Investigating the Effectiveness of Developing a Pre-Marriage Educational Package Based on Film with the Concepts of Sternberg's Theory on the Adjustment of Love Stories in Unmarried Girls

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to examine the efficacy of a pre-marriage education program for single girls, using Sternberg's theory on love stories.

Method: The current study is conducted with an applied purpose, using a quasi-experimental research method and employing a pre-test-post-test design with a control group and a follow-up stage (lasting one month). The study focused on individuals who attended the Haft Sange Zendegi Educational Institute in Izeh City in 2023 and were selected through convenience sampling. Fifty single girls from the center were divided into two groups - experimental and control. Prior to the training, both groups were assessed using the Sternberg Love Questionnaire. Then, for the intervention group, the film therapy program based on Sternberg's concepts was implemented in 25 sessions of two hours per hour, and no intervention was implemented for the control group. To analyze the research data, multivariate analysis of covariance and analysis of variance with repeated measures were analyzed by SPSS 27 software.

Results: The results of the research showed that there is a significant difference in the Asymmetric story component between the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages ($P<0.001$) and also a significant difference was found between the post-test and follow-up stages ($P>0.05$). Likewise, in the Thematic story, Collaborative story, Collaborative story, Narrative story, and A kind of story components, there is a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages ($P<0.001$); however, between the post-test and follow-up stages, No significant difference was found ($P>0.05$).

Conclusion: The results indicated that the love stories of unmarried girls were positively influenced after implementing the protocol, highlighting the benefits of using such interventions before marriage. This protocol can be utilized by various groups, including parents, teachers, and counselors, to address various issues.

Keywords: Pre-marriage educational package, Film-based, Concepts of Sternberg's theory, Love story, Unmarried girls.

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Introduction

Marriage is the most significant and essential life decision for young individuals (Qian et al., 2018). One crucial aspect of marriage is the examination of emotional matters, specifically love. Premarital love can be highly beneficial for one's life if accompanied by familiarity, but it can be detrimental if not. Romantic relationships directly impact the mental well-being, satisfaction, and conflicts within couples (Karami et al., 1400). According to Sternberg, love is a mental phenomenon that consists of behavioral (intimacy), emotional (desire or pleasure), and cognitive components (Latfi et al., 2018). Sternberg later incorporated metaphors and allegories to discuss love in various stories (Shaver et al., 1987). The perspective of love as a story suggests that individuals are more inclined to love those who have similar or complementary stories to their own (Fye et al., 2020). The results of a study indicated that men tend to report higher levels of love perception, passion, commitment, and marital satisfaction compared to women. Love and its three components also displayed a positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Additionally, women exhibited a stronger relationship between the perception of intimacy and marital satisfaction in comparison to men. These findings demonstrate the significant role of love in enhancing overall marital quality (Yoo & Joo, 2022). Research findings further revealed that early incompatible schemas and love stories have a significant correlation with marital satisfaction (Karami et al., 1400; Samalpour et al., 2021).

Communication skills, such as effective listening and expressing oneself, management skills, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, intimate and friendship issues, love and commitment, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and responsibility, are commonly taught in most marriage training programs (Anderson, 2005). Premarital education programs frequently emphasize the importance of communication exercises, clarifying discrepancies, enhancing couples' intimacy, understanding couples' expectations in life, and recognizing the impact of these expectations on their relationships (Kravdal et al., 2022). With the prevalence of movie-watching, some psychotherapists have introduced the concept of using cinema as a supplementary and accelerated form of treatment alongside traditional psychotherapy and medication. The impact of movies on people's moods was so influential that psychologists coined terms such as "film therapy" or "cinema therapy" (Keshavarz and Ardalani, 1400). Traditional cinema therapy entails therapists selecting commercial films for their clients to watch alone or with specific individuals, such as family members. Therapists specifically choose films they believe are relevant to the patient's issues, and after the viewing session, they discuss the main themes that emerge from the film (Sakiluto et al., 2022). Cinematherapy and video modeling have been utilized in various pathologies, including anorexia, anxiety, and autism spectrum disorders (Gramaglia et al., 2011; Lee et al., 1983; Golan et al., 2010; Isong et al., 2014).

