

Physical Attractiveness in Relation to Personality Evaluation among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Physical attractiveness, especially facial attractiveness, is an important component of human interaction. The social benefits of an attractive appearance are widespread and marked. The characteristics associated with youth are also rated as attractive. While there is little evidence to suggest that facial attractiveness influences individuals' appraisal of themselves, it is clear that the judgments made by other people of facial appearance, may give rise to perceptions of positive or negative characteristics. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of relevant stereotypes in the context of the Big Five model. The present study examined whether physical attractiveness affect people's evaluations in relation to five personalities. It is found in existing researches that people who are attractive are also seen as having a variety of positive characteristics, and these traits are activated quickly and spontaneously when we see their faces (Olson & Marshuetz, 2005; van Leeuwen & Macrae, 2004). Attractive people are seen as more sociable, altruistic, and intelligent than their less attractive counterparts (Griffin & Langlois, 2006).

Keywords: Physical Attractiveness, Relation, Personality, Evaluation

The “what is beautiful is good” stereotype (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972) is a classic phenomenon in social psychology and implies that when forming impressions of others, perceiving a person as good-looking fosters positive expectations about personal characteristics. Physical attractiveness has been shown to generate a broadly favorable impression of both men and women (Langlois et al., 2000). Indeed, people seem to assume that positive interpersonal qualities and physical attractiveness are systematically linked (i.e., a “halo effect”) (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008; Callan, Powell, & Ellard, 2007; Smith, McIntosh, & Bazzini, 1999). The effects of attractiveness are strong and pervasive.

As Langlois et al. (2000) underline in their meta-analysis, attractiveness is a noteworthy advantage for both children and adults in almost every domain. Based on the “what is beautiful is good” effect (Dion et al., 1972), several studies (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; Langlois et al., 2000) demonstrated that this phenomenon

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functions as a stereotype, making the perceived link between appearance and personality larger than the actual link. Attractive targets are assessed as less introverted, neurotic and higher on Openness dimension than unattractive targets (Ćurković & Franc, 2010; Langlois et al., 2000). In sum, attractiveness leads perceivers to make strong inferences of personality goodness.

People are likely to arrange another person's perceptions and expectations around his or her race, gender, age and attractiveness, all measurable characteristics that represent our society's status. This definition is the basis of the theory of status characteristics (Berger et al., 1977). Expectations then frame how the individual is assessed and handled in social interactions and form the basis for disparity in interactions, according to the theory.

The attribution to physically attractive goals of desirable interpersonal characteristics and behavior is a projection of interpersonal goals; individuals want to establish and sustain strong social relations with attractive targets and then project these motives onto those goals. Although it may seem inappropriate and certainly not the only determinant of liking, people are strongly influenced, at least in initial encounters, by the physical attractiveness of their partners (Swami & Furnham, 2008).

Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, and Rottman (1966) arranged a field study in which college boys and girls were randomly paired with one another at a "computer dance." After the partners had danced and talked for a couple of hours, they were interviewed separately about their own preferences and characteristics as well as about their perceptions of their date. Walster and her colleagues found that the only important determinant of participants' liking for their date was his or her physical attractiveness.

Even infants who are only a year old prefer to look at faces that adults consider attractive rather than at unattractive faces (Langlois, Ritter, Roggman, & Vaughn, 1991).

People who are attractive are also seen as having a variety of positive characteristics, and these traits are activated quickly and spontaneously when we see their faces (Olson & Marshuetz, 2005; van Leeuwen & Macrae, 2004). Attractive people are seen as more sociable, altruistic, and intelligent than their less attractive counterparts (Griffin & Langlois, 2006).

Attractive people also have more choices of sex partners (Epstein, Klinkenberg, Scandell, Faulkner, & Claus, 2007), are more likely to be offered jobs (Dubois & Pansu, 2004), and may even live longer (Henderson & Anglin, 2003).

Researches has shown that a stereotype favorable to physically attractive individuals seems to exist. Seligman, Paschall, and Takata (1974) examined how this "what is beautiful is good" stereotype influences observers' attributions of responsibility to target persons. A significant interaction was found between physical attractiveness and the outcome of the event. Physically attractive women were seen as more responsible for a good outcome than unattractive women, while unattractive females were seen as more responsible for a bad outcome than attractive females.

McElroy and DeCarlo (1999) examined the role of physical attractiveness in the causal attribution process of saleswomen's performance. Sex-role stereotyping and attribution theory provide the theoretical framework for examining the influence of physical

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attractiveness in the evaluation process. Hypotheses of how physical attractiveness, sex role stereotyped products and performance information affect: (1) causal attributions used to explain saleswomen's performance, (2) expectations for future performance, and (3) decision confidence was developed. The results showed that physical attractiveness plays a limited role in evaluator causal attributions and expectations for future performance of saleswomen. However, physical attractiveness appears to have a significant influence on evaluator decision confidence.

After Physical Attractiveness of an individual, the focus shifts to their personality. The ability of personality traits to predict important life outcomes has generally been the course of action followed but as it is said, 'visuals are stronger than vocals', our physical appearances give away a lot more than we think. The society is nurtured in such a way that certain physical aspects would stereotypically give away how an individual actually is.

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. The study of personality focuses on two broad areas: One is understanding individual differences in particular personality characteristics, such as sociability or irritability. The other is understanding how the various parts of a person come together as a whole.

Personality measurement has traditionally been considered to require relatively lengthy questionnaires. The growing consensus about personality structure has increased the demand for personality assessment in a wide variety of research, including studies where lengthy measures are impractical. To address this, personality test construction, supported by a largely agreed Five Factor Model of personality, has moved toward shorter, though still psychometrically sound, measures (e.g., Gosling et al., 2003; Saucier, 1994).

Research on personality has been developed in various directions. One of these studies aim to investigate how individuals form impressions of others and how specific characteristics influence the expectations (i.e., Ćurković & Franc, 2010; Langlois et al., 2000). The other one has been studied mainly as an outcome of personality traits (i.e., Dilchert & Ones, 2008; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999), whereas here it is considered as a predictor of different personality inferences.

Many researchers interested in the consequences of personality traits have considered the Big Five dimensions as predictive elements of status attainment in the occupational domain (i.e., Judge et al., 1999).

There are considerable evidences indicating that children learn these stereotypes well before entering elementary school and that expect different behaviors from attractive and unattractive peers (e.g., Dion 1973; Langlois and Stephan 1977).

Although there remains some debate in trait theory over how many factors are necessary to provide a complete description of personality, consensus has now seemed to rest upon a five-factor solution consisting of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to experience (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999). Neuroticism refers to the vulnerability to emotional instability and self-consciousness. Openness is characterized by the cognitive disposition to creativity and esthetics. Agreeableness and extraversion focus on the interpersonal relationship: Extraversion reflects the tendency to be gregarious, enthusiastic, assertive, and to seek

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excitement, whereas agreeableness refers to the tendency to be warm, kind, gentle, trusting, and reliable. Conscientiousness is understood as the tendency toward dutifulness and competence. These five personal traits are viewed as the most basic dimensions of personality.

Goldberg and others have used a lexical approach, related to words and vocabulary of a language, to the study of personality to examine the factor structure of everyday personality-descriptive language. In the English language, five factors are frequently extracted from ratings on trait descriptors. Comparable solutions have been achieved in various other languages (Saucier, Hampson, & Goldberg, 2000). The second source of consensus is the questionnaire approach, best exemplified by the work of Costa and McCrae using the NEO-PI-R (e.g. Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The most widely used measure of Big five factor, NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), has 240 items which takes almost 45 minutes to complete. So, Costa and McCrae condensed it to 60 items (NEO-FFI, 1992).

Goldberg developed a set of 100 trait descriptors (20 for each factor) in 1992 for rating the self or others, and this was further condensed by Saucier (1994) to 40. Furthermore, John and colleagues (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John & Srivastava, 1999) have also produced the Big Five inventory (BFI), consisting of 44 short statements. Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann (2003) constructed an even shorter measure - a five-item measure and a ten-item measure of the Big Five.

Need of the Study

Physical attractiveness, especially facial attractiveness, is an important component of human interaction. The social benefits of an attractive appearance are widespread and marked. The characteristics associated with youth are also rated as attractive. While there is little evidence to suggest that facial attractiveness influences individuals' appraisal of themselves, it is clear that the judgments made by other people of facial appearance, may give rise to perceptions of positive or negative characteristics.

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of relevant stereotypes in the context of the Big Five model. The present study examined the association between physical attractiveness and five personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience, from both rater's perspective and from the individual perspective.

METHOD

Aim

To study the association between physical attractiveness and personality.

Hypothesis

H₀: There will be no significant difference between openness to experience and physical attractiveness.

H₀: There will be no significant difference between conscientiousness and physical attractiveness.

H₀: There will be no significant difference between extraversion and physical attractiveness.

H₀: There will be no significant difference between agreeableness and physical attractiveness.

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H0: There will be no significant difference between neuroticism and physical attractiveness.

Participants

The Study was divided into three segments. Each segment included 10, 20 and 30 young adults respectively. All the participants were females ranging from the age group of 18- 24 and the participants for any segment of the study were not repeated.

Measures

Independent Variables Manipulations

Attractiveness –Pictures of 20 models were rated by using a 9-point scale on the basis of facial and physical attractiveness (Cunningham and Pike, 1990), including facial symmetry, nose length, hip to body ratio and visible body mass index. Based on these evaluations, the 5 most attractive (M = 7.6, 7.55, 7.4, 7.2 and 7.05) and 5 least attractive models (M = 6.35, 6.3, 6.0, 5.85 and 5.45) were selected. This result was served as the independent variable in the analysis.

Dependent Measures

30 Participants were asked to evaluate the Big Five personality traits of the 5 most attractive and 5 least attractivemodels by means of five single items using a Bipolar Response Scale (Woods & Hampson, 2005).

Each item was made of two opposing descriptions representing the poles of a Big Five factor. A nine-point scale was placed between the two descriptions. In its original version, this scale was used to assess self-evaluations asking participants to indicate the extent to which one pole or the other best described them. We modified the instructions asking participants to evaluate the model in the photograph.

Also, the 10 shortlisted models; 5 most attractive and 5 least attractive according to the former ratings were asked to fill the self-report Bipolar Response Scale (Woods & Hampson, 2005) for further comparison.

Procedure

In the first segment of the study, 20 participants were shown 20 pictures of models which they rated on a 9-point rating scale based on facial and physical attractiveness. (Cunningham and Pike, 1990). Then, further after averaging the rating, pictures of 5 most attractive models and 5 least attractive models were taken for the second segment of the study.

During the second segment, 10 pictures obtained from the first segment of the study were shown to 30 different participants who were asked to evaluate the Big Five personality traits of the model by means of five single items using a Bipolar Response Scale (Woods & Hampson, 2005).

