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ROMANCE-ORIENTED-MEDIA (R-O-M): RELATION WITH RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION & SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract

During the lockdown that was imposed due to the spread of Covid-19, people turned to media for entertainment purposes. Some studies even reported the time people spent per day on media increased tremendously during this period. However, all genres of media do not equally impose their influence on the consumers. So, studying genre-specific media becomes essential as it allows us to understand in-depth the influence each genre of media has on individuals. The present study focuses on the romance-oriented-media and its influence on relationship satisfaction and self-esteem. The study was carried out on 485 Indian students whose relationship satisfaction and self-esteem were assessed using Rosenberg's self-esteem scale and Hendrick's relationship assessment scale. The results showed a negative correlation of romance-oriented-media with relationship satisfaction and self-esteem. The result also showed a positive correlation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction.

Key words: *Romance-oriented-media, R-O-M, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem, genre-specific media.*

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INTRODUCTION:

With the surge of the Covid-19 situation, the country experienced a shutdown from the end of March 2020. The entire nation was at home with absolute spare time at hand. Individuals took up hobbies that they could carry out inside the four walls of the house. One such hobby was the consumption of media. In a study conducted it was found that television viewing, online videos, and social media have become the top modes of entertainment for Indians during the COVID-19 (Omnicom Media group & YouGov India, 2020). The same study has also shown that people spent close to one and half hours on over the top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney + Hotstar, Zee5, Viki, Viu, and so on, and near about two hours on YouTube

every day watching movies, serials, documentary videos, music, and educational content videos. In another study, it was found that the consumption time of OTT platforms, which provide viewers a platform to watch movies, serials, and videos, without having to go out of the house, has increased from 181 billion to 204 billion minutes in 2021 in India alone (Business Today Desk, 2021).

For the current study R-O-M has been considered as any genre-specific, primarily focusing on romantic love, intimacy, and romantic relationship between two individuals.

R-O-M usually portray the romantic relationship between two people, who come to be known as 'couple'. A proper definition of 'couple' has been given by

the Cambridge dictionary, which defines a couple as, two people who are binded together in either marriage or romantic or sexual relationship, or are together for a particular purpose (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Bond formation or bonding can be defined as the process of attachment development between two individuals such as close friends, mother and child, platonic partners, and others (American Psychological Association, 2022). The romantic bond formation, more specifically, may refer to the development of attachment between romantic partners. In a survey conducted by YouGov for eHarmony in 2013, it was found that on an average men took 88 days (nearly 2 months) and women took 134 days (more than 4 months) to confess "I love you" to the person they love (Emery, 2015). Ackerman, Griskevicius and Li (2011) conducted a study in which they reported that when in a relationship, on an average, men and women took 97.3 days (more than two months) and 138.9 days (more than 4 months) respectively to say 'I love you' to their partner. Considering both the studies it may be assumed that it takes around 6 months for the couples who are in a relationship to confess their love.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction plays an essential role in the life of couples. Relationship satisfaction can be influenced by several factors. One such factor is the unrealistic romantic beliefs and expectations that individuals have. When such beliefs and expectations are not met, they affect the relationship satisfaction of the individuals. These unrealistic expectations and beliefs that people have are often seen to be influenced by the R-O-M consumed by these people.

Self-esteem

The origin of the concept of 'self-esteem' can be traced back to the eighteenth century when it was first

expressed in the writings of David Hume, a Scottish enlightenment thinker. Hume believed that it is very important to value and think positively of oneself as it serves as a motivator for people to explore their full potential. Even though the origin of self-esteem is traced back to David Hume, it was in the works of William James (1898) that self-esteem was identified as a distinct psychological construct ("Self-esteem", 2022).

Objectives:

- 1) To study the relation of romance-oriented-media with relationship satisfaction of couples in educational institutions.
- 2) To study the relation of romance-oriented-media with the self-esteem of couples in educational institutions.
- 3) To study the relation of self-esteem with relationship satisfaction of couples in educational institutions.