Therefore, this research aims to explore the effectiveness of developing a pre-marriage educational package based on films following Sternberg's theory on love stories for unmarried girls. The study seeks to address the research gap and identify a more efficient intervention by creating a movie-based pre-marriage education package. The findings from this study aim to describe how researchers and therapists employ films to treat psychological and physical issues in clinical and sub-clinical populations. Additionally,

this research focuses on assisting in standardizing methodological approaches based on film therapy to establish appropriate criteria for future research. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to filling the research gap by uncovering the needs of unmarried individuals in premarital education. Furthermore, the study is valuable in the creation of a marriage education program that aligns with the emerging needs identified through research. Therefore, the problem addressed in this research is considered novel in terms of the utilized method, i.e., group film therapy, and the scope of influence, i.e., pre-marriage.

Methods

The present study applied a quasi-experimental research method with a pre-test-post-test design using a control group and a follow-up phase lasting one month.   The participants for this study were selected from individuals who sought services at the Haft Sange Zendegi Educational Institute in Izeh City in the year 2023, using an available sampling method.   After selecting 50 unmarried women from the Haft Sang Center, they were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.

Inclusion criteria for the research:

• Female gender

• Not married

• Age 18 years and above

• Literacy in reading and writing

• Completion of the informed consent form before participating in the research

Exclusion criteria from the research:

• Individuals who had not received any intervention, particularly the mentioned intervention in this study, or any psychological or drug treatments before or concurrently with the implementation of the present study.

• Presence of severe physical or mental disorders (such as substance use disorder, personality disorders, psychosis, or symptoms like delusions, hallucinations, or disorientation) that would impede participation in the intervention.

• Failure to attend more than two sessions.

After obtaining the necessary research permission, correspondence was initiated with the Haft Seng Consulting Center located in Izeh City.   Following negotiations with the center's management and acquiring their cooperation, sampling was conducted among the target community (unmarried women seeking services at the Haft Seng Center). Subsequently, individuals who expressed their willingness to participate in the study were contacted individually for evaluation based on the entry and exit criteria. Qualified

individuals were invited to participate in the research if they met the criteria and expressed satisfaction. These individuals were provided with comprehensive explanations regarding the overall goals, advantages, disadvantages, duration, and process of the research, enabling them to make an informed decision regarding participation. Before the commencement of the training sessions, both groups (intervention group and control group) were assessed using the research measurement tool (Sternberg Love Questionnaire). Following this, the intervention group underwent a 25-session film therapy program based on Sternberg's concepts, with each session lasting two hours(Table 1). No intervention was implemented for the control group. After the completion of the training course, both the experimental and control groups underwent a post-test. Additionally, to evaluate the long-term effects of the treatment, the research measurement tool was administered to the sample individuals one month after the completion of the training course."

Instruments

Sternberg Love Story Scale (LSS)

This scale was developed by Sternberg in 2001 based on the theory of love as a story and to measure *the* love story of couples in two separate forms for women and men. This scale includes 100 questions and 25 subtests. All these stories are summarized in 5 main factors under the titles of asymmetric, thematic, participation, genre, and genre narratives. The scale is graded on a 7-point Likert scale. In this way, the subject should give a score from 1 to 7 based on the Likert scale according to his level of agreement with each item. Darvishzadeh and Pasha (2009) used Pearson's correlation coefficient to check the correlation of the subjects' scores in the five subscales of the questionnaire with the total score to check the validity of this questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha is 0.89 for men and 0.90 for women. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.89 (cited by Garavand and Mirzaei, 2016). In this research, the reliability obtained using Cronbach's alpha method for the whole questionnaire was 0.85.

Data analysis method

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics methods were used to analyze the research data. First, descriptive statistical analyses including frequency distribution of demographic characteristics were investigated. Then, using inferential statistical analyses, including multivariate covariance analysis and variance analysis with repeated measurements, the research hypotheses were examined. Before testing the research hypotheses, the assumptions related to covariance analysis, including the normality of data distribution, homogeneity of error variances, homogeneity of covariance matrices of dependent variables, and the condition of sphericity or equality of error covariance matrix, were analyzed by SPSS 27 software.

meetings	Table 1: Content of training sessions
1	The story of the garden (Lilavsada Abad movie)
2	history
3	House and family (film about the life of Vanarji Posh)
4	Religion (Gold and Copper movie, Heartbroken)
5	Sacrifice (Khanoom movie)
6	Horror (Parkway movie)
7	Police
8	Trade (Saadat Abad movie)
9	Khyal
10	Collection
11	Game (Ceasefire 1 and full crow movie)
12	war
13	recovery (Balila fairy tale)
14	Weaving (a movie about a house on water and a painting pool
15	Scientific (there is always a woman's foot in the middle)
16	Addiction (Women Are Angels and Lady Movie)
17	cooking (shy son-in-law)
18	Theater (The last step movie
19	Comedy (A hat for the rain movie)
20	ugly painting (drunk movie)
21	art (film of the world)
22	Journey (Vajdaei wooden bridge movie
23	Teacher and Student
24	Govt.
25	Riddle (Firdous Garden movie 5 Asr)

