

MEN'S VIEWS: DATING A WOMAN WHO EARNS MORE

by Innocentia Gaoes • photograph Shutterstock



“YES, I WOULD DATE OR MARRY A WOMAN WHO EARNS MORE THAN ME AS LONG AS THERE IS LOVE AND RESPECT,” was a common comment given by men interviewed by Sister on this topic.

The men interviewed admitted to not mind if their partner's salary is higher but were quick to point out that the woman should not act as if they received licence to sit on their heads and boss them around as some had already experienced when their woman earned a bigger salary.

Namibia's unemployment rate currently stands at 28,1 percent according to the Namibian Labour Force Survey for 2014, released by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) on 26 March 2015. Since employment is scarce some men see it as a matter of survival to have a woman who earns well.

“Hunger is real and women are now fighting for 50/50 representation, so why not date someone who earns more even if she is older?” were some of the comments given by the men especially from the informal settlements.

For many years men were the primary breadwinners or earned better salaries than their women. But Namibia is no longer a hunter-gatherer community where men went out in search of employment and women tended the house and children.

Many women now graduate in the fields of engineering, accounting and finance, geology, law and many other fields which were dominated by men in the past.

At the University of Namibia (UNAM) graduation ceremony on Thursday 23 April this year, Itah Kandjii-Murangi, minister of higher education revealed that 68 percent of the 1027 graduates were female.

This figure shows that there is a higher chance than before for women to be earning more than men compared to statistics in the past.

Finance is a big issue in a relationship and even though many see it as no big deal when women earn more, it is still seen as a strange thing especially in the Namibian context where male egos and social prejudices can strain relationships.

According to some of the men interviewed, their girlfriends that earned more did not care or seemed to take pleasure

in embarrassing them in front of friends and family, with outbursts such as: “You can open your mouth if you are paying the bills”, “what kind of man are you anyway?” and “I wouldn't call myself a man if I earned your peanuts”.

In the relationships where the lady refrained from such belittling, society might torment them with gossip about the man being kept by his woman. “When I wear nice clothes, people always make it sound like my wife bought them for me” and “I bought this watch for myself, but because my wife earns more, people assume she bought it for me”, were responses by interviewees.

Neil Boyer, chairperson of the United Nation's Gender Theme Group

said it should not be seen as a problem when a woman earns more money than her partner. Boyer said with the current state of affairs and how expensive it is to raise children, it is the responsibility of both partners to uphold the finances in the house. “In order to give your children good opportunities in life, men have to put aside their male egos and look to the practical benefits of having two incomes in the home”, Boyer said.

Journalist and sports writer for the Windhoek Observer newspaper, Jesse Jackson Kauraisa said marrying a woman who earns more than you comes with pros and cons. “One of the cons could be that some women would flaunt their earning power, which will cause a man intense frustration. A pro could be that the woman is decent enough to allow you to be the person with the final say in the house regardless of your financial status. So I would marry someone who earns more if it means my life and that of my kids would be stable,” Kauraisa said.

Lesley Shomongula, an employee at NHP also said he would marry a woman who earns more because if there's love everything else is secondary and even though she might earn more than him, whatever she owns will eventually belong to both of them.

Jimmy (not his real name) admitted that he is married to a woman who earns more and is older than him. Jimmy

confesses he primarily entered the relationship for financial stability but he has grown fond of his wife because of her personality, her patience and caring nature. “I started feeling guilty after I got to know the type of woman she was, now I do everything in my power to show her that I love her and she is my wife, no matter what people think”.

George Shiwayu, a graphic designer at The Namibian newspaper

said it will not be easy to date a woman who earns more as women are already bossy and her making more money will most probably just make her bossier. “Money makes a person powerful and some women will end up controlling the relationship based on her earnings”. The worst relational hurdle for him would be to constantly deal with an “I-earn-more-so-what-I-say-goes” mentality.

Dan, an employee at Rössing Uranium mine

at Arandis said he would date a woman earning more as long as respect, mutual agreement and trust are in the relationship. He said finances do not matter as long as both partners know what they want for themselves and their children. “I am an ambitious person and it does not mean if my partner earns more than me today it will remain like that forever. In the future I will most likely earn more than her and then I don't plan to lord it over her.”

With a high number of qualified women in the country, it is inevitable that more women compared to men could land themselves in high paying jobs. And chances are great that not all of them will find partners who earn more than them.

Dan's advice on men remaining ambitious is sound. This advice should also encourage women to be wise in their choice of a man. A respectful, trustworthy and ambitious man who earns less than his woman today, is a better bet than a big earner, with questionable morals and a dominant behaviour. Just as no woman wants to be told, “shut up and do as I say, because I earn more”, so no man wants to hear it. Mutual respect and support by both partners will see each reach their full potential. ♀