Influence of Romantic Films on Unrealistic Marriage Expectations among Undergraduates in Selected Universities in Kwara State

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of exposure to romantic films through digital platforms on romantic relationships. A sample size of 400 was drawn amongst among undergraduates in selected universities in Kwara State and used in the study. Findings indicated that most of the respondents are heavy viewers of romantic films. Finding also showed that there is no significant difference between the endorsement of romantic film ideals by light viewers and heavy viewers. In addition, gender does not determine the level of influence of romantic films on their romantic relationships. It was concluded that watching romantic films might have an influence on the attitude of viewers in their romantic relationships and most viewers of romantic films tend to endorse some of the romantic ideals portrayed in the films they have watched through digital platforms. The study recommended that there is a need for proper education among viewers of romantic films so as to avoid taking as real the relationship experiences from what they watch in romantic films.

Keywords: Romantic relationships, romantic films, fantasy, television, digital platform

Introduction

An evaluation of the influence of the mass media on young people today continues to be one of the significant challenges to parents and the society at large (Myrien, Kathleen, Miriam & Elna, 2014). Television is a medium that is most likely to have more effects on the attitudes and behaviours of its viewers (Kimberly & Bjarne, 2009). However, a lot of researches most especially in developed countries have suggested that visual media i.e. film/ television has a great influence on attitudes and behaviours of young individuals (Oberiri & Kwase, 2017).

One means through which the media influence people is through films. Most films are produced for the purpose of portraying to the people in society happenings of both the past, present and things that are likely to happen in future (Kimberly & Bjarne, 2009). Young people especially are easily persuaded and influenced by what they see on films/movies (Myrien et al., 2014). This affects how they react to certain issues in society. Importantly, researchers have empirically proved that most films are used purposely to appeal to the emotions of their viewers and ultimately affect their worldview and because of the developing emotions of youths as a result of the start of growing up, films can have a huge effect on them (Fernando, 2016).

The concept of romance has changed in recent times. In the past, the ideal of love was expressed through poetry and love stories which were commonly depicted in plays and novels (Sarah, 2014; Arikewuyo, Efe-Özad, & Owolabi, 2019). People read Shakespeare or Jane Austen and formed a concept of love based on chivalry, love at first sight, and damsels in distress saved by the knight in shining armour (Sorokowski et. al., 2019). However, the growth of the media in the 20th century brought about a change in the way

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people perceive love (Lubomir, Fischer-Lokou & Guéguen, 2009).

Romance is a phenomenon that is frequently on the mind of most young people and is central to the plot and genres that are portrayed in most films targeted towards the youths through digital media platforms (Holmes, 2014; Arikewuyo, Eluwole, & Özad 2020). However, Most people experience their first serious romantic relationship during the early adult years (Regan, Durvasula, Howell, Ureño, & Rea, 2004); so young persons are more likely to be drawn to romantic stories through digital media platforms (Veronica & Barbra, 2013).

According to Sarah (2014), media are one of the most important sources where young people learn concepts and behaviours about love. Borae and Jooham (2015) further added that romantic stories and episodes are dominant in mass media which may shape young viewers' conventional imageries of romantic relationships even before they ever experience real romantic relationships. A major criticism of romantic genre television and films is that they recurrently depict intimate liaisons between physically beautiful characters leading to relationships full of romance, physical intimacy, passion and little or no conflict (Kimberly & Bjarne, 2009).

Young individuals, in an attempt to make an impression of themselves to those around them, often look to the media especially through digital media platform for issues that are of increasing significance such as those of how to engage themselves in romantic relationships (Kimberly & Bjarne, 2009). For adolescents and young adults who begin dating, they require norms which serve to guide their expectations (Ferris et al., 2007). In view of this, Borae and Jooham, (2015) posited that romantic stories and episodes are rampant in mass media which may shape young viewers' conventional imaginations of romantic relationships even before they ever experience real romantic relationships.

Films and television programmes typically rely on exaggerated and unrealistic portrayals of romantic and sexual relationships to appeal to their audiences. Although older and more experienced viewers can generally notice this, younger viewers may come to view these representations as cultural norms and form unrealistic relationship beliefs and expectations accordingly (Kimberly & Bjarne 2009).