The average ratings of the 30 participants were then obtained and were compared to the ratings of the 10 shortlisted models who were also asked to fill the self-report Bipolar Response Scale (Woods & Hampson, 2005).

RESULT

In the first segment, on the basis of the ratings, on a 9-point bipolar scale, 10 models were shortlisted. Those models were further rated on a 5-point bipolar scale and bar graphs

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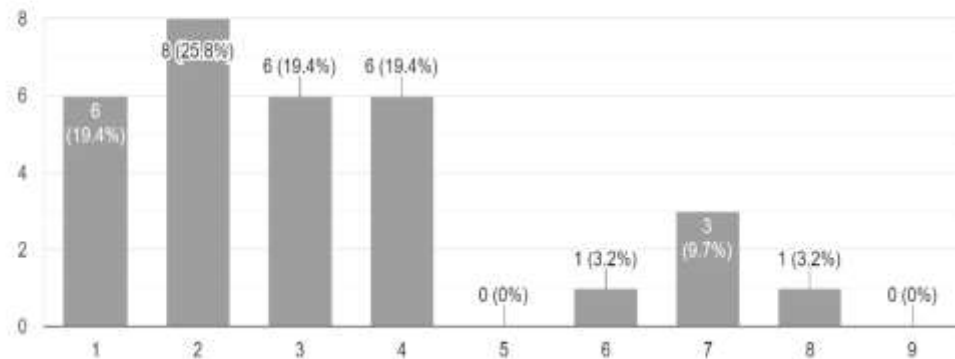
between the rating frequencies and the 5 factors; (extraversion, agreeableness conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness for experience) were obtained:

DATA ANALYSIS- Most Physically Attractive Models

Model 1. Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

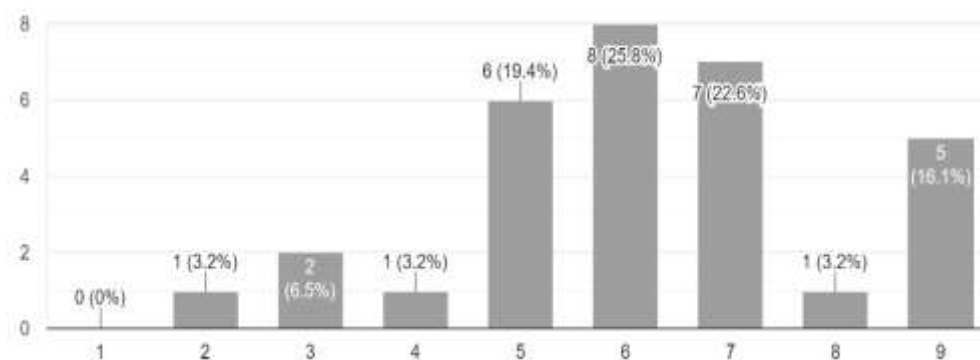
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

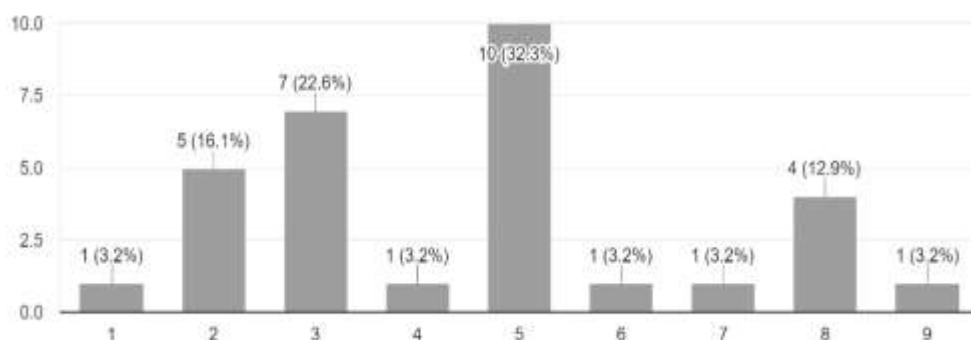
31 responses



Emotional Stability:

Description 3

31 responses

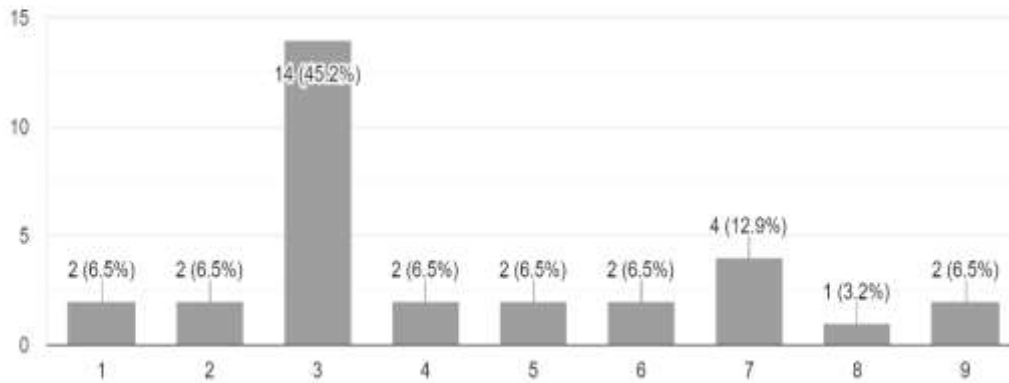


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Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

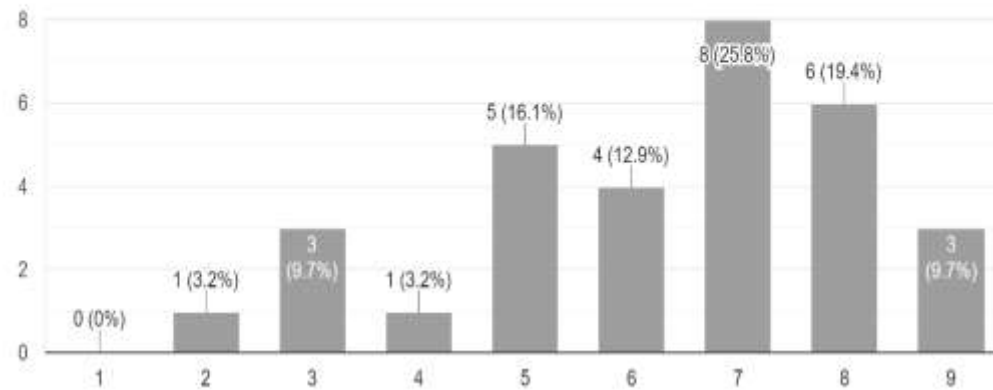
31 responses



Openness to Experience

Description 5

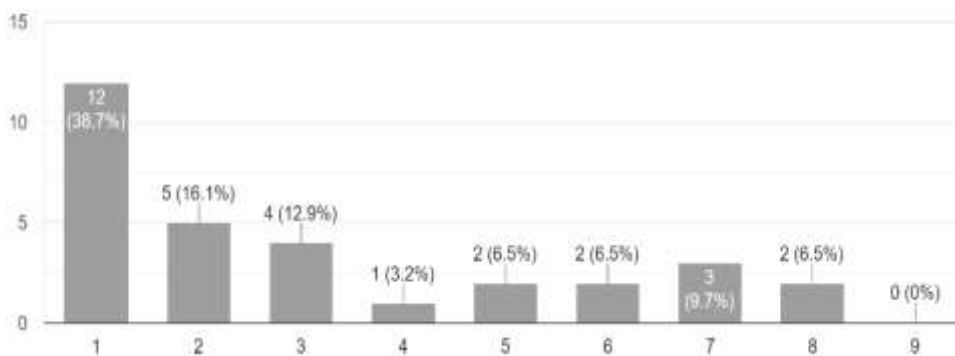
31 responses



MODEL 2 Extraversion (Reverse Coded):

Description 1

31 responses

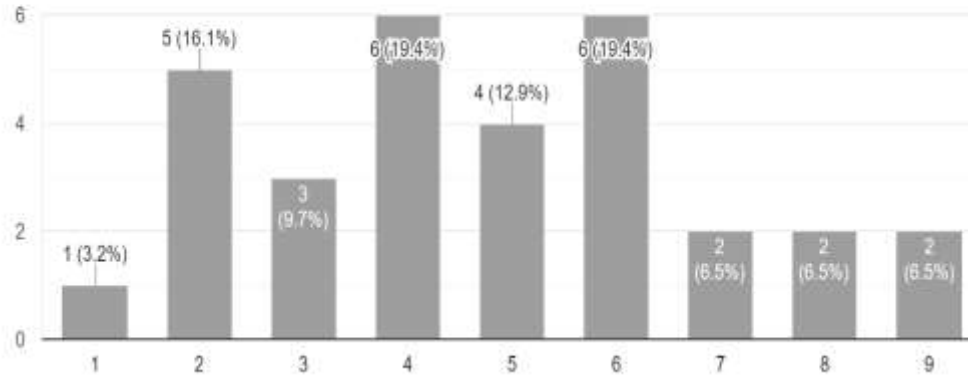


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Agreeableness:

Description 2

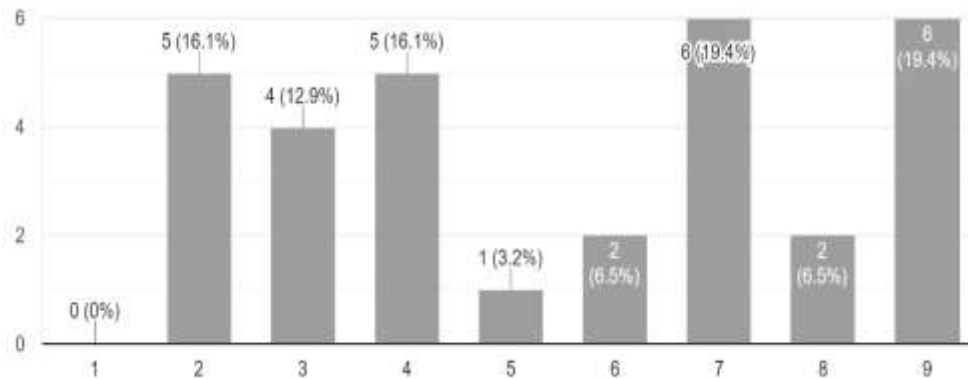
31 responses



Emotional Stability:

Description 3

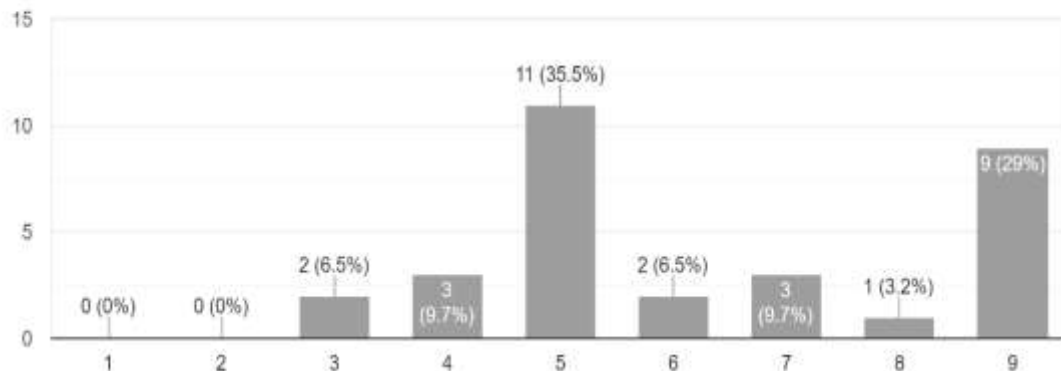
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded):

Description 4

31 responses

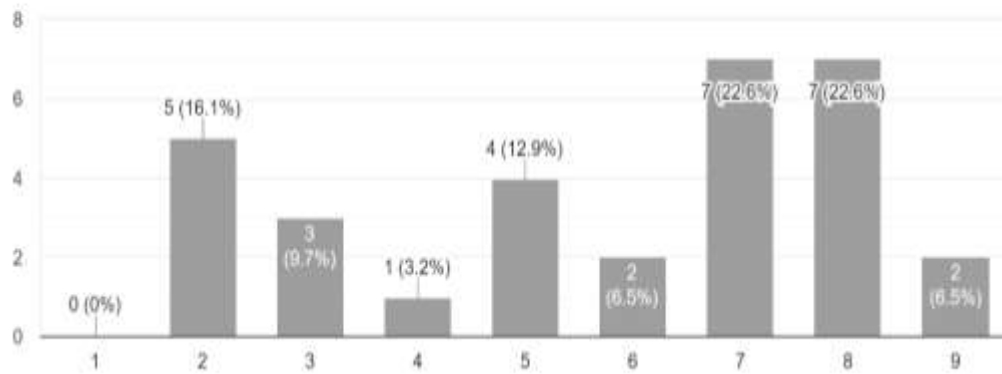


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Openness:

Description 5

31 responses

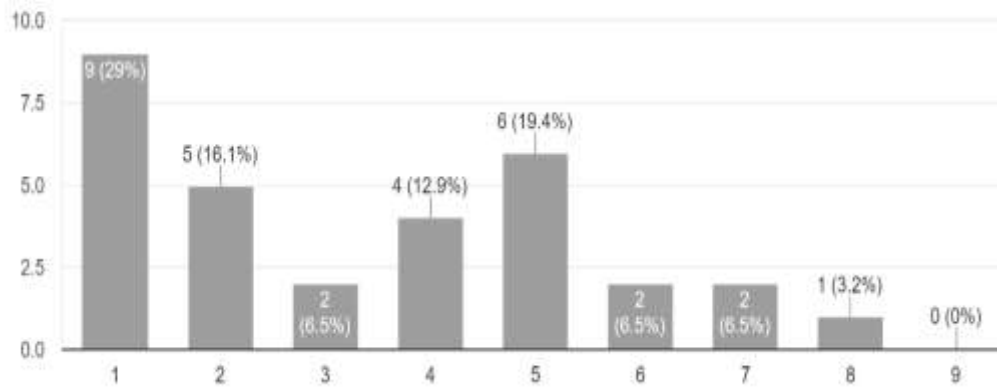


MODEL 3

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 1

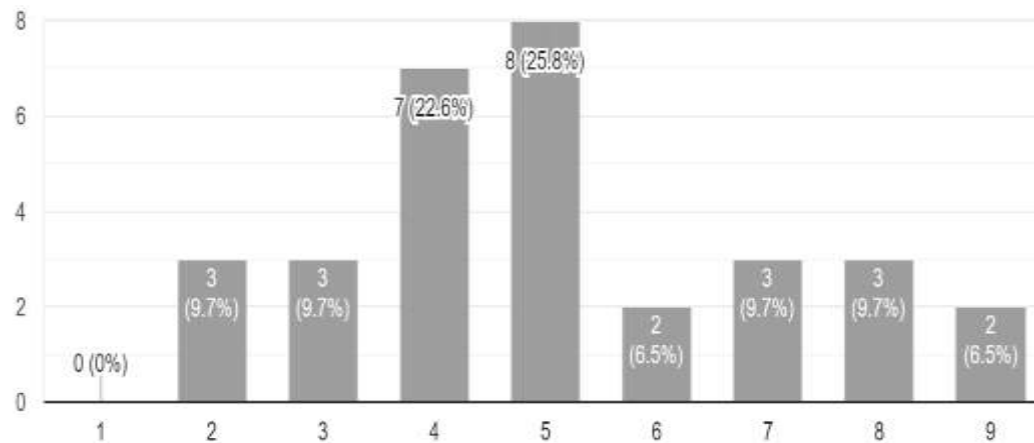
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

31 responses

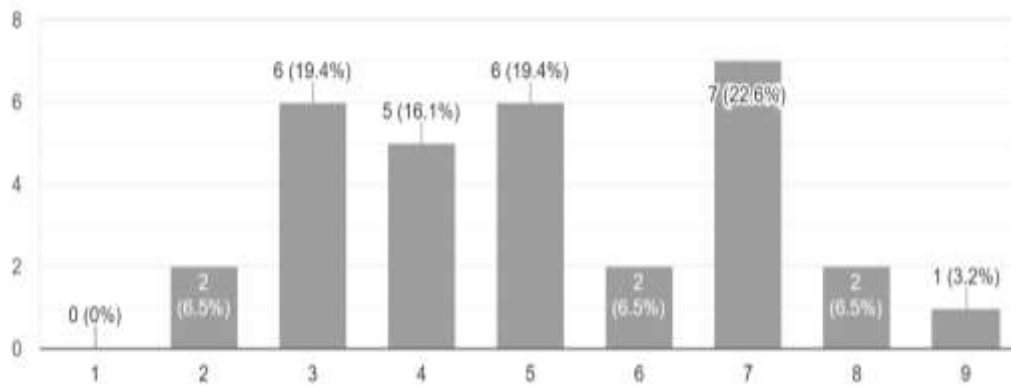


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Emotional Stability:

Description 3

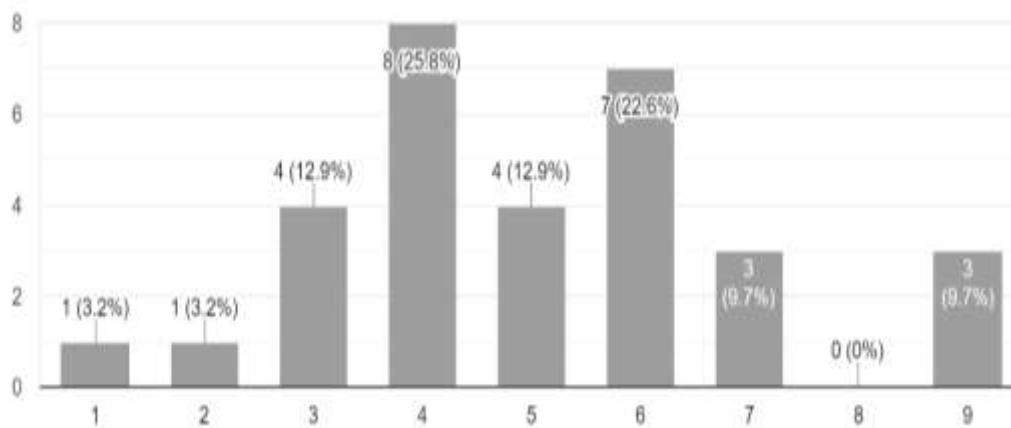
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Items):

Description 4

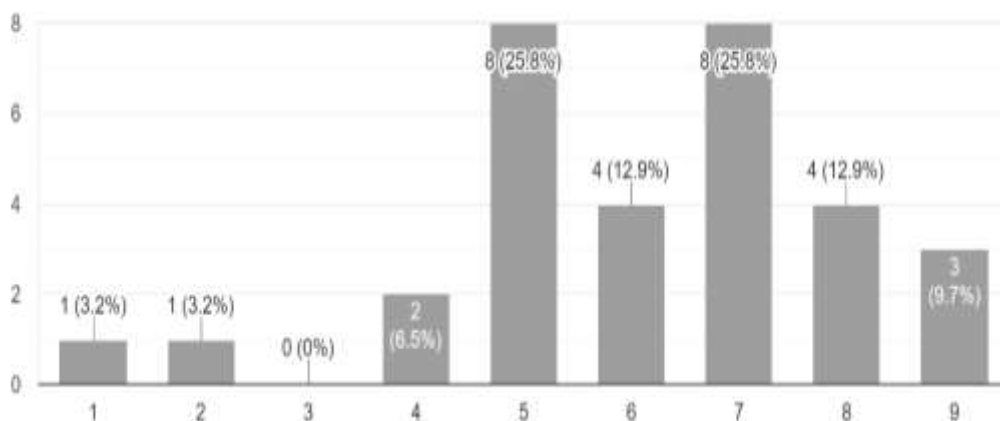
31 responses



Openness:

Description 5

31 responses



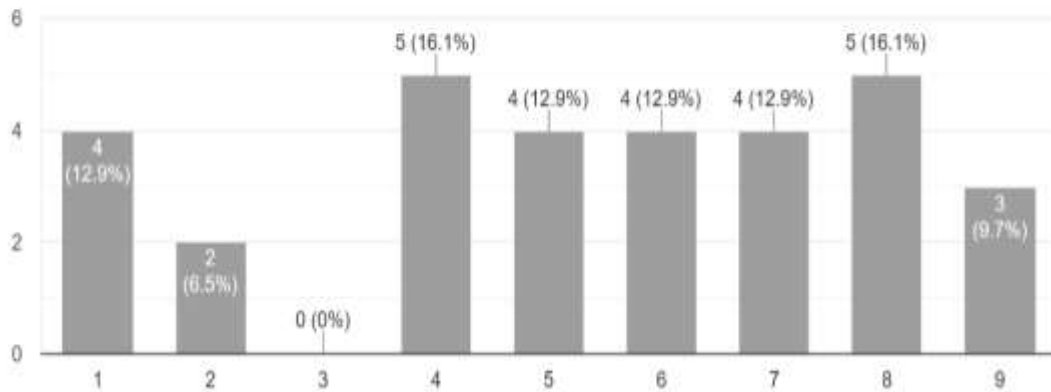
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MODEL 4:

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Items):