Results

The aim of the current study was to examine the effectiveness of a pre-marriage training package based on a film that incorporated the concepts of Sternberg's theory on love stories in young women from Izeh. The research collected information about the participants through pre-test, post-test, and follow-up stages, including both experimental and control groups. Initially, the researcher analyzed and described the study variables. The participants were divided into three age groups: 18-24 years, 25-30 years, and 30 years and above, making up 28%, 42%, and 30% of the total participants, respectively. Additionally, the participants were categorized based on their employment status, resulting in two groups: employed (48%) and non-employed (52%). Education-wise, the participants were divided into four groups: diploma (36%), bachelor's degree (38%), master's degree (20%), and doctorate (6%).

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics of the variables*

Variables		Frequency	Percent	Total	Median
Age	18-24	14	28.0	50	2
	25-30	21	42.0		
	30 and up	15	30.0		
Employment status	Have a job	24	48.0	50	2
	Not working	26	52.0		
Education	Diploma	18	36.0	50	2
	Bachelor	19	38.0		
	Master's Degree	10	20.0		
	P.H.D	3	6.0		

Table 2 shows the average scores of the research variables in two experimental and control groups and three stages of pre-test, post-test and follow-up.

Table 2: *Descriptive statistics of the variables*

Variables	Group	Time					
		Pre-test		Post-test		Follow up	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	**SD**
Asymmetric story	examination	93.08	5.882	71.62	11.609	63.04	**11.373**
	control	93.92	5.082	91.60	7.528	91.00	**10.380**
	Total	93.51	5.447	81.82	13.953	77.31	**17.756**
Thematic story	examination	93.54	5.300	67.83	8.504	65.08	**8.156**
	control	94.92	4.999	89.00	13.051	94.12	**5.395**
	Total	94.24	5.142	78.63	15.301	79.90	**16.171**
Collaborative story	examination	94.08	5.200	71.08	10.371	71.63	**8.376**
	control	93.96	5.435	92.20	5.454	93.76	**5.077**
	Total	94.02	5.266	81.86	13.423	82.92	**13.096**
Narrative story	examination	93.96	5.162	65.96	8.503	69.50	**6.928**
	control	94.40	5.083	95.68	4.161	93.80	**5.454**
	Total	94.18	5.073	81.12	16.391	81.90	**13.730**
A kind of story	examination	94.50	4.746	63.87	8.838	65.38	**6.971**
	control	93.68	4.723	95.04	4.128	94.40	**4.805**
	Total	94.08	4.703	79.78	17.138	80.18	**15.803**

Table 2 presents the findings of the study regarding the average scores of the six factors (asymmetric stories, thematic, participation, type, and type of narrative) in the pre-test for both the experimental and control groups. The results show that there was no difference between the average scores of these factors among the participants in the two groups during the pre-test. However, in the post-test and follow-up measurements, there was a significant difference in the average scores of the six factors between the experimental and control groups. The average scores of the experimental group among the participants were lower than the control group.

To further analyze the data, the researcher examined the assumptions of the covariance test. The first assumption, the equality of error variances, was evaluated using Lon's test. The results revealed no significant difference in the error variances of the dependent variables. This finding suggests that the assumption of homogeneity of error variances among the data is valid.

The second assumption, the equality of the covariance matrix of the dependent variable, was also assessed. The results indicated that the Box's M statistic was not significant for the dependent variables. This means that the assumption of homogeneity of the covariance matrices of the dependent variable is established. It is important to note that a sig value lower than 0.001 would indicate a violation of this assumption, but in this research, the covariance-variance matrix assumption was not violated. Table 3 shows the results of multivariate covariance analysis to investigate the difference between groups in the asymmetric story component.

