

Romantic Ideation and Its Effects on Modern Relationship Expectations in Young Adults

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Abstract:

Romantic ideation involves the mental portrayal of perfection in love and companionship, largely influenced by one's earliest attachment experience, cultural paradigms, technology and media impressions. For a young adult in their developmental stage, according to Erikson's (1968) intimacy versus isolation dilemma, the concept of romantic ideation not only energises a person but also becomes a possible source of dissatisfaction in their relationships. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) provides a foundation for understanding how patterns of relationships during the early years influence adult expectations. The theory also suggests that intimacy and commitment develop throughout the whole period of adulthood, as the hypotheses of Levinson's (1978) "seasons of life" and Vaillant's (2002) "adaptation to life" indicate. Several current lifestyle factors, including social media, globalisation, and idealised media depictions, have further exacerbated this pattern (Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Ray, 2022). The present study will involve young adult participants (17-28 years) of different educational and cultural backgrounds to examine the differences in their concepts of love. The study aims to reflect the views of both men and women and enable gender-based comparisons. Data will be collected through three structured focus group discussions for an in-depth exploration of personal as well as shared experiences. The analysis will follow a thematic analysis approach to identify key patterns and differences across the groups. Results shall be discussed in the light of attachment and developmental theories and supported by empirical evidence.