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Does Movie Viewing Cultivate Unrealistic Expectations about Love and Marriage?

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Lauren Galloway
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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the connection between romantic movie-viewing frequency and endorsement of dysfunctional beliefs for romantic relationships in a university-based sample of 228 participants. Respondents completed a questionnaire in which they reported demographic information as well as responses to the several scales that measure endorsement of romantic ideals (see Method). I base this investigation of Segrin and Nabi’s (2002) examination of television viewing habits and proclivity for unrealistic expectations of sex, love, and marriage. Both the current study and the investigation conducted by Segrin and Nabi (2002) support the supposition that media play a part in reinforcing beliefs about couplings. Frequent viewing of romantic comedy and drama films seems intimately tied to affirmation of love myths and idealistic expectations.

HYPOTHESES/ RESEARCH QUESTION

H1a: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with the belief that sexual relations will be perfect.

H1b: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with endorsement of the mindreading expectation.

H1c: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with agreement disallowance.

H1d: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with greater expectations for intimacy.

H1e: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with greater intentions to get married and stay married.

H1f: Romantic drama movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with agreement disallowance.

H2a: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with the belief that sexual relations will be perfect.

H2b: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with endorsement of the mindreading expectation.

H2c: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with dissolved disallowance.

H2d: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with endorsement of the mindreading expectation.

H2e: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with greater expectations for intimacy.

H2f: Romantic comedy movie-viewing frequency is significantly and positively associated with greater intentions to marry.

H3: Romance-based movie-viewing frequency correlates significantly with greater intentions to marry.

H4: Romance-based movie-viewing frequency correlates significantly with fantasy rumination.

RQ1: Which sex holds more idealized expectations about love and romance?

The present study examined the correlation between preference for romance-based movie genres and endorsement of unrealistic expectations of sex, love, and romance.

METHOD

Online Survey Design

- **Idealistic Expectations**
  - Fantasy Rumination (Segrin & Nabi, 2002)
  - Dysfunctional beliefs about relationships (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982)
  - Love finds a way (Weaver & Canong, 2004)
  - Expectations for relationships (Tornstam, 1992)
  - Eros love style (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986)
  - Marital intentions (Segrin & Nabi, 2002)

- **Demographics**
  - Age
  - Sex orientation
  - Marital status
  - Family character
  - Biological sex
  - Relationship status
  - Social class
  - Religiosity
  - Race/Ethnicity

- **Movie-Viewing Habits**
  - Movie-viewing (Author)
  - Genre-specific movie-viewing (Author)
  - Perceived movie accuracy (Rubin, 1981)

Pearson bivariate correlations were used to test correlations between movie-viewing and idealistic expectations for romantic relationships. Independent sample t-tests were used to test sex differences (RQ1).

HYPOTHESES/ RESEARCH QUESTION

H4: Romance

Purposes

- Romantic Drama Movie-Viewing and Idealistic Expectations
  - In this study, participants who frequently watched romantic drama movies tended to:
    - believe that true love conquers all.
    - have greater expectations for intimacy.
    - endorse the eros love style (romantic, passionate love).

- Romantic Comedy Movie-Viewing and Idealistic Expectations
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    - have greater expectations for intimacy.
    - endorse the eros love style (romantic, passionate love).

- Romantic Movie-Viewing, Marital Intentions, and Fantasy Rumination
  - In this study, participants who frequently watched romantic movies (dramas and comedies)
    - frequently ruminated about one’s wedding and romantic relationships.
    - indicated greater intentions to get married and stay married.

Sex Differences and Idealized Expectations

- In this sample:
  - Females watched more romantic comedies and romantic dramas than males.
  - Females had greater expectations for intimacy in their relationships than males.
  - Females spent more time fantasizing about marriage and weddings than males.
  - Females had greater intentions to get married and stay married than males.

Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Movie Titles*

1) The Notebook (n = 23)
2) Harry Potter** (n = 19)
3) Batman: The Dark Knight** (n = 13)
4) Twilight Saga** (n = 11)
5) A Walk to Remember (n = 9)
6) The Avengers (n = 9)
7) Lord of the Rings** (n = 9)
8) Bridesmaids (n = 8)
9) The Lion King** (n = 8)
10) The Titanic (n = 7)

*This list includes all titles reference seven times or more.
**These titles have three or more sequels. The frequency reflects a reference to any title in the series.

REFERENCES