However, studies that have shown that individuals exposed to romantic films content through various digital platforms are likely to endorse dysfunctional relationship beliefs, potentially to the disadvantage of their current relationships (Kimberly & Bjarne, 2009). Since romantic films are very popular amongst young people in Nigeria and most of these films displayed on digital media platforms are usually built on romantic plots, this study investigated the influence of exposure to romantic films on university students' perception of romantic relationship. This study sought to determine the influence of exposure to romantic films through digital media platforms on romantic relationship amongst University students. As such, the ultimate goal of this study is to investigate the level at which romantic films influence individuals in romantic relationships

Youths and romantic films consumption

Unlike other forms of romantic media, films offer stories that trace relationships from the start to the finish in one bundled narrative; and in dissimilarity to the romantic relationships on digital media platforms, which frequently takes numerous seasons to fully develop the characters, films are viewed in a single sitting. This is likely potent enough to boost the impact of films on attentive viewers (Veronica & Barbra, 2013). Romantic films, when watched overtime, do have the potential to affect the prospects, beliefs and general relationship experiences for its viewers (Andrew, 2013).

The idea of finding true love and living happily ever amongst other romantic ideals are some of the portrayals of romantic most romantic film. Almost most people in the world watched one of the most popular romantic films that aired in 2006 titled High School Musical. This movie tells a passionate love story about a pretty girl and a handsome boy who share their enthusiasm for music and fall unconditionally in love. Such popular depictions of romance and love are entertaining, though idealistic; they reduce the complexity of personalities and emotions to an uncomplicated story of sexual attraction and blistering love

(Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Tanner, Haddock, Zimmerman, & Lund, 2003).

Over the years, there has always been a rapid change in the beliefs and attitudes of youths in the 21st century towards love. Young people that are exposed to romantic themed programmes have a dysfunctional belief or attitude expecting their partner to behave like those they see in the movies (Myrien, Kathleen, Miriam & Elna, 2014). This can also be associated with what is called Parasocial Interaction.

A Parasocial Interaction has been defined as a one-sided communication with a media character that results into a parasocial relationship with the media character (Giles, 2002 as cited in Driesmans, Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2016). Also, Aimes and Brittany (2013) see parasocial interaction as a form of parasocial relationships which was defined as a one-sided relationship that people hold with media figures. It has to do with a situation whereby a viewer sees himself as the character of a programme and decides to act as the character in real life.

Young viewers may identify with television characters whom they observe to be attractive, successful, and admired by others (Cohen as cited in Giogio, 2016). They may vicariously participate in the characters' experiences during a programme (Cohen, 2001). It can, therefore, be said that as individuals with higher levels of parasocial interaction with a media character are more involved in a story (romantic stories in this case), it is expected that they are likely to accept the romantic claims of these stories (Driesmans et al., 2016).

Television is a source which contains diverse messages about "ever-lasting love," "finding your soul mate," and the secret to finding "true love" some of which the youths try to introduce into their own relationship (Sarah, 2014). A major belief promoted to youths in most movies is that there is a predestined soul-mate out there and that relationship happiness will be achieved immediately and sustained if that special person can be found (Holmes, 2014), which is why Knee et al. (2001 as cited in Holmes) claimed that belief in relationship destiny will have a negative consequence on a proper functioning of a relationship. He further mentioned that people who possess this kind of belief tend to want to give up too easily in a relationship when faced with complications, inferring conflict as a sign that the relationship "just wasn't meant to be" or should have never started in the first instance.

Those that watch romance movies or programmes that have romantic values believe that mind reading is expected in a relationship. In other words, this belief is of the opinion that if two people are meant for each other, they should be able to predict and understand what one person is trying to communicate to the other with little effort or communication (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981 as cited in Holmes, 2014).

According to Stephen (2004), those who are exposed to movies with high romantic contents may however come to perceive what they view as normal which, in turn, could have a contrary effect on the satisfaction they derive from their own future relationships. To this extent, when their own relationships do not equate to the exaggerated portrayals in the media, they may come to feel as though they are missing a relationship that others are enjoying.

In most social relationships, love, status, information, money, goods, and services have been identified as basic exchangeable resources, but when it comes to romantic relationships, romantic partnerships are acknowledged to be more specific and include sex and companionship which are the resources exchanged (Aimee & Brittany, 2013).

To this extent, Aimee and Brittany (2013) add that relationships which could either be romantic or social are pursued when the transaction of benefits is rewarding to both parties and when pursuing relationships, people maximise relationship benefits while minimising relationship costs.