Hypotheses:

- 1) Romance-oriented-media has no significant correlation with the relationship satisfaction of the couples in the educational institutions.
- 2) Romance-oriented-media has no significant correlation with the self-esteem of the couples in educational institutions.
- 3) Self-esteem has no significant correlation with the relationship satisfaction of the couples in educational institutions.

METHODOLOGY:

Sample

A sample 485 individuals studying in any educational institution in India, belonging to any class among 11th standard, 12th standard, graduation, post-graduation, diploma courses, and Ph.D. were eligible to be a participant in this study. However, these students should have been viewers of

R-O-M which includes romance novels, romantic and romantic comedy movies and series, and in a relationship for more than 6 months. Methods of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling were utilized to select samples in this study. Along with screening questions were used to enroll only that sample that followed the eligibility criteria for participating in this study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Individuals who are in a relationship for more than 6 months and consumers of R-O-M were included. Individuals who were in a relationship for 6 months or less were excluded. Transgenders, females, and males having heterosexual or homosexual relationships were included in the study. The individuals can be dating, in live-in relationships, engaged, or married. No age limit was kept.

Measures

The present study focuses on the three variables - R-O-M, relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem. The variable of R-O-M was assessed through some items which were based on the preferred mode and time spent on watching romantic media by the participants. For assessing relationship satisfaction and self-esteem, following two questionnaires were used:

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS): Relationship Assessment Scale developed by S.S.Hendrick in 1988 is a self-measure, 5 points Likert scale consisting of 7 items. The respondents had to answer each item based on 5 options, ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (High satisfaction). The relationship assessment scale is not only useful in assessing relationship satisfaction of married couples but also dating couples. The internal consistency of RAS was found to be .86, which is high.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE):

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg in 1965 consists of 10 items. The participants had to respond to each item on 4 points ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. RES has a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, which indicates an excellent internal consistency. The 2 weeks period test-retest reliability of the scale was found to be .85 and .88, which indicates high stability.

Procedure

For the eligible subjects the data was collected through Google forms. Three sampling methods were used which included purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. The purposive, and convenience sampling method was mostly used in collecting data from the individuals studying at the Central University of Punjab. The instructions were clearly mentioned in the google form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in the SPSS software and checked for their significance at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviations of the three variables of the study. To analyze the R-O-M variable, the hours spent on romantic media were considered. The mean and standard deviation of hours spent watching or reading romantic media by 485 participants was 1.62 and 0.926 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of relationship satisfaction was found to be 28.66 and 5.177 respectively and of self-esteem was 30.02 and 6.669 respectively.

Self-esteem	30.02	6.669	485
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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	N
Hours (R-O-M)	1.62	.926	485
Relationship Satisfaction	28.66	5.177	485

The normality of the data collected under the three variables were also analyzed and the obtained data was not found to be normally distributed.

Table 2
Shapiro-Wilk Table

	Statistics	Sig
Hours (R-O-M)	.686	<.001
Relationship Satisfaction	.910	<.001
Self-esteem	.941	<.001

Based on the skewness of the data, the Spearman correlation non-parametric statistics was used to analyze the correlation between R-O-M and relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem. Spearman correlation was also used to find the correlation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction.

Table 3
Spearman’s correlation between romantic media (hours spent on romantic media) and relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem

		Relationshi p Satisfaction	Self- esteem m
Hours (R-O-M)	Correlation	-.244*	-.223*
	Coefficient		
	Sig (2-tailed)	.024	.040
	N	485	485
Self-esteem	Correlation	.398**	1.000
	Coefficient		
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	485	485

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 represents the correlation between the variables. The results showed a negative correlation of -.244 between hours spent on R-O-M and relationship

satisfaction, significant at $p < .05$ level. Similarly, a negative correlation of -.223 was also found between hours spent on R-O-M and self-esteem, significant at $p < .05$ level. The results also showed a positive correlation of .398 between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction, significant at $p < .01$ level. Based on the results, all the null hypotheses are rejected.