Table 3: Covariance analysis

Variables	Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Eta Squared
Asymmetric story	group	Post-test	5071.901	1	5071.901	57.314	p<0.001	.555
		Follow up	9641.811	1	9641.811	80.788	p<0.001	.637
Thematic story	group	Post-test	5118.549	1	5118.549	42.300	p<0.001	.479
		Follow up	9983.837	1	9983.837	208.982	p<0.001	.820
Collaborative story	group	Post-test	5449.633	1	5449.633	79.416	p<0.001	.633
		Follow up	6011.390	1	6011.390	126.620	p<0.001	.734
Narrative story	group	Post-test	10802.938	1	10802.938	239.162	p<0.001	.839
		Follow up	7220.020	1	7220.020	182.707	p<0.001	.799
A kind of story	group	Post-test	11698.847	1	11698.847	247.184	p<0.001	.843

	Follow up	10130.419	1	10130.419	284.750	p<0.001	.861٠

According to Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of love story components in both the post-test and follow-up phases with the control of the pre-test phase (p<0.001). At the same time, based on the effect size obtained in the research results, the effect size was large. Based on this, it can be confirmed that the research intervention has an effect on adjusting the asymmetric story in girls and reduces the asymmetric story. Also, in order to check the difference between the steps, it is shown in table 4 to check the pairwise comparisons test with the Bonferroni method.

Table 4: *The difference between pre-test, post-test and follow-up*

Variables	Time		Statistics		
			Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
Asymmetric story	Pre-test	Post-test	11.889*	1.788	p<0.001
		Follow up	16.481*	1.818	p<0.001
	Post-test	Follow up	4.592*	1.461	.009٠
Thematic story	Pre-test	Post-test	15.814*	1.619	p<0.001
		Follow up	14.629*	1.157	p<0.001
	Post-test	Follow up	-1.185	1.976	1.000
Collaborative story	Pre-test	Post-test	12.380*	1.463	p<0.001
		Follow up	11.329*	1.152	p<0.001
	Post-test	Follow up	-1.051	1.543	1.000
Narrative story	Pre-test	Post-test	13.360*	1.209	p<0.001
		Follow up	12.529*	1.157	p<0.001
	Post-test	Follow up	-0.831	1.351	1.000
A kind of story	Pre-test	Post-test	14.632*	1.251	p<0.001
		Follow up	14.203*	1.162	p<0.001
	Post-test	Follow up	-0.430	1.090	1.000

The results of the Bonferroni test showed that there is a significant difference in the Asymmetric story component between the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages (P<0.001) and also a significant difference was found between the post-test and follow-up stages (P=0.090). This showed that the intervention method was effective, and this effect was stable. Likewise, in the Thematic story, Collaborative story, Collaborative story, Narrative story, and A kind of story components, there is a significant difference between the pre-test, post-test and follow-up stages (P<0.001); however, between the post-test and follow-up stages, No significant difference was found (P=1.000). This showed that the intervention method was effective. However, this effect was not stable.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine how effective a premarital educational program, centered on a movie inspired by Sternberg's theory on the adaptation of romantic relationships, is in helping single girls adjust to love stories. The results suggest that the attitude of unmarried girls toward love stories changed after the introduction of the pre-marriage educational protocol. Based on the findings, there was no significant distinction between the experimental and control groups in terms of asymmetric story, thematic story, collaborative story, narrative story, and story type during the pre-test.

However, there was a significant difference between the control and experimental groups during the post-test and follow-up periods. Similarly, there was no remarkable distinction between the two experimental and control groups in the pre-test phase. Nevertheless, a significant discrepancy was found in the post-test and follow-up results when comparing the control and experimental groups. However, no substantial difference was identified in the thematic and narrative story variables between the post-test and follow-up periods.

Understanding your own story is what has taken place here. When individuals acknowledge the significance of their narrative, they avoid making the same initial errors. Familiarity with these narratives helps people recognize that stories encompass both positive and negative aspects, and it becomes crucial for individuals to find a method that allows them to capitalize on the positive elements while reducing or eliminating the negative ones(Asper, 2023).

To better recognize stories, we should ask people to tell us what these events mean to them. These matters should not be seen only superficially. Another approach to recognizing narratives would involve encouraging people to observe their surroundings and identify individuals who captivate their attention while exploring the underlying reasons behind this attraction. By tapping into their curiosity, individuals can recognize the storylines that align with these events (Sternberg, 1998; Bahrami translation, ۲۰۲۰). Movies or TV series offer an invaluable advantage in psychotherapy and couples therapy: the ability to instill the much-needed "aha moments" in patients and clients. These epiphanies serve as a powerful catalyst, igniting the motivation and determination demanded to embark on and persist in treatment. However, equally significant is the potential of film therapy to eradicate the social stigma surrounding mental disorders (illnesses) by shattering the labels attached to them. "Through this approach, it fosters a community that welcomes and empowers individuals facing mental obstacles."