Gender and romantic films

Research continues to emphasise that watching romantic films encourages romantic mythologies and gendered cultural scripts, with women exceptionally affected in comparison to men. Romantic love in history is more focused on the female gender, and even with modern socialisation, there is still an advancement on how women get preoccupied with love and interpersonal relationships (Amanda, Lauren & Sarah, 2019).

Galloway et al as cited in Amanda and Lauren (2018) carried out a study on undergraduates' romantic beliefs and movie-viewing patterns. He

found out that women significantly expected intimate romantic relationships, imagined being married and daydreamed about their weddings, and anticipated getting married and staying married more than men. In other words, idealised media portrayals of romantic love and marriage, circulated through such variations of a fairy tale, could, thus, perpetuate or exasperate worries between women's expectations and real-life experiences (Piorkowski, 2008). Based on the findings of Nielsen Ratings as cited in Nicollette and Todd (2015), women comprised 77% of the viewers of romantic comedies, resulting in women being the primary recipients of a bombardment of images about relationships and romance.

With films depicting male characters as frequently performing exaggeratedly romantic gestures, it is very easy and persuading for any female who spends most of her time watching these films to believe that such behaviours are the norms (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). Hollywood sets parameters for women within romantic comedies that they must follow in order to be happy and fulfilled (Green, 2013).

Also, Nicollette and Todd (2015) added that women after spending their childhoods flooded with images of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, all of whom were saved by their Prince Charming, it should not be shocking that they expect nothing less from both their romantic partners and their relationships in reality. From viewing a lot of movies on romance, females develop what is called a "princess syndrome" which influence girls to grow up into women living in a false reality, searching for romantic relationships based in commodified goods and/or finding a Prince to take care of them (Amanda et al., 2019).

Green (2013) made use of Bandura's Social cognitive theory to explain how women make use of what they watch on the television as a model in their real-life activities. The main idea of Social Cognitive Theory according to Stephen and Karen (2009) is that people learn from observation; therefore, the reinforcement or punishment of behaviour impacts their behaviour and subsequent outcome expectancies in similar situations. In other words, it can be said that people oblige to behaviours they have observed to memory from what they see or hear to be later used as models on which to base their own behaviour.

Effects of television viewing

The values and ideas sold by the media may have a great impact on people's beliefs (Sarah 2014). In our society today, television over the years has become one of the major sources of socialization and majority of the population rely on it for information. According to Okpala, Awujo and Okpala (2012), television is a system of communication where the image of the scene can be transmitted and produced to another place without the viewer having any problem in recoding the information which is transmitted and accompanied with sound.

Through its use of repeated themes and images, it serves to influence viewer's perception of reality that is, viewers exposed over a prolonged period of time to portrayals of reality as defined by the media may come to develop perceptions that are consistent with these portrayals (Okpala et al.).

There is a broad consensus in the literature about the crucial role played by television in shaping beliefs, attitudes and values of young people (Giogio, 2016). When television was introduced was introduced in Nigeria in the late 1950s, one of the noble goals set by the decision makers was to act as a catalyst for change (Olagunju, Adeniyi, Adewumi & Ukechukwu, 2018) but these scholars also analyzed that the success tales of television as a medium for social change has negated the confabulations that television is hostile to thoughts.

According to Kamaruzaman and Nurul (2009), looking back at the contents of television programming that we could access from cables and satellite, the amount of advertisement, violence and other unhealthy behaviour and scenes are being broadcast for the viewing of the audience. Regardless of this, whether television can cause harm or not depends on different factors. These factors include what is being watched, with whom are they watching, what they are doing while watching, for how long they are watching and for what purpose are they watching.

Over the years, various research works have been carried out to know the effects of television on young people. One of which Olagunju et.al (2018),

using the Software visualization approach did a research on the impact of television on youths. They wanted to know if television has a significant impact on the social and cultural values of the youths. They found out that traditional and cultural content shown on television has a profound real-life effect on young individuals. It was also found out that the real impact of television on its viewers depends on its reach and accessibility, socio economic status of the viewers and the time spent on viewing.

Also, Okpala et.al (2012) looked at the influence of television viewing on adolescent behaviour among public secondary school students. From the result they obtained, it was noted that television viewing can impact the behaviour of an adolescent both positively and negatively. The result also proved that there is a prolonged television viewing habit amongst the students under study and this can alter the behaviour of most adolescents.

