A Comparison Study of the Effects of Romantic Films and Fictional Stories on Romantic Beliefs among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of media, specifically romantic films and fictional stories, in shaping romantic beliefs among early adults. An experimental method was employed with a pre-test and post-test design across two groups. A total of 50 participants (aged 20–30) were divided into two groups: the first group (n=25) watched romantic films, while the second group (n=25) read romantic fiction. Changes in romantic beliefs were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. The results indicated that the average romantic beliefs score of the film group increased from 3.2 to 4.1 ($p < 0.01$), while the fiction group showed an increase from 3.3 to 3.8 ($p < 0.05$). Statistical analysis using an independent t-test revealed that the score increase in the film group was significantly greater than in the fiction group ($t(58) = 2.89$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that visual narratives in films are more effective at eliciting emotions and reinforcing beliefs about romantic relationships compared to written text. These results also have practical implications that film media can be used as a psychological and educational intervention approach related to romantic relationships in early adulthood.

Keywords : Romantic Beliefs, Early Adulthood, Media Influence, Experimental Study

INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood, which encompasses ages 18 to 40, is a crucial phase in individual development (Hurlock, 2011; Pratiwi & Sawitri, 2020). Erikson describes this phase through the development crisis of intimacy vs isolation, where individuals are challenged to establish intimate and meaningful relationships with others. Successful resolution of this phase enables individuals to build deep and supportive connections, both in the context of friendship and romantic relationships. Conversely, failure to achieve intimacy may lead to emotional isolation, characterized by feelings of alienation, loneliness, and difficulty trusting others. Based on Bowlby's attachment theory, the sense of alienation experienced in individuals in early adulthood is often associated with insecure attachment patterns, such as anxious or avoidant attachment, which are formed during childhood (Angela & Hadiwirawan, 2022). Bowlby explained that individuals with insecure attachment tend to struggle in establishing stable and trusting relationships. These attachment patterns influence how individuals perceive and approach their romantic relationships, a concept known as romantic beliefs. Romantic beliefs reflect individuals' expectations and assumptions about romantic relationships themselves (Angela & Hadiwirawan, 2022).

In addition to attachment, romantic beliefs in young adulthood are also influenced by life experiences, including violence within relationships, whether physical, psychological, or sexual, which often leads to trauma (Grace et al., 2018). Positive or negative perceptions of romantic relationships are shaped by individuals' experiences with those relationships. Research has shown that relationship satisfaction may serve as an indicator of enjoyment and trust in the quality of relationship (Chrisnatalia dan Ramadhan, 2022).

On the other hand, media, such as film and fictional romantic stories can have a positive influence on romantic beliefs. Generation Z, who grew up in the digital era, is constantly exposed to various media, including romantic-themed films and series. Previous studies have shown that consumption of romantic films correlates with the idealization of love, including beliefs in the existence of a perfect partner, fantasies about marriage, and elevated relationship expectations. Romantic films often portray dramatic or idealized love narratives, which can shape individuals' expectations toward their own romantic relationships (Galloway, et al., 2015).

Romantic readings, such as short stories, novels, and fictional stories, exert a similar influence. Reading romantic fiction allows readers to engage in narrative transportation, a psychological state in which individuals become fully absorbed in a narrative, marked by focused attention, emotional involvement, and imagination directed toward the story's progression across various media (Green & Appel, 2024). This process enables readers to identify with the characters, strengthen their emotional connections to the narrative, and form romantic expectations based on those fictional experiences. Such engagement is particularly relevant in shaping romantic beliefs, especially among young adults, who often rely on media as a reference for understanding romantic relationships.

Romantic films and stories often portray idealized love, which can shape positive expectations toward relationships. For young adults, such exposure helps them explore their views on love and reinforces their romantic beliefs, thereby supporting their emotional development (Oliver et al., 2021). To gain a deeper understanding on how this media influences romantic beliefs in young adults, a systematic approach through experimental methods is required.

