in Moral Decision-Making in Female Physical Attractiveness Situations

The study found that there were no gender differences in moral decision-making in the context of women's physical attractiveness. This result is consistent with previous studies [12]. To a certain extent, this shows that beautiful women are always favored by the subjects, regardless of gender. Before the experiment, Ding searched on the Internet with the topic of "men are more likely to be affected by women's appearance attractiveness or women are more likely to be affected by appearance attractiveness" influences. Based on previous research and answers from internet users, this study further explores whether gender affects moral decision-making bias under different conditions of female attractiveness? The results showed that when faced with the choice of moral decision, the subjects did not show gender differences, that is, the number of utilitarian choices did not differ according to the gender of the subjects.

4.2. Female Physical Attraction and Dilemma Type Combined in Moral Decision Making

The results of the study show that under different types of dilemmas, the utilitarian choices of the subjects are significant. In the self-involved dilemma, the number of utilitarian choices made by the subjects was significantly lower than that in the non-self-involved dilemma. This result suggests that individuals' utilitarian tendencies tend to decrease in self-involvement scenarios, whereas individuals' utilitarian tendencies tend to increase in non-self-involvement scenarios.

At the same time, it can be seen from previous research that some social behaviors of the subjects will be affected by their attractive appearance, and it is shown that people will prefer appearance to outstanding individuals. For example, some researchers believe that the attractiveness of others' appearance will affect the moral judgment of individuals [13]. Song pointed out in her research that whether it is from the perspective of an "inner" or an "outsider", facial attractiveness will affect the individual's moral judgment. The moral decision-making of college students is influential [8, 13]. The results of this study are consistent with the above-mentioned studies, showing that the number of rescues of the protagonists with high attractiveness is significantly higher than that of individuals with low attractiveness in difficult situations. This result indicates that the subjects in the dilemma will be influenced by the appearance of the protagonist, and the subjects will be more moralistic and make less utilitarian choices in the face of the highly attractive subjects. But in the face of protagonists whose physical attractiveness is relatively low, the subjects' choices tend to be opposite, and they will choose utilitarianism more. This result reminds us that when making decisions, we should try to exclude the influence of other people's appearance and overcome the stereotype of appearance. Today's society is known as a society that looks at faces. The ancient adage left by the predecessors that you should not judge people by their appearance has long been forgotten by the world, and it is difficult to be sure if an actor is not attractive. This research inherits and develops the previous research, and the conclusions obtained are consistent with the previous conclusions. It can be seen that the influence of "face value" on us can be far-reaching.

In addition, from the simple effect analysis, it can be seen that female physical attractiveness and dilemma type jointly affect moral decision-making. Under the condition of high physical attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices in self-involved dilemmas is significantly less than that in non-ego-involved dilemmas. But, under the condition of low physical attractiveness, there is no significant difference between the two.

5. Conclusion

The main conclusions of this study are as follows: Female physical attractiveness and dilemma type work together in moral decision-making; at the same time, under the condition of high appearance attractiveness, the number of utilitarian choices in self-involved dilemmas is significantly less than that in non-self-involved dilemmas. In addition, this study only used college students as subjects, and the promotion of the results is limited to a certain extent, and future research can further expand the subject population and improve the ecological validity of the study.

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