Moreover, Kamaruzaman and Nurul (2009) added that despite the challenge faced by educators and parents on the influence of mass media on young people, there are also some positive part to it which are also of great significance.

Young people today, without leaving their houses can hear the world's best music and witness superb musical performances, see outstanding drama and dance programmes, hear political and governmental leaders of the nation and the world analyze major issues of the day and learn of scientific advances and problems. Mass media brings information, inspiration and enrichment that potentially improves the quality of our living (Olagunju et al., 2018).

Cultivation theory

Cultivation theory which is also known as cultivation hypothesis or cultivation analysis was originally propounded by Professor George Gerbner in 1967 who was later joined by his colleague Larry Gross (Ezekiel, Angela & Adeline, 2017). Cultivation theory is the most prominent theory that discusses whether there is a relationship between television content and the notion of viewers towards social reality (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980 as cited in Stephen, 2004).

The theory proposes that the risk of viewing television lies not only in its ability to shape a particular point about one particular issue but it has the ability to shape an individual's moral values and overall belief about the world (Mosharafa, 2015). Gerbner and his group posit that the major contribution of television is "cultivation". This is a cultural process that relates "coherent frameworks or knowledge and to underlying general concepts...cultivated by exposure to the total and organically related world of television rather than exposure to individual programs and selections" (Gerbner, 1990).

Cultivation theory tackles the long- term effects of television on viewers. The theory proposes that the danger of television lies in its ability to shape, not a particular view point about one specific issue but its ability to shape people's moral values and general beliefs about the world (Mosharafa 2015)

It emphasizes that television does not reflect what is happening in the outside world, but it presents an artificial world that focuses on certain issues depending on the will and interest of those controlling the media. Eventually, the accumulation of exposure to television and the lack of direct experience in various issues create an artificial world, which becomes more and more real to the recipients. (Maccawi, Emad & El Sayed 1985).

Research conducted in this field over the years generally has linked the beliefs and notions of light and heavy viewers. The cultivation theory was supported when it was found out that there is a significant difference between light and heavy viewers and it was also discovered that the conceptions of these heavy viewers imitated televised reality (Stephen, 2004). Gerbner and Gross 1976 as cited in Lau, 2015 posited if heavy viewers of television are exposed to more violent content eventually effected by the Mean World Syndrome, they will eventually have an idea that the world is worse than it actually is (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

According to Gerbner 2002, Heavy viewers are usually those who watch television for three or more hours of prime time. Therefore, it is not likely they miss the frequent and significant patterns of television content. One of the arguments of cultivation theorists is that television has a long-term effect on its viewers which are small, gradual

and indirect but it is cumulative and significant (Ezekiel et al., 2017).

Within the framework of romantic relationships, cultivation theory implies that heavy viewers of television or any other form of media tends to cultivate some of the unlikely beliefs that people have while entering into dating or marital commitment, ranging from perceptions of sexuality to perceptions of marital expectations (Banjo, 2002).

Cultivation theorists posits that high viewers of television are more influenced by what they watch than light viewers. Therefore, the following are the research hypothesis in this study

Research hypotheses

H_1: Viewers of romantic films on digital platforms will cultivate an unrealistic expectation about marriage.

H_2: Heavy viewers of romantic films on digital platforms will report stronger endorsement of romantic beliefs than light viewers.

H_3: Watching of romantic films on digital platforms will have an influence on the romantic relationship of the viewers.

Methodology

This study adopted the cross-sectional research design due to its relevance to this study and its capacity to achieve the objectives of the study. As such, data were collected from a representative sample at only one point in time. Population of the study was derived from undergraduates in two Universities in Ilorin Metropolis namely University of Ilorin (Federal University) and Al-Hikmah University (Private University). However, the State University in Kwara State is located outside Ilorin, thereby informing the decision to select only 2 universities. The total number of students in the aforementioned universities constituted the entire population of study. According to the Students Affairs Unit of each university, the population of students in each university were: UNILORIN (47,499) and Al-Hikmah (3,748). Hence, the population of this study was 51, 379. Furthermore, Yamane's (1967) model of determining sample size was adopted. A sample size of 400 was derived as adequate for the study population. The study purposive sampling method. Only students in the selected universities who were in a romantic relationship and consumed romantic films through digital platforms were selected for the study, as that was the basis for individuals to be qualified in the study. However, copies of the questionnaire were allocated to the Universities selected.