This study aims to explore and compare the effects of exposure to romantic film and romantic fictional stories on romantic beliefs in young adults. The different forms of presentation between films and romantic fictional stories, namely visual and narrative, are important to examine because they may influence romantic beliefs in individuals differently. Using an experimental design, this study aims to measure the extent to which the two types of media exert a positive impact on individuals' beliefs about love and romantic relationships. The findings are expected to provide not only theoretical insights into the role of media in the emotional development of young adults, but also practical implications for utilizing romantic films and fictional stories as effective intervention tools to help individuals rebuild hope and belief in love.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Romantic Beliefs

Sprecher & Metts define romantic beliefs as views that shape the ideology of romanticism and are specifically related to the idealization of partners and romantic relationships, the concept

that love will can overcome various obstacles, the understanding that there is one true love, and the idea of love at first sight (Fachri, et al., 2020). Abelson states that these beliefs are structured within a romantic context that can be described as a mental representation of a series of events related to romance (Fachri, et al., 2020). According to Sprecher & Metts, the standards associated with these beliefs are then incorporated into romantic texts that are used to construct and evaluate one's own behavior, as well as to predict and understand the behavior of a romance partner or potential partner (Fachri, et al., 2020). Sprecher & Metts also stated that romantic beliefs can have a significant influence in attracting initial interest and play an important role in directing the development of relationships in the early stages (Fachri, et al., 2020).

According to Sprecher and Metts, romantic beliefs consist of four dimensions, which are:

1. Love at first sight
   Love at first sight refers to the belief that a person can fall in love with someone they have just met for the first time.
2. Idealization
   Idealization is the belief that true love will be perfect, where the ideal partner will live up to expectations, and the romantic relationships will be flawless.
3. Love that can overcome obstacles
   Love that can overcome obstacles is the belief that true love can face any challenges or problems that may threaten the relationship.
4. The one and only
   Meanwhile, the one and only is the belief that each individual has only one true love.

In addition, romantic beliefs can be influenced by several factors, including:

1. Television or Film
   Lippman, et al. state that romantic beliefs are formed from programs with themes of relationships or marriage that are often shown on television and in films (Imaniar, 2017).
2. Printed Media and Fairy Tales
   Jin & Kim stated that fairy tales, novels, and romantic stories in mass media create stereotypes about romantic relationships, even for individuals who have never experienced a real relationship (Imaniar, 2017).

Film

Film is one of the oldest electronic media and has long been an important part of human life (Sugianto, et al., 2017). According to Effendi, as a cultural product and a medium of artistic expression, film combines various elements of technology and art, including photography, sound recording, visual arts, theater, and music (Fais, et al., 2019). In the context of mass communication, film serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a tool for education, information dissemination, and even propaganda. As a learning medium, film has been proven effective because it integrates both visual and auditory elements, making it easier for students to understand the learning context while enhancing engagement, motivation, and language skills (Safira et al., 2025).

Based on their purpose and characteristics, films can be categorized into various types. For instance, documentary films are used to present reality authentically, often with educational or informational objectives. In addition, short films serve a learning medium for beginner filmmakers. In terms of themes and story ideas, films are also divided into several genres. The major genres commonly known include action, comedy, horror, science fiction, musical, melodrama, romance, war, and gangster films (Bordwell et al., 2019). Each genre has its own unique appeal and function, catering to different audience needs, from pure entertainment to the conveyance of emotional or moral messages. The presence of film in modern life goes beyond recreation, it also serves s a medium capable of influencing public perception and emotion on a broad scale.

Fictional Story

Taylor states that stories are a crucial element of the human experience, connecting individuals with one another and across time (Fentiani et al., 2025). Fiction is often defined as an imaginative narrative born from a writer's reflection on realities within their socio-cultural context. This reflection is then processed through creativity and imagination (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017). Although fiction tells life experiences and various problems, it must remain as an engaging story with a coherent structure and an aesthetic purpose. Through such stories, readers can indirectly learn, feel, and understand the various life issues conveyed by the author (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017).

Romantic fiction is recognized as a powerful genre in shaping readers' understanding of love and relationships, a process of socialization that occurs through textual narrative (Sumarno & Rosidin, 2022). Recent research indicates that romance novels not only serve as a form of entertainment but also a source of strong romantic idealism (such as the concepts of 'soulmates' and 'love at first sight', as highlighted by Radway and Sterk), which can influence a person's relationship expectations (Garciano et al., 2022). Furthermore, this genre can also be function as a mechanism for compensation or wish fulfillment from the pressures of relational reality, where readers, particularly women, seek validation and images of ideal men that are difficult to find in real life (Reza et al., 2024). Its influence is both normative and behavioral; in the Indonesian context, romance novels have become a trend that influences dating styles and even encourages the desire to emulate the romantic behaviors portrayed (Sumarno & Rosidin, 2022).