According to Vida's (2023) research findings, the movies Frozen and Encanto incorporate educational themes and actions that align with the theory of rational and emotional behavior. This theory emphasizes the importance of assisting individuals in identifying and altering irrational beliefs that contribute to negative emotions and self-destructive behaviors. Consequently, these two films possess the potential to serve as a valuable tool for parents, educators, and counselors worldwide, enabling them to impart essential rational attitudes such as unconditional self-acceptance, acceptance of others, acceptance of life, and self-awareness. Additionally, through the lens of cinema therapy, these movies can also effectively teach significant values like family, friendship, honesty, and courage, making them even more beneficial as a therapeutic medium.   Kurtz (2019) conducted a study that explored the correlation between television and film consumption, romantic ideals (such as the belief in love overcoming all obstacles and the existence of soul mates), and satisfaction in romantic relationships among adults who were actively involved in such relationships. The findings demonstrated that engaging in various genres of television and film (including reality TV focusing on relationships, dramatic TV shows, comedic TV shows, operas, and romantic films) had a favorable influence on one's romantic ideals. The viewing of TV dramas and romantic movies emerged as the most influential predictors of both the belief in love conquering all and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, soap opera viewing stood out as the most influential predictor of the faith in soul mates. Surprisingly, the associations were not influenced by either age or the length of the relationship. Furthermore, the investigation discovered that particular types of television programs and films had a beneficial impact on the contentment of relationships by strengthening the ideals of romance.

   Ballard (2012) demonstrated the screening of Shrek 2, an animated film where a companion of the main characters disrupts their romantic relationship, leading them to recognize that their difficulties stem from their bothersome acquaintances. The study also indicated that watching specific videos can be impactful, even if patients view them in a non-sequential manner (Heston & Cutman, 2011; Sacilotto et al., 2022). The therapist should locate a movie that possesses the preceding qualities and aligns with the individual's inclinations, aspirations, fascinations, and level of understanding (Heston & Katman, 1997). Taking this into consideration, it is preferable to employ films that the patient can endure. To illustrate, presenting the patient with a movie that tackles their issue in a stark and distressing manner may have a negative impact (Saciluto et al., 2022). Furthermore, if the subject is in a particular stage of treatment, such as working hard to change, the therapist should avoid cinematherapy (Bergcross et al., 1990). In a clinical setting, video modeling has been used mainly to improve social skills in individuals with autism spectrum disorders, from appropriate behavior in the workplace (Walsh et al., 2018) to ways to initiate and carry out a social conversation during daily activities (Duenas et al., 2018). 2019), and from positive behavior when playing with peers (McPherson et al., 2015) to helping behavior (Reeve et al., 2007). Another application of video modeling involves exposing patients to videos of people who recount their experiences of a particular event (Perlik et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2016). This study aims to explore the potential impact of film therapy as a form of creative therapy, where the therapist employs movies as a metaphorical device to enhance the instruction of Glaser,

Guttman, Sternberg, and Jeffrey Young's methods for premarital counseling. Film therapy involves selecting and employing a commercial film during the formal interaction between the client and therapist, with the therapeutic goals determining the choice. The content of this shared viewing experience then becomes the focal point of discussion in subsequent sessions. Movie-watching offers a multifaceted experience, making video therapy a valuable tool and a successful process for teaching new skills and concepts. By incorporating film therapy for treatment, the principles of psychotherapy and counseling methods can be reinforced (Keshavarz and Ardalani 1400).

The current research has certain flaws and constraints that need to be addressed to apply the findings to other studies. These include a small sample size, a lack of long-term follow-up (3-6 months), no examination of demographic variables, and a failure to consider the impact of educational methods on unmarried girls based on their age, education level, and economic circumstances. This research is the inaugural of its kind. It is recommended to include it in conjunction with other methods in premarital therapy. The participants in this research were all female. Subsequent research should involve male participants as well in order to compare the findings with those of females.

Conclusion

This study, which was conducted in Iran, stands out as one of the limited investigations that employ movies as a foundation for premarital counseling. The results demonstrate that the love narratives of unmarried females underwent alterations following the execution of the suggested protocol, thereby confirming the positive impact of employing such protocols before marriage. Hence, this approach can be recommended to diverse groups, including parents, educators, and advisors, to address an array of issues more effectively.

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