Measures

Certain concepts, that were used within the context of this research, deserve to be operationally clarified, and are therefore defined and measured as follows:

Motives for watching romantic films: This study adapted a measure to assess motives based on Rubin's (1983) original scale, which ascertained the different reasons people watch television. Participants were presented with a list of five statements that pertained to three potential reasons (i.e., escape, entertainment, and learning) for viewing romantic films. Some of the items in the scale includes, I watch romantic films because they entertain me, I watch romantic films just to pass away time, I watch romantic films so as to learn how to be romantically engaged with my partner, and I watch romantic films because they amuse me. The scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Fantasy rumination about marriage: The 6-item scale was created by Segrin and Nabi (2002) to measure people's tendency to fantasize about marriage and was therefore adapted for this study. Respondents were therefore asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: I will like to have a glamorous wedding as portrayed in romantic films, I believe in the romantic ideal that love should lead to marriage, I expect my lifelong partner to be close to the fantasy I create from watching romantic films and I believe I have to adapt myself to the new behaviour of my potential lifelong partner as portrayed in romantic films. The items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Influence of Romantic films: Sprecher and Metts' (1989) Romantic Beliefs Scale (RBS) was adapted. The 7-item scale was to measure participants' endorsement of beliefs associated with the ideology of romance. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following

statements: Based on my exposure to romantic film, there can be only one true love in life, my concept of love at first sight is influenced by the romantic movies I consume; and based on the romantic movies I consume, if I was in love with someone, I would commit myself to him or her even if my parents and friends disapprove of the relationship. The items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percent
Age		
18-22	262	65.5
23-27	104	26.0
28-32	23	5.8
33-37	7	1.8
37 and above	4	1.0
Gender		
Male	191	47.8
Female	209	52.3
University of study		
University of Ilorin	370	92.5
Al-Hikmah university	30	7.5
Relationship status		
Single	233	58.2
Engaged	46	11.5
Married	17	4.3
Dating	104	26
Through Which Platform do you mostly watch romantic films		
YouTube	121	30.3
Netflix	252	63
Streaming	10	2.5
Others	17	4.3
Religion		
Christianity	204	51.0
Islam	177	44.3
Others	19	4.8

Results from Table 1 show that majority of the respondents were between 18 – 22 years of age (65.5%) while those between ages 23 – 27 were a little above one quarter (26%). From this, it can be deduced that most of the respondents were adults and can therefore be involved in a romantic relationship.

The findings from this study further indicated that more than half (52.3%)were females while the male respondents were 48%. Findings indicate that more than one quarter of the respondents (33.5%) were 100Level students, followed by those in 300level with 21% and those in 400level came third with 18%. A majority of the respondents 92.5% were from University of Ilorin while respondents from Al-Hikmah University were 7.5%.

In addition, more than half (58.2) of the respondents were single, while more than one quarter are (26%) were dating and 4.3% were already married. From the data collected, more than half (51%) of the respondents were Christians while 44.3% were Muslims. However, 4.8% of the respondents claimed they practiced other religions.

Table 2: Linear Regression for Romantic Films on Unrealistic Marriage Expectation

Model	B	SE	T	P
(Constant)	1.413	.155	9.127	.001
Romantic Films	0.256	.045	5.724	.001

$F_{(1, 398)} = 32.564$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = .562$

Dependent Variable: Unrealistic Marriage Expectation

Table 2 shows the relationship between romantic films and unrealistic expectations about marriage. Since the hypothesis is rejected, it can, therefore, be concluded that there is a significant relationship between romantic films and unrealistic expectation about marriage. This was because the p-value was less than 0.05% (p=.001). The influence of romantic films on unrealistic expectation about marriage had a high beta coefficient and a significant p-value (β=.492, p=.001). The beta coefficient indicates that consuming romantic films has an influence on the unrealistic expectation of individuals about romantic relationships. The modal had a R^2=.562, which means that romantic films were responsible for 56.2% of unrealistic expectation about marriage.

Table 3: Endorsement of Romantic Belief

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	Heavy Viewers	*Low Viewers*
Mean	26.67	80
Variance	674.33	1561
Observations	3	3
Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
Df	3	
t Stat	-1.953836453	
P-value	0.072863236	
t Critical one-tail	2.353363435	

As indicated in table 3, the p-value is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Therefore, heavy viewers of romantic films on digital platforms will not report stronger endorsement of romantic beliefs than light viewers.