Early Adulthood

Early adulthood is a stage of human development characterized by significant physical, psychological, and social changes. This stage marks a transitional period in which individuals adapt to new life patterns and roles, such as achieving personal and economic independence, developing a career, and establishing intimate relationships and families (Santrock, 2019). Romantic beliefs play a crucial role in navigating these development tasks, especially in forming romantic relationships that serve as the foundation for achieving intimacy in early adulthood. According to Hurlock, early adulthood is marked by the maturity of reproductive organs, although reproductive capacity gradually begins to decline (Putri, 2019). Mappiare emphasizes this stage as a transition from dependence to economic independence and autonomous decision-making (Putri, 2019). In Erikson's psychosocial theory, early adulthood

falls within the stage of intimacy versus isolation, where individuals face the development task of balancing the pursuit of intimate relationships with the avoidance of isolation (Adilla, 2019). According to Watkins and Beckmeyer (2020), Romantic beliefs are relatively coherent cognitive schemas about love that help individuals organize and evaluate their expectations, experiences, and behaviors within romance relationships. Hazan and Shaver's Adult attachment theory suggests that romantic relationships are influenced by attachment styles formed during infancy, encompassing aspects of dependence, closeness, and anxiety (Puspitasari & Syafiq, 2022). Hurlock explains that the development tasks of early adulthood include obtaining employment, choosing a life partner, building a family, managing a household, and fulfilling civic responsibilities (Putri, 2019). Romantic beliefs play a central role in helping individuals assess partner compatibility, form relationship expectations, and determine long-term commitment. Early adulthood thus becomes a crucial phase for consolidating personal values, developing complex social relationships, and fulfilling responsibilities as members of a broader society..

Previous Research

Romantic media exposure, whether through film or television, has been shown to significantly influence individuals' romantic beliefs. Previous research has shown that popular teen movies can shape romantic idealism in early adolescent girls (Driesmans et al., 2016) and that watching TV dramas and romantic movies is a strong predictor of romantic idealism among adults (Kretz, 2019). In fact, exposure to Disney films has been linked to more idealistic and unrealistic beliefs about romance (Ray, 2022). Studies in the local context also confirm that films have a substantial influence on adolescents' perceptions of romance (Fais et al., 2019). Although these data strongly support the role of audiovisual media in shaping romantic beliefs, there is a substantial gap in the literature that limits comprehensive understanding. There have been no studies that directly and comparatively compare the effects of exposure to romantic films (audiovisual media) with romantic fiction stories (textual media) on romantic beliefs in the early adult population. Previous studies have tended to focus on one type of media or generalize the influence of audiovisual media, without testing whether the mode of content delivery (visual versus textual narrative) produces significant differences in the formation of romantic beliefs. Therefore, this study is urgently needed to fill this gap, not only by targeting young adults as a crucial group in the formation of intimate relationships, but also by investigating the modes of content delivery comparatively. This effort will provide a profound academic contribution regarding the different cognitive and affective mechanisms between films and fiction in shaping romantic beliefs, while also providing practical insights into the influence of dominant media among the younger generation.

Exposure to popular teen movies has been shown to have a romantic belief effect on early adolescent girls. Research shows that adolescents aged 11-14 with high levels of parasocial interaction with movie characters are more likely to support idealistic romantic beliefs after watching *High School Musical*. However, the influence of watching romantic movies decreases with age (Driesmans et al., 2016). Furthermore, studies on the relationship between television and film consumption, romantic idealism (the belief that love conquers all and that there is such a thing as a "soulmate"), and relationship satisfaction among adults in romantic relationships

show that watching each genre of television and film analyzed (including reality shows about relationships, TV dramas, TV comedies, soap operas, and romantic films) is positively associated with romantic idealism. Watching TV dramas and romantic films is the strongest predictor of the belief that love conquers all and relationship satisfaction, while watching soap operas is the strongest predictor of the belief in "soulmates" (Kretz, 2019).