Description 1

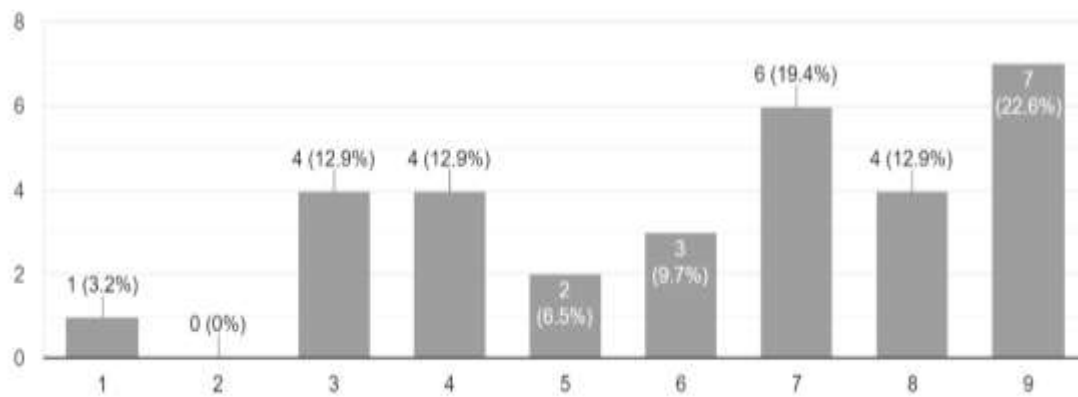
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

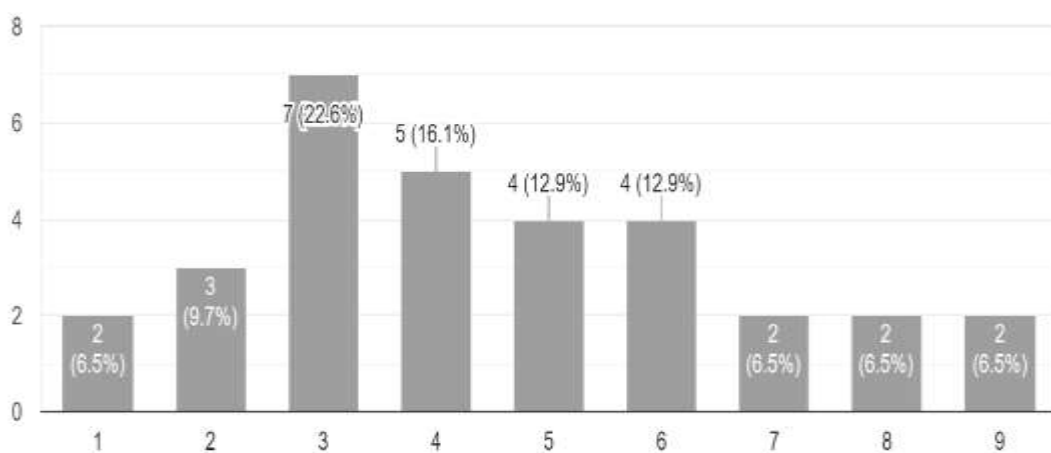
31 responses



Emotional Stability:

Description 3

31 responses

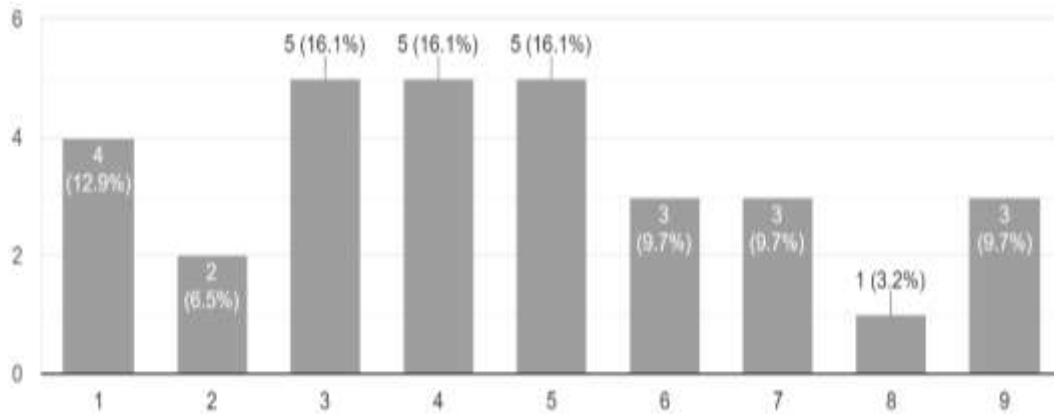


Physical Attractiveness in Relation to Personality Evaluation among Young Adults

Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded):

Description 4

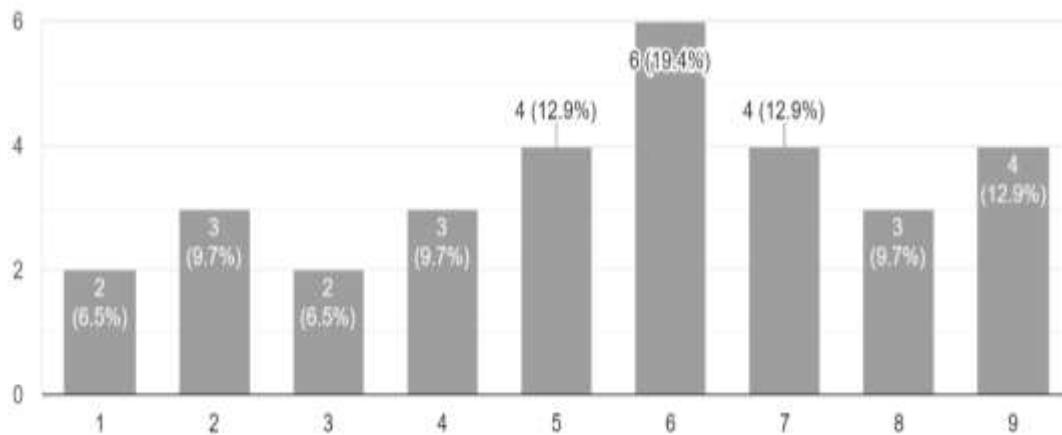
31 responses



Openness:

Description 5

31 responses

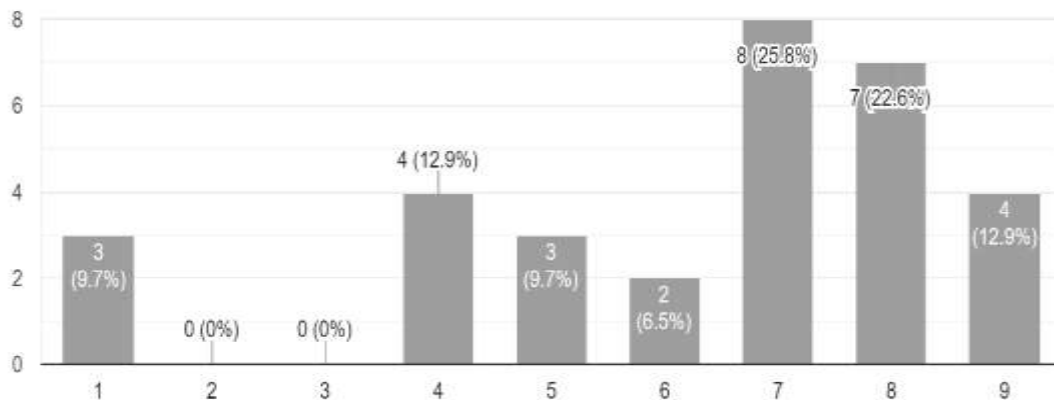


Model 5:

Extraversion (Reverse Coded):

Description 1

31 responses

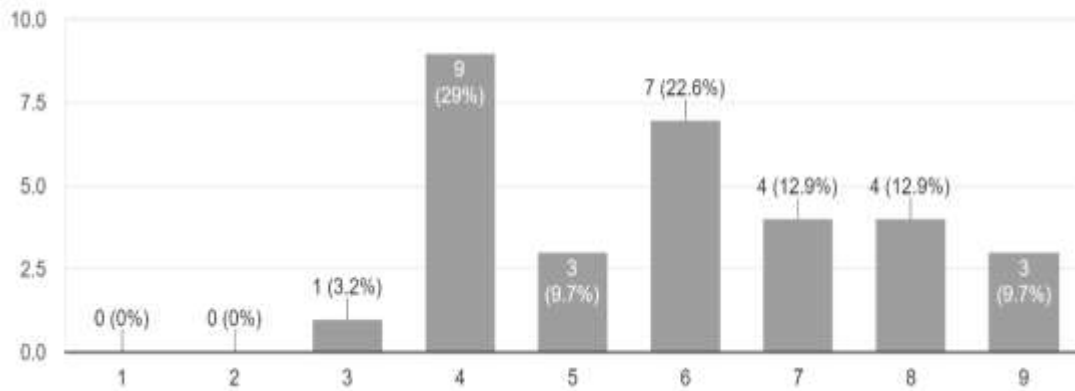


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Agreeableness:

Description 2

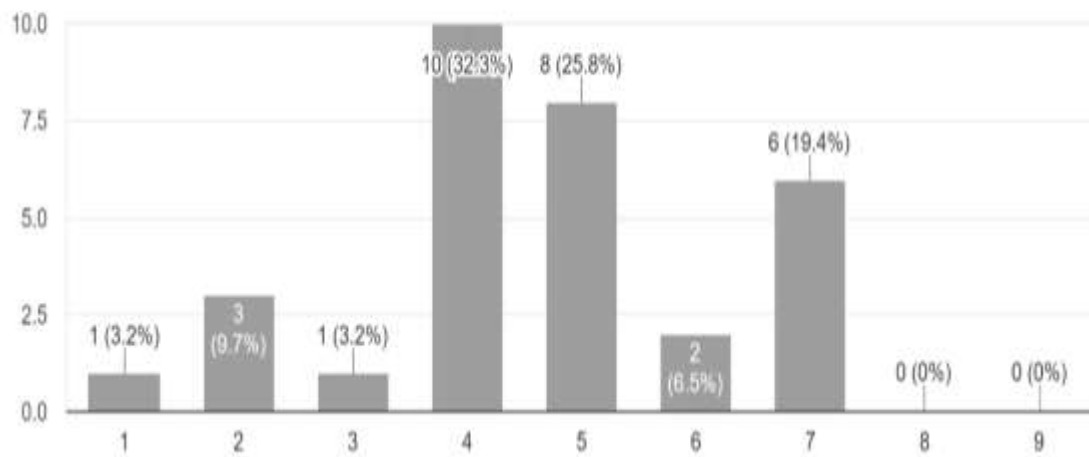
31 responses



Emotional Stability:

Description 3

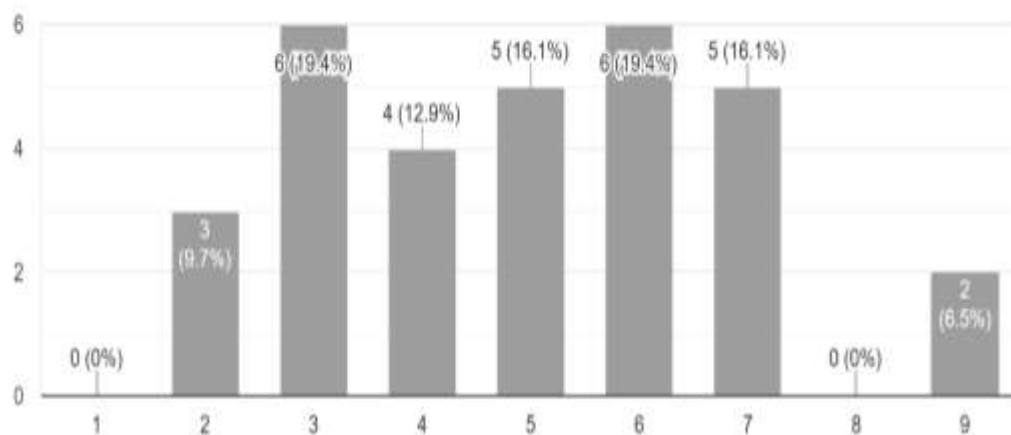
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded):

Description 4

31 responses

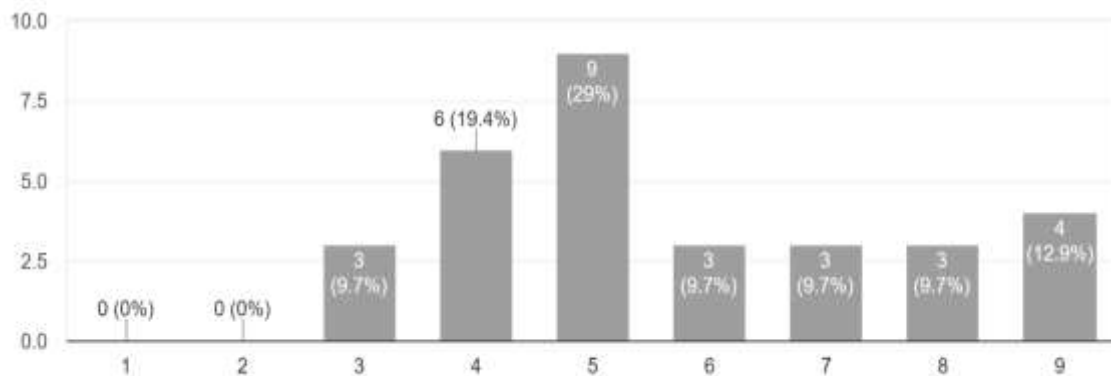


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Openness:

Description 5

31 responses



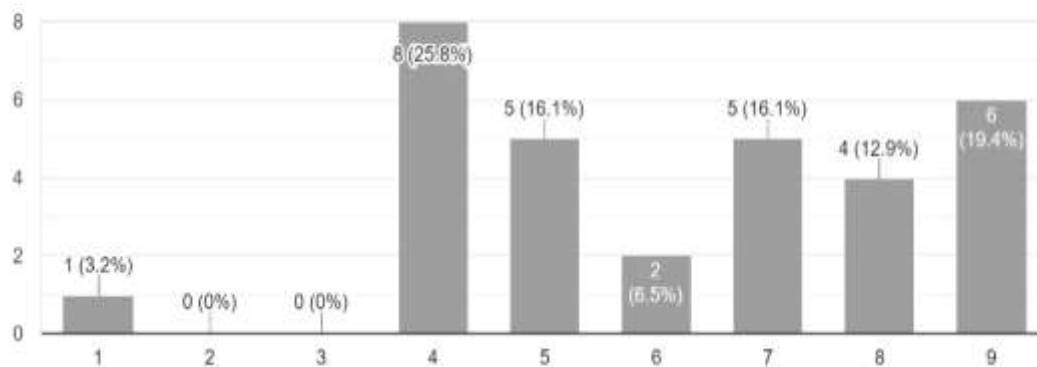
DATA ANALYSIS- Least Physically Attractive Models

Model 6.

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

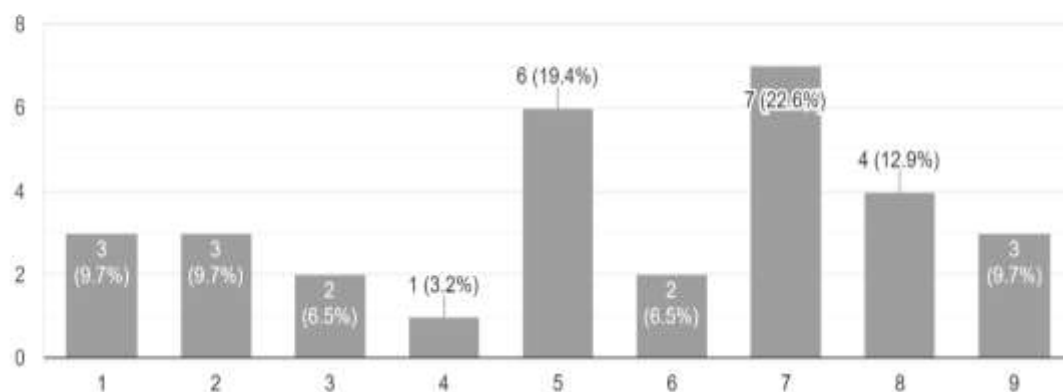
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

31 responses

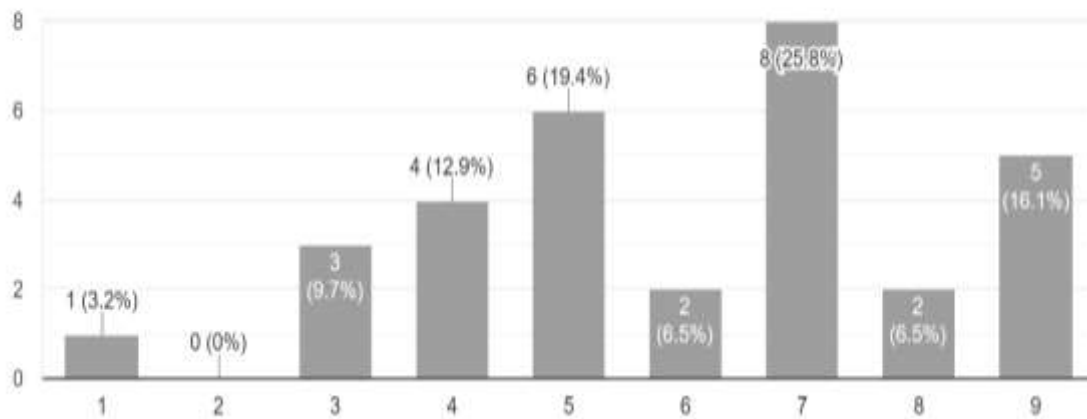


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Emotional Stability

Description 3

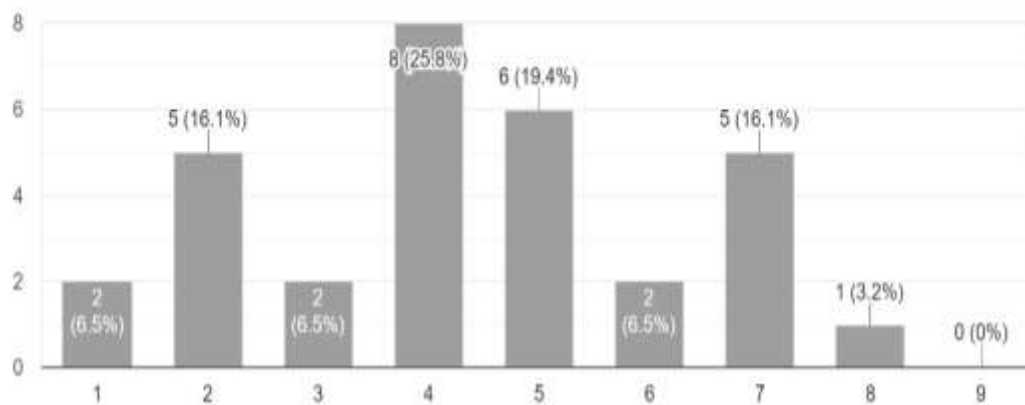
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

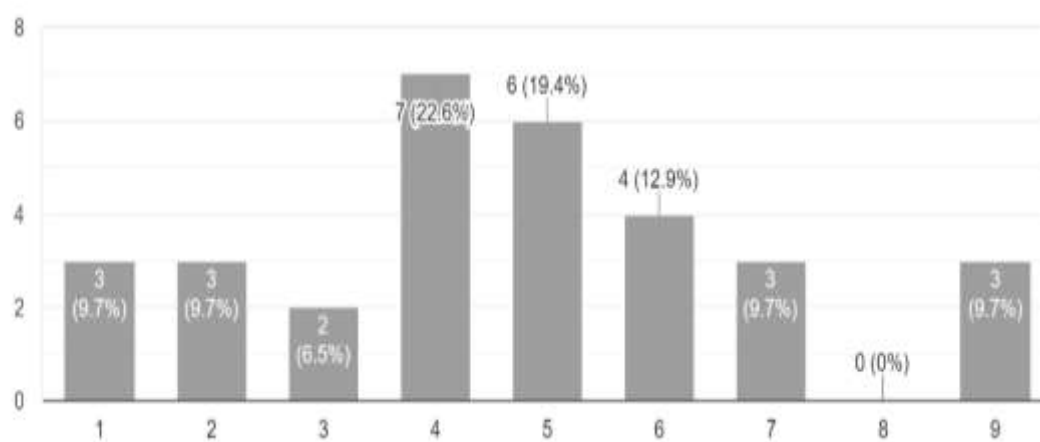
31 responses



Openness

Description 5

31 responses



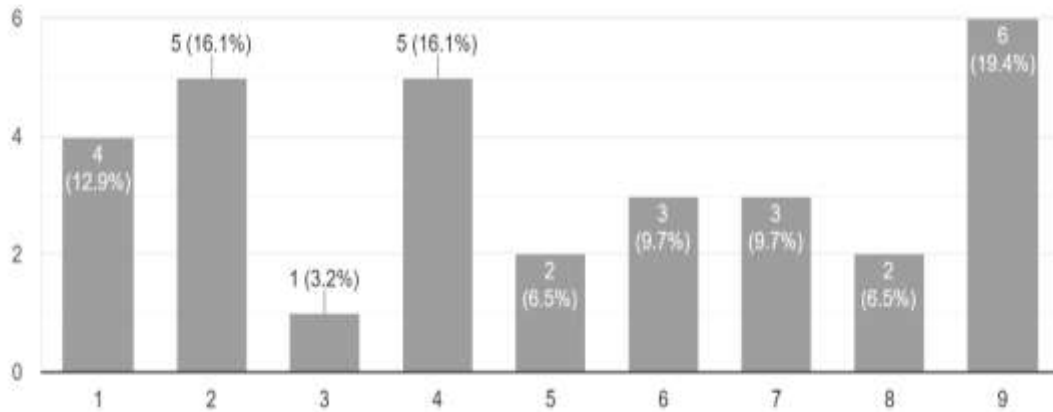
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Model 7.