Table 4: Linear Regression on the influence of romantic films on romantic relationships

Model	B	SE	T	P
(Constant)	1.932	0.173	11.151	.001
Romantic Films	0.090	0.048	1.888	.030

$F_{(1, 398)} = 3.564$, p =.001, R^2 =.479

Dependent Variable: Romantic Relationship of Viewers

Results from linear regression showed that romantic films predicted practice of romantic relationship among viewers of romantic films on digital platforms. This was because the p-value was less than 0.05% (p=.030). The influence of romantic films on the relationship of viewers had a moderate beta coefficient and a significant p-value (β=.322, p=.030). This indicates that the influence of romantic films on romantic relationship of viewers was moderate. Because the p-value (p=.030) was less than 0.05%, we, therefore, uphold that watching romantic films on digital platforms has a significant influence on the romantic relationship of the viewers.

Discussions

This study aimed at examining the influence of exposure to romantic films through digital platforms like Internet, Netflix and YouTube amongst others on romantic relationship among university students. Data were collected from students at the University of Ilorin and Al-Hikmah University. Findings in the research inferred that that heavy viewers are most likely to imitate televised reality compared to light viewers (Stephen, 2004). In addition, results from this study indicated that heavy consumption of romantic films does not necessarily predict how much influence these films will have on the romantic relationships of its viewers.

There are a number of different motivations that scholars have identified as reasons people use media. Some of those include: habit, arousal, escapism, learning, interpersonal activity, relaxation, entertainment, reality exploration of personal identity, and a way to pass time (Bryant & Thompson, 2002; Rubin, 2002). In this regard, data collected for this study showed that most of the respondents watched romantic films because they learnt how to be romantically engaged with their partners from what they watched.

From the findings of the study, it was observed that a many respondents fantasised about what they wanted their marriage to look like just from what they consumed in romantic films. The result from this finding is consistent with findings by Segrin and Nabi (2012), who found that those who watch romantic films tend to fantasise and dream of what their own wedding will be like and also imagine what life after the wedding day would be like. In their work, they concluded that most of these fantasies lead to the divorce of so many marriages because not all that is seen in romantic films can be applied to relationships in reality. As a result of this, there is a high rate of divorce in society.

Also, findings indicated that viewers of romantic films will cultivate an unrealistic expectation about marriage. Those who watch romantic films a lot have the tendency to create a notion of a perfect marriage and fantasise about what they would want their marriage life to be like. Most romantic film viewers also tend to create a picture of what and who their life partner should be like as seen in most of the films they watch.

Findings also showed that heavy viewers of romantic films will not report stronger endorsement of romantic beliefs than light viewers. This finding is opposed to the postulation of the cultivation theory which states that heavy viewers of television are likely to get influenced by what they watch than light viewers. Also**,** hypothesis three which stated that watching of romantic films will have an influence on the romantic relationship of the viewers was also accepted. Results from the study indicated that watching of romantic films will have an influence on the romantic relationship of the viewers.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study confirmed that watching romantic films through digital platforms influence the perception of an individual's romantic relationship. Exposure to romantic films through digital platforms increases a persons' tendency to have fantasised ideas about relationships. Thus, there is a significant positive effect of media consumption on peoples' perception of reality. There is every tendency for comparison in most relationships as people are constantly comparing their romantic relationship with some kind of expectations and most of these expectations are obtained from what is watched in most romantic films. This study therefore concluds that unrealistic romantic expectations are created from the romantic films consumed through digital platforms which inturn influences the behaviour of viewers towards their partners in romantic relationships.

The study therefore recommended that there is a need for proper education among viewers of romantic films so as to have a personal understanding with their romantic partners while avoiding taking as real relationship experiences they watch in romantic films.

Further studies should be conducted to find out if the influence of romantic films on romantic relationship is either positive or negative since this study only investigated if these films actually influence people's perception of a romantic relationship. Also, further studies can be carried out to find out the influence of romantic films on romantic relationships based on the relationship status of the respondents. In other word, further study should find out if romantic films have more influence on married people or people who are dating. Finally, studies can be done to find out the cultural and religious implications of applying the romantic ideals portrayed in romantic films into romantic relationships in Nigeria.

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