Another study conducted by Ray (2022) focused on testing the influence of exposure to Disney romantic films on romantic beliefs. His findings show that Disney films and other films with similar themes appear to influence participants' beliefs about romantic relationships. After being exposed to Disney films, people tend to believe more in idealistic and unrealistic forms of romance. In addition, those exposed to Disney films may feel more satisfied with their current relationships.

Research conducted by Farida Fais, Edy Sudaryanto, and Sri Andayani (2019) examined adolescents' perceptions of romanticism in the film Dilan 1990, which premiered throughout Indonesia on January 25, 2018. Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study aimed to describe groups or phenomena occurring in society. Through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, the researchers collected data in the field. The results showed that the perceptions of teenagers on Sidokapasan X Street, Simokerto District, Surabaya, towards the film Dilan 1990 varied and were influenced by different points of view. This film has been proven to have a significant effect on teenagers who are still in a phase of emotional instability, providing insight into how films can shape teenagers' views on romance and reflect complex social and psychological dynamics in the context of romantic relationships among teenagers.

From previous studies, it can be concluded that romantic films not only serve as a means of entertainment, but also have a significant effect on shaping individuals' perceptions of romantic relationships. However, although there have been many studies examining the influence of films or fictional stories on romantic perceptions, so far there have been no studies that directly compare the effects of romantic films with romantic fictional stories on romantic beliefs, particularly in early adults in different local and cultural contexts. This gap is what this study aims to fill by exploring how both forms of media can affect romantic beliefs, while also assessing which medium has a greater effect. Therefore, this study not only strengthens academic understanding of the dynamics of romantic relationships in early adulthood, but also provides practical insights into how various forms of media contribute to shaping social norms and expectations among the younger generation.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework examines the use of fictional media as an intervention to address the failure of the developmental task in early adulthood, namely, establishing intimacy, which leads to the risk of isolation. This risk is exacerbated by factors such as relationship trauma and insecure attachment, which foster negative perceptions of relationships. Film is proposed as the primary psychological intervention, leveraging its unique advantages such as the impact of visual emotion and the formation of parasocial relationships that serve as a safe simulation of closeness. This intervention aims to enhance individuals' romantic beliefs. By this enhancement, it is expected to support emotional development and individuals' success in fulfilling the task of intimacy.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Media Influence on Romantic Beliefs

Research Hypothesis

Based on the explanation above, the researchers conducted a comparative exploratory study to examine whether there is a difference in romantic beliefs among young adults based on the type of media they consume, namely romantic films and romantic fiction stories. The hypothesis of this study are as follows:

H_0: There is no significant difference in romantic beliefs between young adults who watch romantic films and those who read romantic fictional stories.

H_1: There is a significant difference in romantic beliefs between young adults who watch romantic films and those who read romantic fictional stories.

METHODS

This study employed an experimental method with a quantitative approach. The experimental design used was a quasi-experimental design, consisting of two groups that received the same pre-test and post-test but were given different treatments. The sample of this study comprised psychology students from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia who are currently in early adulthood. The initial target sample size was set based on the total number of students from two existing classes (Class A and Class B), totaling 60 respondents. However, on the day of data collection, 10 respondents were unable to attend due to personal matters. Consequently,

the total number of respondents who completed the treatment was 50, with 25 respondents in each group. Despite the reduced number, data collection was still conducted in accordance with the method proposed by Gay and Diehl, which suggests that the minimum sample size for experimental research is 15 participants per group (Handayani, 2025).

The administration of the treatments was carried out by taking into account both the duration of each treatment and the schedule of each group. Group 1 (Class A), received a treatment in the form of a screening of a romantic film titled *The Notebook,* with a duration of 2 hours and 3 minutes. Meanwhile, Group 2 (Class B) received a treatment in the form of three short romantic stories titled *You are Worth My Time, Suara Kala Asmara, and Daily Morning with Jaden and Nina,* each with an estimated reading time of 8 minutes. Both treatments were conducted on December 9, 2024, in separate rooms at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The difference in duration reflects the ecological validity of the media being compared, film and short romantic fiction, representing formats that are commonly consumed in everyday life. Therefore, the researchers maintained the original duration to preserve the realism and relevance of the comparison. In addition, the reading duration was intentionally designed to minimize the influence of personal factors such as boredom or fatigue.

