

An Evolutionary Approach to Exchanging Sex and Companionship for Resources

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Life History Theory (LHT) posits that individuals exhibit variation in their sexual, reproductive, parental, familial, and social behaviors as adaptive responses to the physical and social challenges encountered during development. “Sugar relationships” typically involve the exchange of resources for sex and/or companionship between a younger partner and an older provider. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between openness to sugar relationships and life history strategy. A sample of 312 Hungarian participants (192 women, 120 men) completed a comprehensive online questionnaire, which included the Acceptance of Sugar Relationships Scale, the High-K Strategy Scale, the Sociosexual Orientation Scale, the Family Resources Scale, the Childhood Unpredictability Scale, and the Perceived Vulnerability to Disease Scale. The findings elucidate the associations between openness to sugar relationships and life history strategies, indicating that socio-economic factors and family experiences significantly influence attitudes toward such relationships. The study highlights the intricate interplay between short- and long-term mating orientations, life history strategies, and sugar relationships, revealing that women with faster life history strategies and a preference for short-term mating are more likely to engage in relationships involving exchanges for sexual resources compared to women with slower life history strategies. Notably, this pattern was not observed among men. These results suggest that a strong acceptance of sugar relationships is aligned with a mating strategy aimed at maximizing resource opportunities. This utilitarian approach, marked by risk-taking and exploitation, is characteristic of a fast life history strategy, which plays a crucial role in the psychological and sexual dynamics within intimate relationships.

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