



Mate Retention Inventory-Short Form (MRI-SF): Adaptation to the Brazilian context



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ABSTRACT

This study secured evidence of the validity and reliability of the Mate Retention Inventory-Short Form (MRI-SF) in the Brazilian context. Participants were 212 individuals in a long-term, heterosexual, romantic relationship residing in Fortaleza, aged between 18 and 59 years ($M = 26.3$, $SD = 7.5$), mainly female (58.5%) and attending college (60.8%). The average duration of the romantic relationship was 59.3 months ($SD = 63.8$ months). Participants answered demographic questions and completed a Brazilian Portuguese translation of the MRI-SF, which presents 38 items that assess how often participants performed each mate retention act described. The results indicated a two-factor structure that explained 33.3% of the total variance. The results also indicated that men and women differentially use several mate retention tactics. These results are discussed in light of evolutionary hypotheses of mate selection, and we highlight limitations of the current research and identify important directions for future research.

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1. Introduction

Long-term romantic partnership between a man and a woman is the most common human mating arrangement (Buss, 2003). In fact, long-term mating conferred benefits for both sexes over the deep time of our evolutionary past. For men, these benefits included an increase in paternity certainty, and for women, these benefits included reliable partner investment in the woman and her children (Gallup & Frederick, 2010). Although these are not the only benefits that long-term mating brings to men and women, continued receipt of these and other benefits selected for psychological mechanisms in both men and women that motivate efforts to retain a long-term mate (Buss, Shackelford, & McKibbin, 2008).

Therefore, mate retention efforts differ from (and occur after) the efforts to acquire a long-term partner (Buss, 2003), and efforts allocated to retaining a long-term partner repay reproductively the effort allocated to mate acquisition (Buss et al., 2008). Buss (1988) presented the first attempt to identify and assess mate retention behavior in humans. He developed the Mate Retention Inventory (MRI), which assesses the performance of 19 mate retention tactics with responses to 104 specific behaviors. The tactics are organized into five factors, subdivided into two domains: intrasexual manipulations (i.e. tactics directed toward

one's partner) and intersexual manipulations (i.e. tactics directed toward same-sex competitors).

The intersexual manipulations domain includes three factors:

- 1) Direct guarding (comprised of the following tactics: vigilance, e.g. "He read her personal mail"; concealment of mate, e.g. "He did not let her talk to the other males"; and monopolize mate's time, e.g. "He would not let her go out without him");
- 2) Intersexual negative inducements (threaten infidelity, e.g. "He flirted with another woman in front of her"; punish mate's threat to infidelity, e.g. "He became angry when she flirted too much"; emotional manipulation, e.g. "He cried in order to keep her with him"; commitment manipulation, e.g. "He asked her to marry him"; and derogation of competitors, e.g. "He pointed out to her the other guy's flaws");
- 3) Positive inducements (resource display, e.g. "He bought her an expensive gift"; sexual inducements, e.g. "He performed sexual favors to keep her around"; enhancing physical appearance, e.g. "He made sure that he looked nice for her", emphasize love and caring, e.g. "He told her that he loved her"; and submission and debasement, e.g. "He acted against his will to let her have her way").

The intrasexual manipulations domain includes two factors:

- 4) Public signals of possession (verbal signals of possession, e.g. "He told his male friends how much they were in love"; physical signals of possession, e.g. "He kissed her when the other guys were around"; and possessive ornamentation, e.g. "He gave her jewelry to signify that she was taken");
- 5) Intrasexual negative inducements (derogation of mate to competitors, e.g. "He told other guys that she was stupid"; intrasexual

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threats, e.g. “He told the other guy to stay away from her”; and Violence, e.g. “He hit the guy who made a pass at her”).

Empirical research provides evidence for the reliability, validity, and utility of the MRI in North America (e.g. Pham & Shackelford, 2013; Shackelford, Goetz & Buss, 2005), Spain (de Miguel & Buss, 2011) and Croatia (Kardum, Hudek-Knezevic, & Gracanin, 2006). Furthermore, Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford (2009) suggested a superordinate structure for the MRI that includes five categories subdivided into two domains. Cost-inflicting mate retention behaviors (direct guarding, Intersexual negative inducements and intrasexual negative inducements) reduce the likelihood of partner infidelity by inflicting or threatening to inflict costs on the partner for infidelity or defection. Benefit-provisioning mate retention behaviors (positive inducements and Public signals of possession) reduce the likelihood of partner infidelity by bestowing benefits on the partner, to thereby increase the attractiveness of the relationship.

Because the 104-item MRI is time-consuming to complete, Buss et al. (2008) developed the Mate Retention Inventory Short Form (MRI-SF). The MRI-SF assesses the 19 tactics by securing responses to the two items from the longer form that load highest on each tactic, for a total of 38 items. All two-item tactics showed acceptable internal consistency and correlated with their respective tactic in the original form, suggesting that the two-item scales provide reasonable assessments of each of the 19 tactics (Buss et al., 2008).