The instrument used in this study was the *Romantic Beliefs Scale* developed by Sprecher and Metts, which had been translated into Indonesian by Imaniar (2017). The instrument demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0,86 and had undergone validity testing through expert judgement involving two psychology experts and two linguistics experts, as well as a readability test with 15 early adults (Imaniar, 2017). In this study, data were collected using a questionnaire distributed through Google Form, which served as a medium for both the pre-test and post-test. The questionnaire used a 7-points Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neutral, slightly agree, agree,* to *strongly agree.* The data analysis techniques used in this study began with descriptive analysis, normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk Test, parametric statistical analysis (ANOVA), homogeneity testing, hypothesis testing with Paired Samples T-Test, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, Mann-Whitney U Test (Wilcoxon Signed Sum Test), and influence strength test using Cohen's test through the Jeffrey's Amazing Statistic Program (JASP) application.

RESULTS

The preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics that provided information about the characteristics of the data, followed by tests of normality and homogeneity as prerequisites for inferential analysis. After confirming that these assumptions were met, hypothesis testing was conducted to empirically address the research questions. Based on the results of the analysis, the descriptive statistics are presented as follows.

Table 1. Group Description

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of Variation
Romantic Beliefs	1	25	90.36	6.93	1.39	0.077
	2	25	81.56	8.93	1.79	0.109

Based on descriptive analysis, the mean score of romantic beliefs in Group 1 (watching romantic films) was 90.36, with a standard deviation of 6.93, whereas Group 2 (reading romantic fiction) had a mean score of 81.56 with a standard deviation of 8.93. The coefficient of variation indicated that Group 1 (watching romantic films) exhibited lower relative variability (7.7%) compared to Group 2 (reading romantic fiction) (10.9%), suggesting that the data in Group 1 were more consistent.

After obtaining an overview of the data characteristics through descriptive statistical analysis, the next step was to examine the data distribution in each experimental group. In this case, Experimental Group 1 (watching romantic films) and Experimental Group 2 (reading romantic fiction) were tested for normality to ensure that the data obtained from both groups met the normality assumption. The results are presented below.

Table 2. Normality Test

Group	W	p	Description
Experiment 1 (Pre-Test - Post-test)	0.973	0.720	Normal
Experiment 2 (Pre-Test - Post-test)	0.1799	< 0.001	Not Normal

The table above presents the normality test results for the romantic film experimental group on the pre-test and post-test scores, using the Shapiro-Wilk Test. The results show that the pre-test and post-test scores yielded W = 0.973 and p = 0.720. Since the p-value > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed, indicating the parametric statistic analysis (ANOVA) can be used for further testing.

Meanwhile, the normality test for the romantic fiction experimental group yielded a W value of 0.799 with p < 0.001 for both the pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, parametric statistical analysis could not be conducted, as the data did not meet the assumptions required for ANOVA. Consequently, the data analysis was continued using a non-parametric test, specifically the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, as an alternative to the parametric approach.

After confirming the data from both experimental groups through normality testing, the next step was to conduct a homogeneity of variance test to ensure that both groups had similar variance in the context of romantic beliefs. This test was used to determine whether the differences between Experimental Group 1 (watching romantic films) and Experimental Group 2 (reading romantic fiction) could be interpreted under the assumption that the variances of the two groups were homogenous.

Table 3. Homogeneity Test

	F	df_1	df_2	p
Romantic Beliefs	1.101	1	48	0.299

Based on the homogeneity test, the results presented in the table above show a p-value of 0.299, which is greater than > 0.05. This indicates that the assumption of homogeneity was fulfilled, meaning that the data across the groups were relatively consistent.

The analysis then proceeded with hypothesis testing using a paired samples t-test for Experimental Group 1 (watching romantic films). This test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within this group.