DISCUSSION:

The objective of the present research was to study the relationship between R-O-M and relationship satisfaction, as well as the relationship between romance-oriented-media and the self-esteem of the individuals who are in a relationship. It was found that R-O-M has a significant negative correlation with relationship satisfaction and self-esteem. Such a negative correlation between the predictor variable and outcome variables can be explained using theories such as cultivation theory and social cognitive theory. Along with these theories, there are also socio-cultural factors that lead to the negative relation that relationship satisfaction and self-esteem hold with R-O-M.

According to cultivation theory, more time spent on television leads to individuals constructing a view of reality that is similar to the reality shown on television (Perera, 2021). When individuals spend more time on R-O-M content, they start to construct a view of reality that is similar to the reality portrayed in the R-O-M. They regard characters of these contents as their model, and through observational learning, they learn how these characters behave in different situations related to their romantic life. When these individuals are confronted with difficult situations in real life they try to act out in ways shown in such movies and series. When such behavior does not work out as expected, they start doubting their capabilities and negatively evaluate themselves. Such

negative evaluation lowers their self-esteem.

When it comes to socio-cultural factors, in India, parents find it taboo to talk to their children about dating and romantic relationships. Hence, their children have to rely on romance-oriented movies, series, or books to gather knowledge about relationships. However, what is portrayed in these series, movies, and books are scenarios that are sometimes quite different from reality. These R-O-M cultivate dysfunctional beliefs in individuals' minds such as "sexes are different", "mind-reading is expected", "love finds a way", "love at first sight", "idealization" and "one and only" (Holmes, 2004; Holmes & Johnson, 2009; Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook, 2014). Such ideals and beliefs are formed when people start believing in the romance that is portrayed in the R-O-M. Such dysfunctional beliefs and ideals, and unmet expectations lead to a decrease in relationship satisfaction (Vannier & Sullivan, 2017).

Another reason for a negative correlation between R-O-M and relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem can be social comparison. When individuals evaluate themselves as not up to the level of beauty standards as portrayed in the R-O-M, they negatively evaluate themselves and even start having doubts and fear in their relationship. Such doubts and fear can hamper their self-esteem as well as relationship satisfaction.

There are various series that can be used as examples to show how beauty standards are emphasized upon. In present times, the Korean series, or in other words the 'Hallyu series' (Chinese term) are greatly received by people around the world. It is readily available on YouTube and the OTT platforms. Even though these series and movie give a positive important lesson on beauty at the end, their portrayal of certain scenes in which only beautiful people are appreciated can lead to viewers inculcating such notion, which can hamper their self-

esteem. These media showed how the protagonist changed themselves and then they found happiness. If female protagonists were able to find happiness before they changed themselves, then the lessons they wanted to convey would have had more impact.

The present study was not only limited to the study of the relation of R-O-M with relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem. It also found a positive correlation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. This finding supports the previous research which shows that self-esteem has an influence on relationship satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2014; Scingula & Morry 2014).

The positive correlation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction can be explained using some scenarios. The way individuals perceive themselves and others influences to a greater extent how they think others perceive them. If individuals view themselves in a negative light, it will make them think that others perceive them in such a negative light also, as rightly said by one of the prominent writer, Prem Prakash, "*the world that we perceive is a reflection of our states of mind and reveals our own level of consciousness*" (Quotefancy, 2022). If such scenarios happen when individuals are in a relationship, it hampers their relationship as they will constantly compare themselves and their relationship to that of others. This can lead to lower relationship satisfaction.

Media has become an irreplaceable part of our lives. No matter how hard we try we cannot fully refrain from these. But why refrain completely from the media? Media is informative, a source of entertainment, a source of knowledge and learning, and it connects us globally. This study attempted to highlight this dark side of media, although through a few variables only. Not always the media needs our attention, sometimes we also need to pay attention to the content that we watch on media.

Relationships should be reality-based, but sometimes people tend to base their relationships on the superficial foundations laid by the media. And that's when many times these fail. The study wanted to bring attention to these relationship failures for which the cause many times is media.

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