Previous research has identified evolutionarily-predicted sex differences in the use of several mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Kardum et al., 2006; Pham, Barbaro, Mogilski, & Shackelford, 2015). For example, men more than women use resource display, and women more than men use appearance enhancement (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; de Miguel & Buss, 2011). These sex differences were predicted by an evolutionary perspective on mate selection (Buss, 2003). According to this perspective, men perceive as more attractive women who display cues to greater reproductive capacity (Geldart, 2010). Because these cues are related to physical characteristics, women more than men are predicted to use appearance enhancement as a mate retention tactic. In contrast, women more than men prefer as long-term partners individuals that display current or future resource acquisition (Buss, 2003). Men more than women, therefore, are predicted to use resource display as a mate retention tactic.

No previous research has investigated mate retention in Brazil. We searched Google Scholar (2015), PsycINFO (2015) and PubPsych (2015) using the keyword “mate retention”, and we found no publications using Brazilian samples. We then used the keyword *retenção de parceiros* (“mate retention” in Brazilian Portuguese), and this search returned 20 publications, but none of them empirical. Mate retention research conducted in Brazil may have theoretical value. Investigating cross-cultural differences is central to accumulating evidence that might strengthen evolutionary hypotheses, and evolutionarily-predicted sex differences in the use of mate retention tactics have been investigated in Spain (de Miguel & Buss, 2011) and Croatia (Kardum et al., 2006). Mate retention research may also have applied value. For instance, men’s use of specific mate retention tactics, such as vigilance and monopolization of time, is correlated with men’s physical violence against their partners (Shackelford, Goetz, Buss, Euler & Hoier, 2005), suggesting that the use of these tactics may portend domestic violence. The results of mate retention research may be useful in practical contexts such as in developing educational programs, marital counseling, and marital therapy (Buss et al., 2008).

The goal of the current research was to investigate mate retention in Brazil, by first adapting and validating the MRI-SF to the Brazilian context, which we refer to as the *Escala de Retenção de Parceiros Reduzida* (ERP-R). Additionally, as part of the evaluation of the construct validity of the ERP-R, we investigated sex differences in use of mate retention tactics.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The original dataset included responses from 259 individuals. However, in parallel with previous research on mate retention (e.g., Buss et al., 2008), we analyzed only responses provided by individuals in a heterosexual, romantic relationship for at least six months in the last year. The final sample included 212 individuals residing in Fortaleza, aged between 18 and 59 years ($M = 26.3$; $SD = 7.5$, 90.9% younger than 35 years), mostly female (58.5%) and attending college (60.8%). The mean relationship length was 59.3 months ($SD = 63.8$). This sample size is above the minimum suggested for principal component analyses (Kline, 1979).

2.2. Materials

Participants answered a booklet composed by two parts:

Escala de Retenção de Parceiros Reduzida (ERP-R, see supplemental material). This is a Brazilian Portuguese version of the MRI-SF (Buss et al., 2008), and includes 38 items, two each assessing 19 tactics. The tactics index five components and two domains (see Introduction). Participants indicate the frequency with which they performed each act in the past six months on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = Never and 3 = Often). The tactics of the MRI-SF showed reasonable internal consistencies given the inclusion of only two items per tactic (Cronbach’s alpha varying from .40 to .87), and scores on the tactics correlate positively across the MRI (Buss, 1988) and MRI-SF (Pearson’s r varying from .81 to .99).

Demographic questions. We included demographic questions (e.g., age, gender), as well as questions about the romantic relationship. Specifically, we asked the following Yes/No questions: 1) “Are you in a romantic relationship?”, 2) “Have you been in this relationship for at least 6 months?”, 3) “Did you commit infidelity at least once in your lifetime?”, and 4) “Were you betrayed at least once in your lifetime?”. We also asked questions to which participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = Low and 5 = High: 5) “What are the odds that your relationship will exist in 12 months?”, 6) “To what extent are you satisfied with your relationship?”, 7) “What is the physical intimacy level of your relationship?”, and 8) “What is the emotional intimacy level of your relationship?”. Finally, participants were asked to indicate the length of the relationship [“What is the approximate duration of the relationship (in months)?”].

2.3. Procedure

2.3.1. Translation of the MRI-SF

The translation followed the guidelines suggested by Borsa, Damásio, and Bandeira (2012). Specifically: 1) two bilingual translators translated the MRI-SF from English to Brazilian Portuguese, resulting in two translated versions; 2) two bilingual translators synthesized the versions by comparing them and evaluating semantic, idiomatic, conceptual, linguistic and contextual discrepancies, resulting in a single Brazilian Portuguese version; 3) one bilingual translator compared this version and the English version, suggesting semantic adjustments; 4) we administered the translated version to five residents of Fortaleza to identify abstruse terms, which were replaced with synonyms (semantic validation); 5) two bilingual translators performed the back translation; and 6) an author of the original version (Buss et al., 2008) compared the original and the back-translated versions, indicating minor modifications to improve the equity of the translated version.

2.3.2. Data collection

We collected data from public places and approached prospective participants at random. We explained that participation was anonymous to limit responses motivated by social desirability concerns. Only individuals at least 18 years old who provided informed consent

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