Table 4. Paired Samples T-test of Experimental Group 1

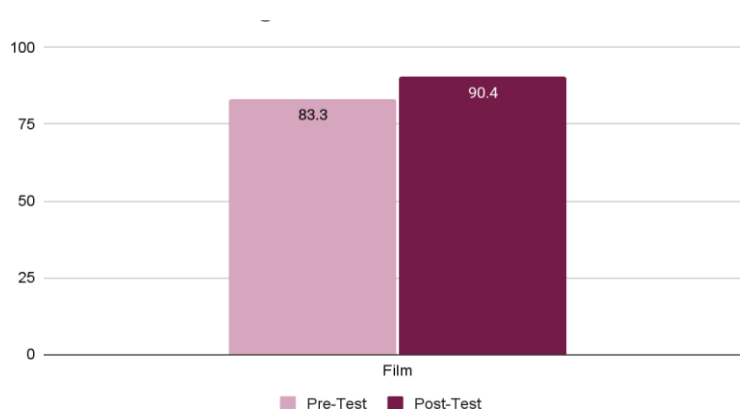|	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Pre-Test	25	83.32	7.54	1.51	-5.31	24	< 0.001	-1.062 (Large)
Post-Test	25	90.36	6.93	1.39				

Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores in Experimental Group 1

The table and figure above shows that the mean score of romantic beliefs in the experimental group increased after the intervention involving the viewing of romantic films, from 83.32 (SD = 7.54) in the pre-test, to 90.36 (SD = 6.93) in the post-test. The paired samples t-test revealed

a significant difference, $t(24) = -5.309$, p < .001, with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.06). This indicates that exposure to romantic films had a strong positive effect on enhancing romantic beliefs among the participants.

For Experimental Group 2, which received romantic fiction reading interventions, the analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. This test was selected because the data in Group 2 did not meet the normality assumption, making this non-parametric test more appropriate or analyzing the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in this group.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test of Experimental Group 2

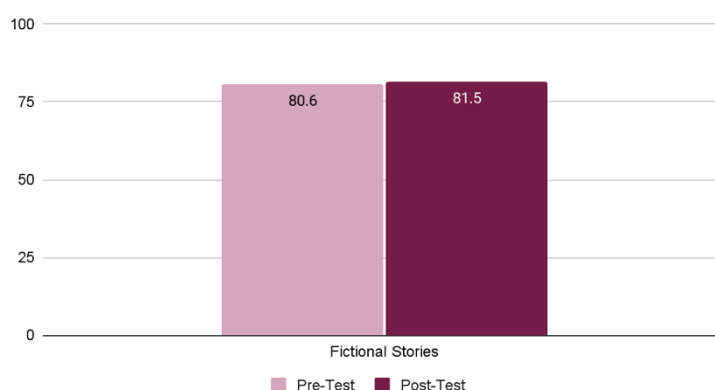|	N	Mean	SD	SE	z	p	Effect Size (r)
Pre-Test	25	80.68	8.75	1.75			
					-1.338	.184	-0.319 (Small)
Post-Test	25	81.56	8.93	1.79			

Figure 3. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores in Experimental Group 2

Based on the table and figure above, the mean score of participants in the experimental group increased slightly after being exposed to the romantic fiction reading intervention, with a post-test mean of 81.56 (SD = 8.93), compared to a pre-test mean of 80.68 (SD = 8.75). However, the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test showed a p-value > 0.05, indicating that there as no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of romantic beliefs in Experimental Group 2 (reading romantic fiction). The obtained effect size was r = -0.319, which falls into the small effect category, suggesting that although there was a slight increase in scores, the impact of reading romantic fiction on romantic beliefs was relatively weak. These findings suggest that reading romantic fiction did not produce a significant improvement in romantic beliefs. This may be attributed to a lower level of narrative transportation or immersion experienced during reading, or to participants' lack of engagement with the assigned reading material. Other factors, such as the linguistic style or narrative complexity of the short stories presented, may also have influenced participants' responsiveness to the text-based stimulus.

After examining the differences within Experimental Group 1 and Experimental Group 2 separately, the two groups were compared to determine whether there was a significant difference between participants who watched romantic films and those who read romantic fiction. Since one of the groups did not meet the normality assumption, the Mann-Whitney U Test was employed as a non-parametric method to analyze the difference between the two independent groups.