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

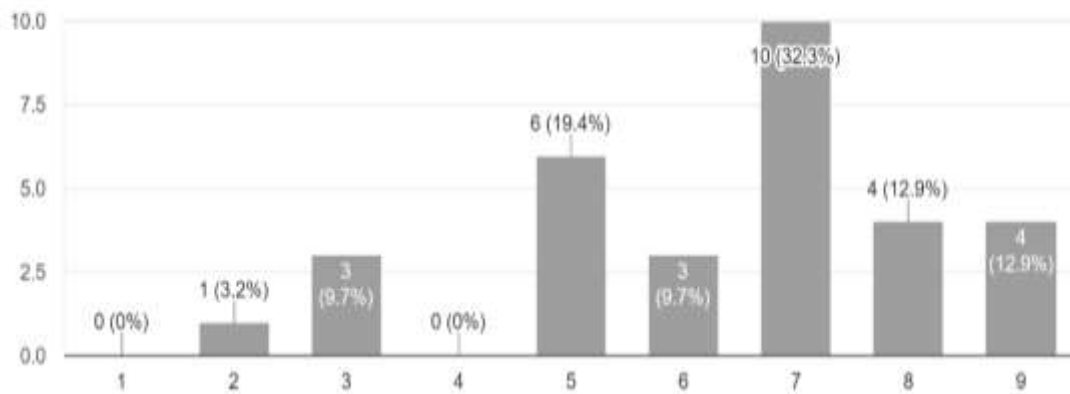
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

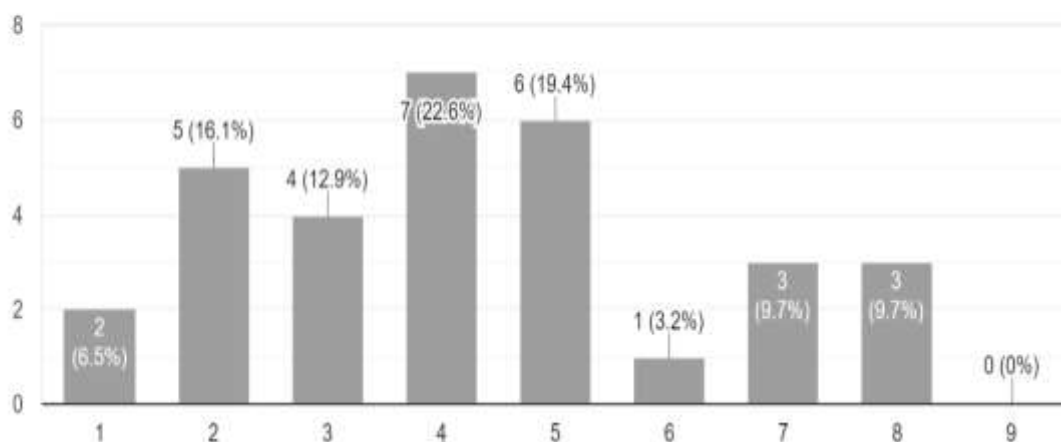
31 responses



Emotional Stability

Description 3

31 responses

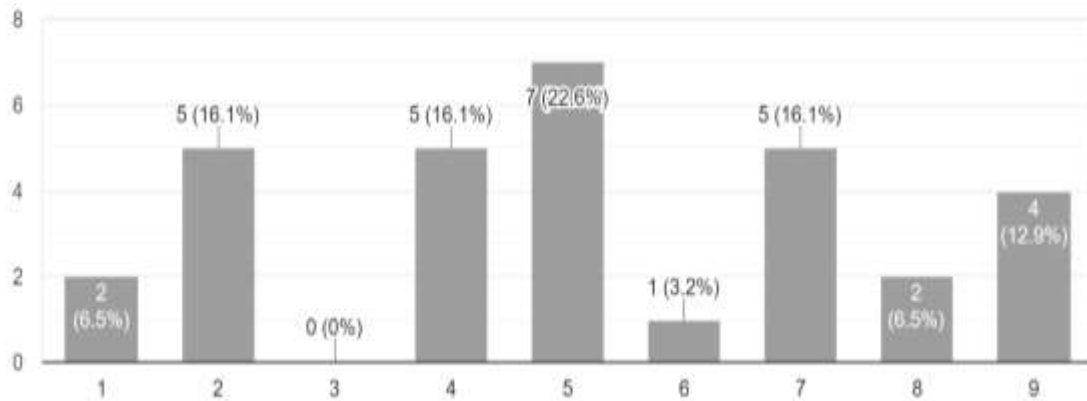


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Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

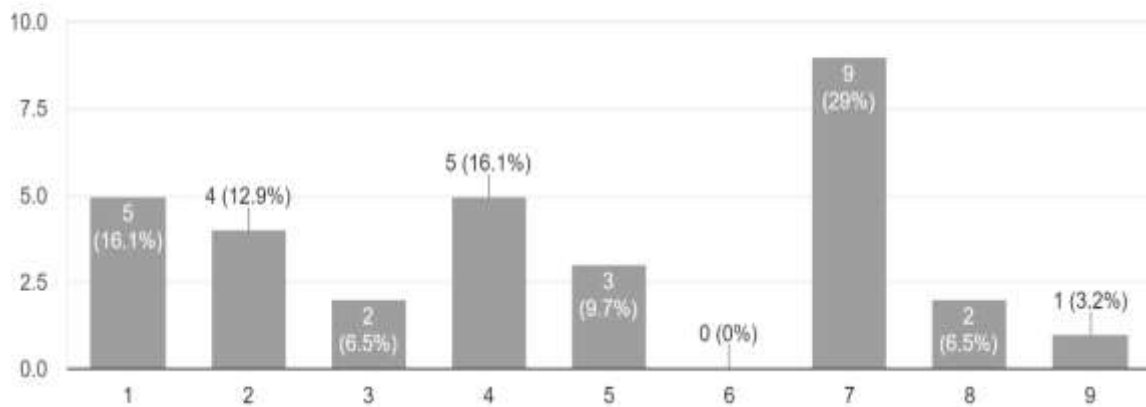
31 responses



Openness

Description 5

31 responses

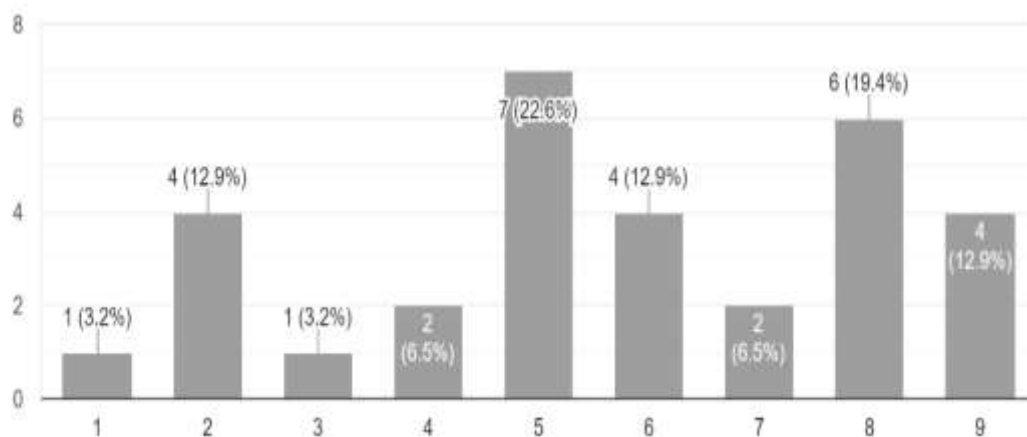


Model 8.

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

31 responses

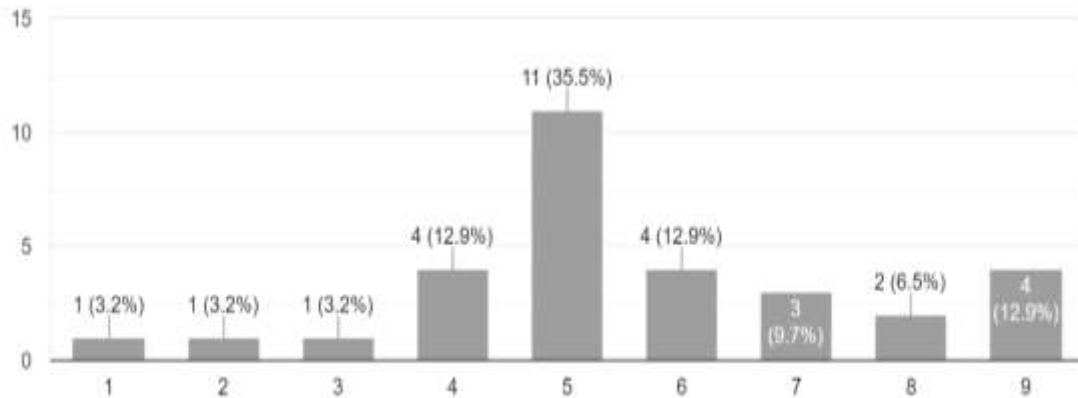


Physical Attractiveness in Relation to Personality Evaluation among Young Adults

Agreeableness:

Description 2

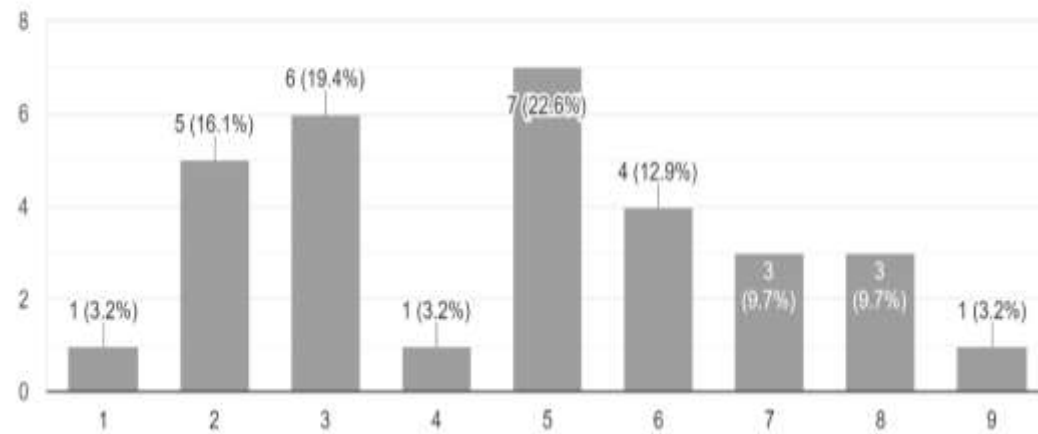
31 responses



Emotional Stability

Description 3

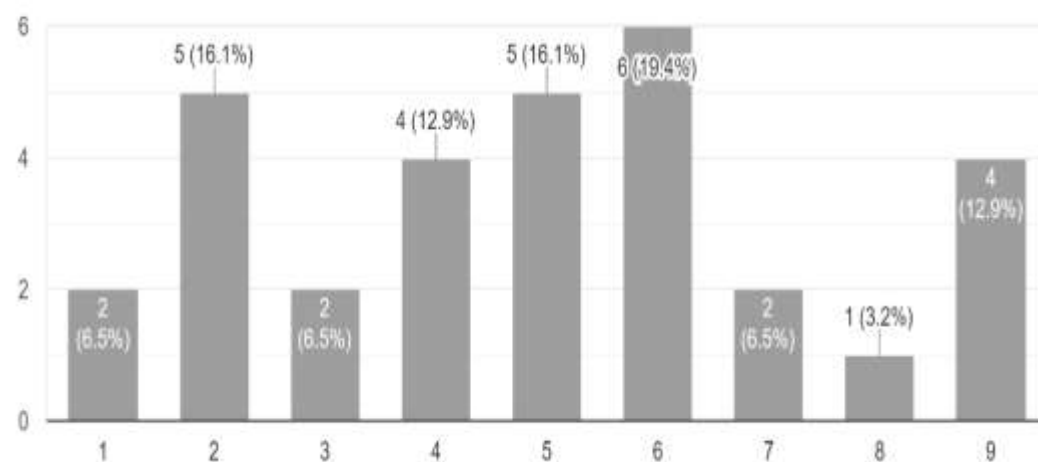
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

31 responses

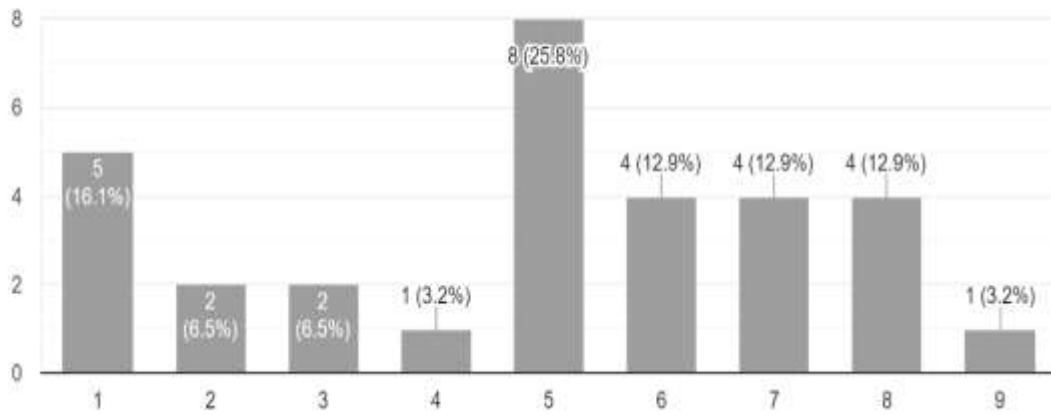


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Openness

Description 5

31 responses

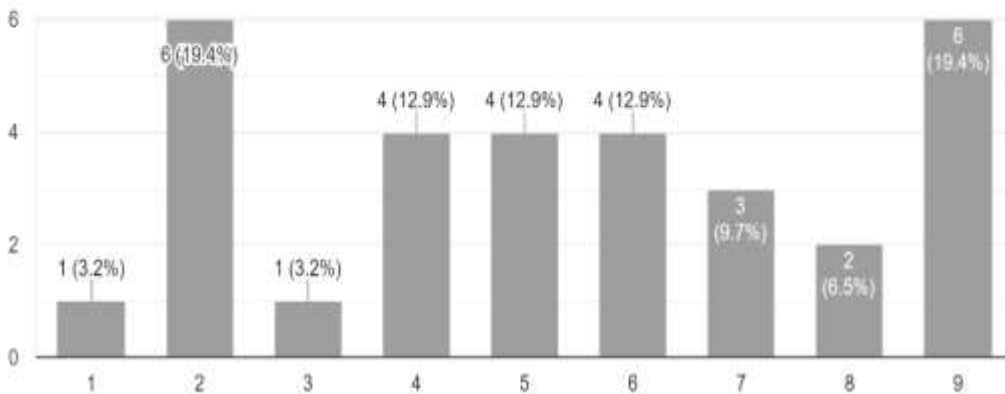


Model 9.

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

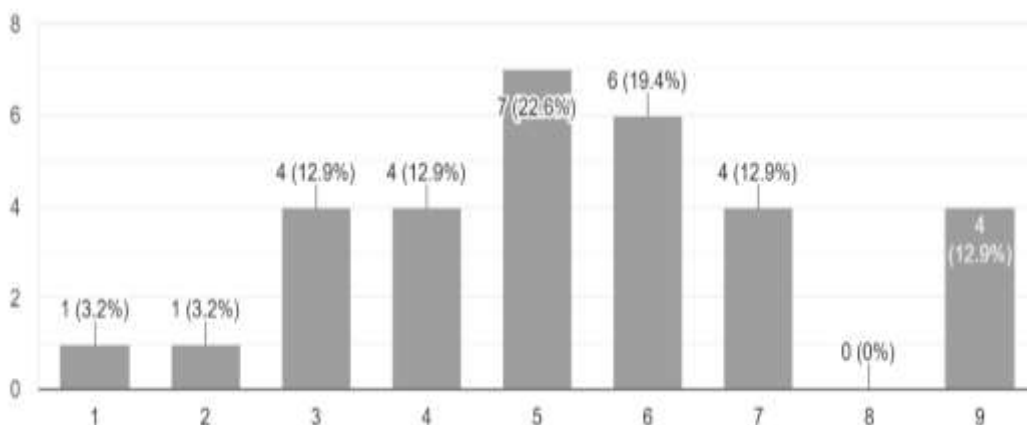
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