Table 6. Mann-Whitney U Test

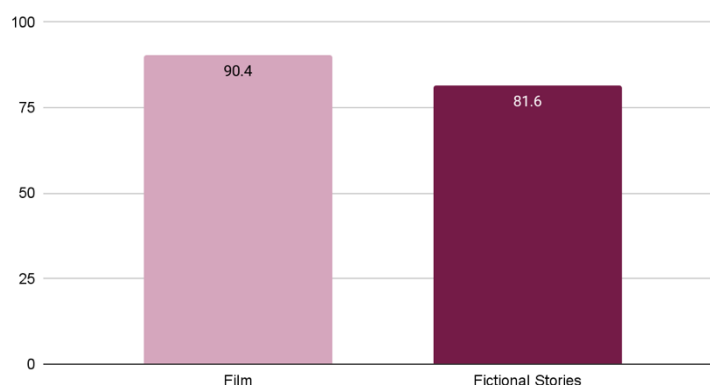| Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	U	p	Effect Size (r)
1	25	90.36	6.93	1.39	491.500	< 0.001	0.573 (Large)
2	25	81.56	8.93	1.79			

Figure 4. Comparison of Post-Test Scores Between Group

The table and figure above show that the romantic beliefs scores in the group that watched romantic films (M = 90.36, SD = 6.93) were higher than those in the group that read romantic fiction (M = 81.56, SD = 8.93). The Mann-Whitney U revealed a significant difference between the two groups, U = 491.500, p < .001, with a large effect size (r = 0.573). These findings indicate that watching romantic films had a stronger impact on enhancing romantic beliefs compared to reading romantic fiction. Therefore, H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Romantic beliefs shape the way individuals build, maintain, and resolve conflicts in romantic relationships (Jin & Kim, 2015). The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of romantic films and fictional stories on romantic beliefs in young adults. Based on results of data analysis, it was found that H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted, namely that there was a significant difference between the effect of romantic films and romantic fiction stories on romantic beliefs in young adults, with romantic films having a greater effect. Romantic films

also had a greater effect size compared to romantic fiction short stories, namely Cohen's d = 1.06.

The results obtained by the researchers are in line with the research conducted by Jin & Kim (2015), namely that a drama or film will shape individuals' expectations or beliefs about romantic relationships, especially if they experience a parasocial relationship with the characters in the film or drama. This is reinforced by Fitri's (2022) research, which states that films can affect the mood of the audience, and the impact can continue to be felt even after the film ends. The audience tends to feel happy, sad, or upset in accordance with the mood of the film. The audience seems to be immersed in the lives of the characters and get to know the characters they are watching.

In this study, it was found that treatment in the form of short fiction stories showed insignificant results. Previous studies have shown that entertainment media, including novels and fiction stories, have an effect on romantic relationships in early adulthood (Vaterlaus, et al., 2017). In this study, exposure to media such as novels can affect young adults to have unrealistic expectations of romantic relationships.

However, in this study, factors that may influence the degree of the effect of films or fictional stories on romantic beliefs are duration, language style, personal interest, presentation format, and immersion or narrative transportation. Films or dramas have a longer duration compared to reading short fictional stories, which was done in this study. This duration influences individuals in forming parasocial relationships with the characters in films or short fictional stories on the internet, making films or dramas more effective in increasing individuals' romantic beliefs. This is reinforced by Gerbener in his cultivation theory, which explains that individuals who spend more time watching television tend to have perceptions that are often depicted on television (Stacks, et al., 2015). In line with the study, Littlejhon argues that viewers will tend to maintain their conception of the world based on what they see on the most popular of frequently watched television programs (Syafrizaldi, 2021). Viewers will process the information presented in the program, then store it in their cognitive memory, which will then have an impact on the viewers' views, attitudes, and behaviour.

The difference in presentation between films and fiction stories can also be one of the factors that affect differences in effectiveness. Films are presented digitally in visual and narrative form (subtitle text), while fiction stories are only presented in narrative form. Research conducted by Widura & Akhmad (2024) explains that in Gestalt Psychology theory, individuals perceive and process visual information as a meaningful whole. In the context of film, Gestalt principles can be used to analyze how narrative and visual elements are combined to create a coherent and meaningful experience for the audience. Koffka (Widura & Akhmad, 2024) argues that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This means that the images and stories in films should be viewed as a single entity. Each visual and narrative element complements each other to create a meaningful experience. If the content is presented only in the form of narrative text, individuals need to exert more mental effort to imagine and visualize the story. This process can provide more space for readers to reflect on and question the elements of the story, so that the impact on personal beliefs may be more varied. This form of presentation influences individuals in interpreting the story as a whole, making films more effective in enhancing individuals' romantic beliefs.