31 responses

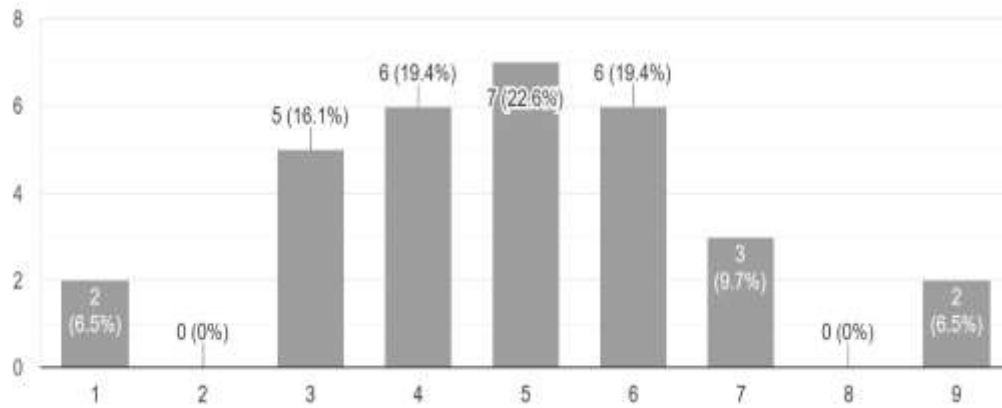


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Emotional Stability

Description 3

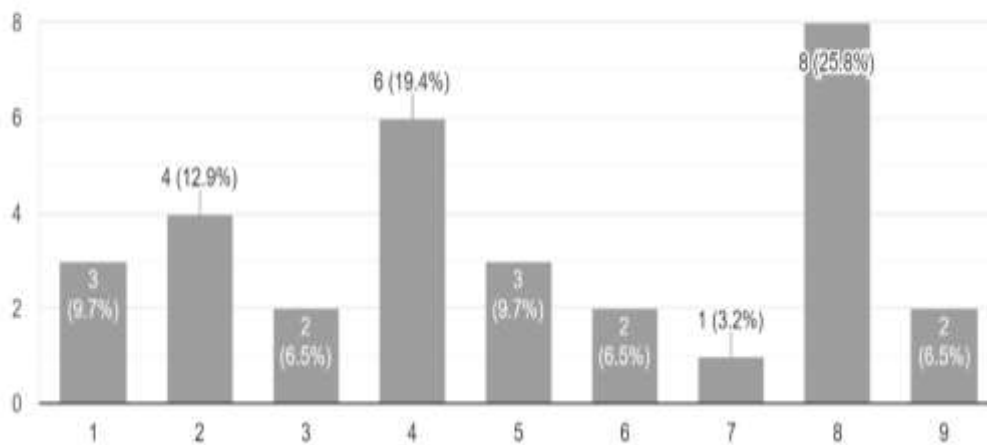
31 responses



Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

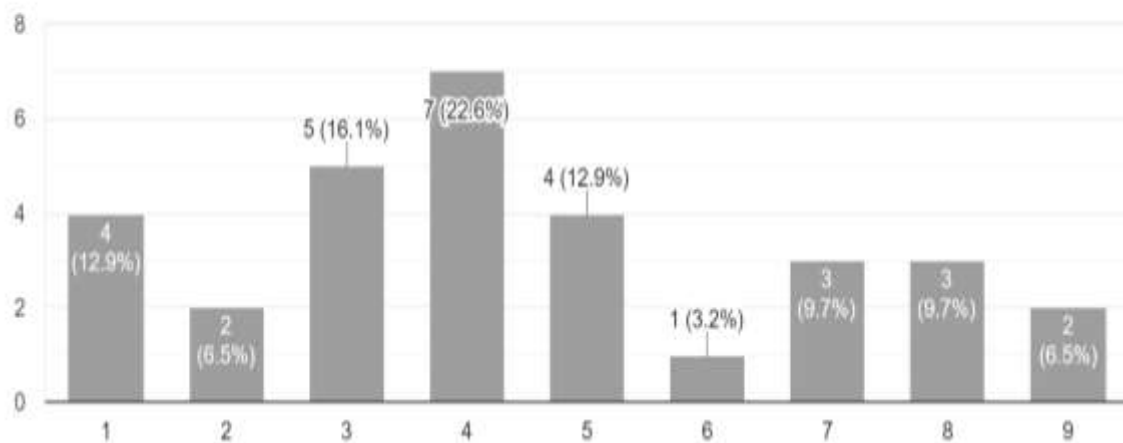
31 responses



Openness

Description 5

31 responses



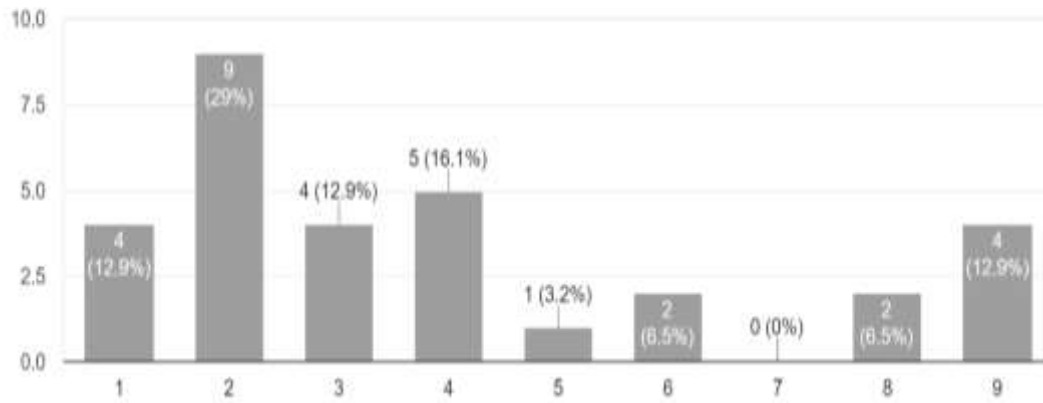
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Model 10.

Extraversion (Reverse Coded Item with 1 as the highest and 9 as the lowest):

Description 1

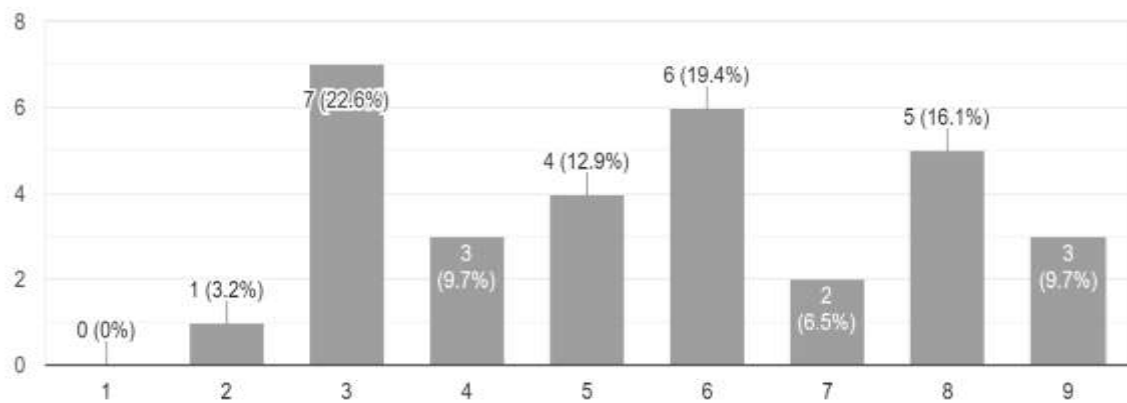
31 responses



Agreeableness:

Description 2

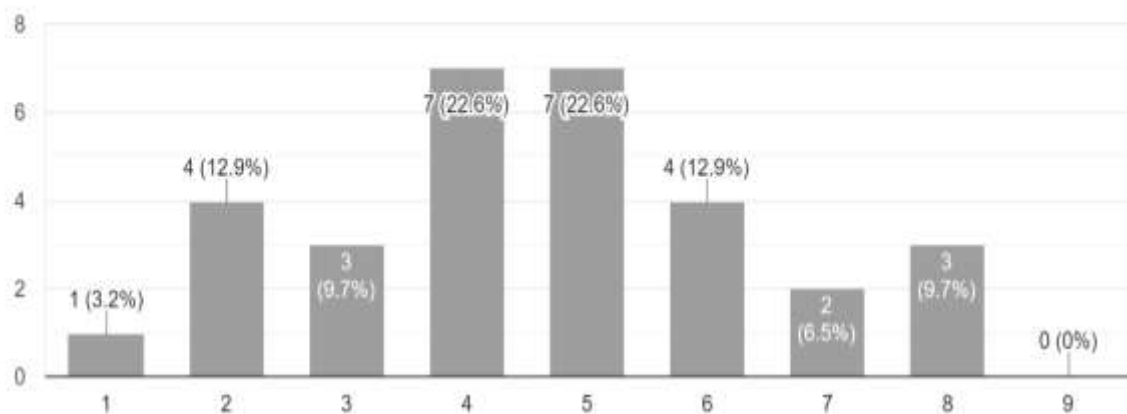
31 responses



Emotional Stability

Description 3

31 responses

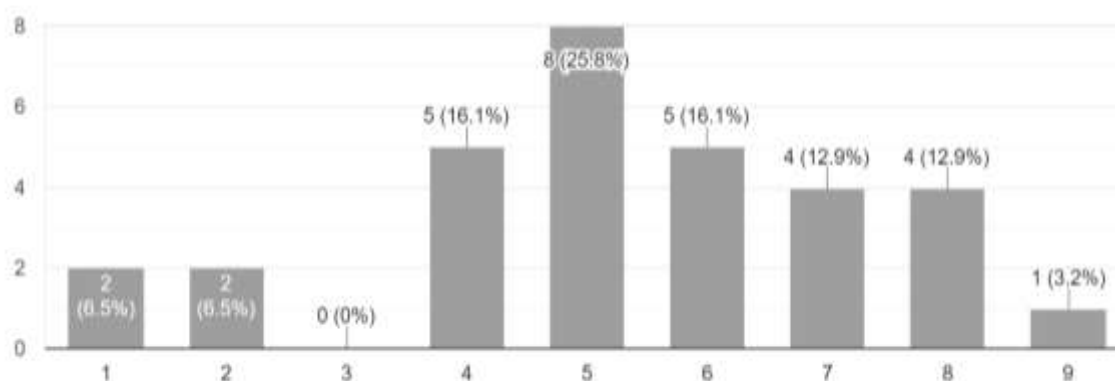


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Conscientiousness (Reverse Coded Item):

Description 4

31 responses



Openness

Description 5

31 responses

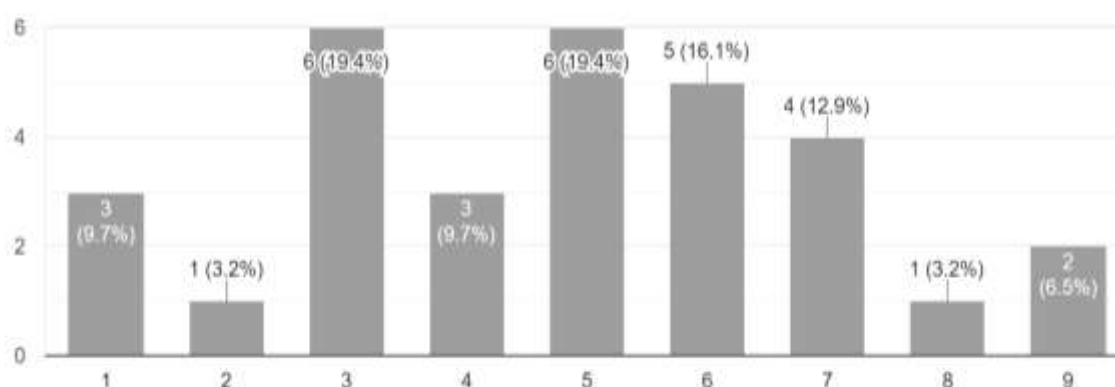


Table 1: Showing the mean rank and z scores of physical attractiveness and dimensions of personality

Variable	Most attractive Mean Rank	Least attractive Mean Rank	Z	Sig
Openness to Experience	8.00	3.00	-2.61	.00*
Conscientiousness	4.40	6.60	-1.15	.31
Extraversion	4.60	6.40	-.940	.42
Agreeableness	5.40	5.60	-.104	1.00
Emotional stability	5.20	5.80	-.315	.84

*p<.01

It may be seen from the table that the mean rank of most attractive females (M= 8.00) and least attractive females (M= 3.00) shows a significant difference on openness to experience with a z score of 2.61 at .01 level of significance.

DISCUSSION

The 10 models rated were also asked to fill in the self-report Big Five Factor Personality Scale. The ratings of the participants were compared to the self-ratings of the 10 models.

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It was found that for the 5 most attractive models according to the ratings, the participants rated the pictures High on Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Openness and mixed responses for Emotional Stability and Agreeableness were seen.

It was also found that for the 5 least attractive models according to the ratings, the participants rated the pictures Low on Extraversion and Openness to experience and mixed responses for Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness were seen.

As per the data, the Models numbered 1,2,3,4,5 who were rated most attractive, and following observations were made:

1. They were considered high on extraversion according to the participant ratings and they also considered themselves highly extraverted.
2. They were considered high on agreeableness according to the participants and they also considered themselves high on agreeableness.
3. They were considered average on emotional stability according to the participants and they considered themselves low or average on emotional stability.
4. They were considered high on conscientiousness according to the participants and they also considered themselves high on conscientiousness.
5. They were also considered high on openness to experience according to the participants and they also considered themselves as high on openness.

Models numbered 6,7,8,9,10 who were rated least attractive, and following observations were made:

1. They were considered low on extraversion according to participant ratings and they considered themselves as average or low.
2. They were considered low/average on agreeableness according to the participants and they considered themselves high on agreeableness.
3. They were considered low on emotional stability according to the participants and they considered themselves low or average on emotional stability.
4. They were considered low on conscientiousness according to the participants and they also considered themselves low on conscientiousness.
5. They were considered low on openness to experience according to the participants and they also considered themselves as low on openness.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined whether physical attractiveness affect people's evaluations in relation to five personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Existing literature states that relevant stereotypes, one being physical attractiveness can influence one's judgement of someone's personality.

It is found in existing researches that people who are attractive are also seen as having a variety of positive characteristics, and these traits are activated quickly and spontaneously when we see their faces (Olson & Marshuetz, 2005; van Leeuwen & Macrae, 2004). Attractive people are seen as more sociable, altruistic, and intelligent than their less attractive counterparts (Griffin & Langlois, 2006).

The present study classified attractive people according to 30 female participants and based on their ratings on the Big-Five Factor Model Related Bipolar Response Scale (Woods & Hampson, 2005) found out a possibility of positive correlation between physical

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attractiveness and extraversion, physical attractiveness and conscientiousness and physical attractiveness and openness to experience.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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