In addition, narrative transportation, also known as immersion, can affect the effectiveness of reading short fiction stories on romantic beliefs. This is explained in the study by Green & Apple (2024) that individuals who experience narrative transportation while reading will show beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are more consistent with what they read. Narrative transportation is a psychological state of immersion in which the entire mental process is focused on the events occurring in the narrative (Green & Apple, 2024). In the context of this study, it is possible that the subjects did not experience narrative transportation while reading the short fiction stories presented. This could be influenced by several factors, such as language style, the medium of presentation, the nature of the reader, and environmental distractions such as pop-up messages (Green & Apple, 2024). These factors are in line with the subjects' circumstances while reading the fictional short stories, where the stories were presented digitally and the subjects appeared to be distracted by pop-up messages that appeared and even opened other applications after finishing reading. Language style and personal interest can also influence a person's narrative transport, which in turn affects the degree of influence of films and romantic fiction stories on individual romantic beliefs, according to their respective interests and language styles.

Everyone's view of an ideal romantic relationship is highly personal, including what one should do in a relationship, what one should not do, and how a good relationship should work (Syafrina, et al., 2016). Each individual's view of romantic relationships is highly personal and influenced by various factors, including life experiences and media exposure. Complex family dynamics, such as parental divorce or a lack of emotional involvement in the family, are often faced by individuals in early adulthood (Dewanti & Setyadi, 2020). This affects the way individuals view romantic relationships. This affects how individuals view romantic relationships. In addition, love stories in the media, such as films and fiction or novels, often shape our expectations of romantic relationships (Syafrina et al., 2016). People tend to compare their romantic relationships with the ideal stories presented, which are sometimes unrealistic. Love stories in the media often shape individuals' views of romantic relationships, even before they experience them themselves (Jin & Kim, 2015). This research can contribute as a basis for further research on films as a tool or psychological intervention in therapy for individuals or couples experiencing relationship trauma.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the crucial role of media in shaping individuals' perceptions and beliefs about romantic relationships during early adulthood. Empirical analysis revealed that exposure to romantic films, such as *The Notebook*, significantly enhanced romantic beliefs compared to the reading of romantic fiction. It is important to note that reading romantic fiction did not produce a significant change in romantic beliefs, highlighting the disparity in effectiveness between the two types of media. These findings suggest that romantic films, through their intense visual representation and emotionally engaging narratives, possess a greater capacity to facilitate the internalization of positive expectations and beliefs about romantic relationships. The practical implication of this study lies in the potential use of film media as an effective psychosocial intervention tool to support emotional development in early adulthood, particularly in reconstructing constructive beliefs about love and interpersonal relationships.

As a recommendation for future research, it is essential to conduct more comprehensive exploration of various fiction genres, differences in reading media formats (reading versus digital), and the duration of reading exposure, in order to gain a more holistic understanding of how reading media influences the construction of romantic beliefs.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, there was limited experimental control over participants' personal factors such as emotional state, specific genre preferences, and past relationship experiences, which may have influenced the validity of the findings. Another limitation lies in the unequal duration of treatments between the two experimental groups. Equal time control is necessary to ensure a fair comparison of media effects. In this study, participants in the first experimental group watched a romantic film lasting 2 hours and 3 minutes, whereas participants in the second group read romantic short stories for approximately 30 minutes. This considerable difference in exposure time may have affected participants' responses and their ability to form parasocial relationships with the character in the stimulus material. Moreover, behavioral differences were observed between the two groups. Participants in the film group appeared more engaged and emotionally responsive to the storyline, while those in the reading group often displayed boredom and distraction, such as checking phone notifications or appearing drowsy. This may have been influenced by the timing of the reading session, which took place during the participants' lunch break, potentially reducing their focus and engagement compared to the film group.

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