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Career Persuasion Attitude and Anuptaphobia: The Moderating Role of Exposure to Romantic Media Contents

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Abstract: *The aim of the study was to explore the association between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia and to see the moderating role of exposure to romantic media content between these variables among unmarried women. Unmarried women (n=282) aged 25-35 (M = 26.24, SD = 1.45) were collected from universities. The sample was purposive taken from Lahore, Pakistan. A correlational research design was used for the study. Career aspiration scale-R (Gregor & O'Brien, 2015), perceived realism scale (Rubin, 1985), fantasy rumination scale (Segrin & Nabi, 2002) and fear of being single scale (Speilmann et al., 2013) were used to collect data. Results revealed a non-significant correlation between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia. However, a significant positive correlation between romantic media content and anuptaphobia was found. Regression analysis showed that the number of hours spent on romantic media and its exposure to romantic content was the predictors of anuptaphobia. Regarding the moderation analysis, exposure to romantic media was not a moderator between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia. However, findings of the t-test revealed significant educational aspiration and anuptaphobia among the PhD and M Phil groups. The research highlighted the importance of balanced media consumption as this could potentially help reduce anxieties related to being unmarried.*

Introduction

In Pakistan, women's lives have always revolved around their marriages (Marphatia et al., 2017). Pakistani parents rush to arrange the marriage as their daughters get older, like a lot of other South Asian cultures (Bhatti, 2014). Career and marriage are two major life domains that anticipate people's overall life satisfaction and influence an individual's emotions. Due to the importance of commitment in both of these domains in people's lives, these two domains start to become more important in late adolescence (Demirtas & Tezer, 2012). One of the main sources of stress is trying to balance a career and a marriage. The majority of women in today's society anticipate finding employment after completing their education. Marriages are postponed as a result of the increased commitment to one's career (Betz, 1993; Spain & Bianchi, 1996, as cited in Hoffnung, 2004), but women experience distress as they get older (Spielmann et al., 2013). In Pakistan, the ideal marriage age is 18-25 years (Hafeez, 2015). The likelihood of finding a partner declines with age. Women under the age of 25 are viewed as more attractive as potential brides than women over the age of 30 (Slonim et al., 2015). If the women are not married till the age of 30, they develop the fear of being single.

Over time, there has been an increase in media exposure (Crone & Konijn, 2018), specifically romantic content and shows may exacerbate the fear of being single (Gerbner et al., 2002). Exposure to how relationships are portrayed in movies may strengthen beliefs like "love is the key to happiness" (Hendrick, 1988). Popular shows and movies make it abundantly clear that unmarried women are lonely, depressed and pathetic and romantic media portrays single life negatively (Busch, 2009). In addition, romantic

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stories present women as incomplete without men (Alemán, 2005). Career and autonomy are not enough to make a single woman happy and fulfilled; only a good man will be able to do that (Moseley & Read, 2002).

Theoretical Framework
Role Strain Theory

Believed that engaging in multiple roles can lead to negative psychological effects since psychological resources have restricted boundaries (Goode, 1960). The competing workplace responsibilities and home chores would strain one's resources, resulting in role overload, inter-role conflict, and stress. As women pursue career aspirations, they may experience role strain when these aspirations conflict with societal expectations of settling down and getting married because our culture and families strongly emphasize the importance of marriage and may pressure women to prioritize it over their careers.

Social Cognitive Theory

Claims that people can learn from what they observe by watching others. Face-to-face encounters are one way in which this social learning might take place. However, media adds a lot to learning. By watching models performing certain movements on the screen, people can acquire new behaviours (Bandura, 1986). According to the cultivation theory, views of the real world are influenced by how often people are exposed to general media information (e.g., Holmes, 2007; Rössler & Brosius, 2001). Their conceptualization of the world tends to mirror how the media portrays reality the more they are exposed to it. This perspective states that young people who watch romantic media more are vulnerable to particular ideas that are easily accessible to them while processing actual romantic situations (Gerber & Gross, 1976). In all romantic media content, single women are often portrayed as miserable, lonely (Johnson & Holmes, 2009), and deficient when she didn't have a husband (Kim et al., 2007). So, women must have a husband in their lives in order to be happy and successful, as the media presents women as incomplete without men (Alemán, 2005). Only a man will be able to make a woman happy and fulfilled; work and autonomy will not do so (Moseley & Read, 2002). So, exposure to romantic media may cultivate anuptaphobia.

Literature Review

Nadeem and Khalid (2018) identified the associations between young adults' career aspirations, career decisions and gender role attitudes. The study establishes a strong connection between career aspirations and women's social liberation, with substantial implications for how gender norms and women's social standing have changed in contemporary Pakistani culture.

Chang (2020) discovered that women who remain unmarried for longer periods of time fail to meet social expectations and might even be rejected, making it challenging for women to attain both goals, career and marriage. Hafeez (2015) reported that having a career is important for women in Pakistan since it gives them financial freedom and social stability, but due to excessive family pressure and social expectations, many single women who exceed the age bar while pursuing higher education and professional occupations suffer from self-pity, despair, and anxiety. (Ali et al., 2021) revealed a high level of anxiety about one's future career and a moderate amount of marital distress. Also, a positive relationship between future career anxiety and marital distress was found. Signorielli (1991) reported a strong positive correlation between media effects on adolescents' expectations about marriage and marital conduct index scores, indicating a link between adolescent marriage expectations and exposure to these biased representations.

Segrin and Nabi (2002) found that watching romantic media was linked not just to higher expectations but also to stronger intents to get married. Timmermans et al. (2019) conducted research on emerging adults and found that when unmarried women watched more romantic content, they were more afraid of being single.

Rationale

In Pakistani culture, marriage is seen as something that should occur at a certain age because women's fertility, unlike men's, falls rapidly after age 35. According to our culture, women should prefer getting married quickly to secure a match rather than investing in their careers while postponing and possibly

missing out on marriage. According to the romantic media stories, women must have a man in their lives in order to be happy and successful (Alemán, 2005). Rarely can a woman find satisfaction and fulfilment through her career and independence (Moseley & Read, 2002). Following this reasoning, researchers suspect that it may cultivate anuptaphobia among unmarried women. Anuptaphobia is a topic with little research, especially in the South Asian region, including Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between career persuasion attitude, watching romantic media, and anuptaphobia. It also aimed to investigate how fantasy-related content acts as a moderator in the relationship between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia.

Hypothesis

1. There is a significant relationship between career persuasion attitude, watching romantic media content and anuptaphobia among unmarried women.
2. Career persuasion attitude and exposure to romantic media content would predict anuptaphobia among unmarried women.
3. Exposure to romantic media content would play a moderating role between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia among unmarried women.
4. Unmarried women with PhDs would have a higher level of career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia and a lower level of exposure to romantic media content as compared to unmarried women doing MS.
5. Unmarried women who spend more hours on romantic media would have a higher level of perceived realism, fantasy rumination anuptaphobia and lower level of career persuasion attitude as compared to unmarried women who spend less no of hours on romantic media.
6. There would be a mean difference in career persuasion attitude, exposure to romantic media content and anuptaphobia among unmarried women with respect to the type of romantic media exposure.

Method

The correlational research design was used to find out the relationship between career persuasion attitude, exposure to romantic media content and anuptaphobia. A purposive sample consisted of (N=282) unmarried women (MS =210, PhD =72) from different government and private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The age range of participants was between 25 to 35 years. Participants who scored at least 34 on the career aspiration scale were included in the research. Participants who watch romantic media for at least two hours on an average weekday and weekend were included. Unmarried female university students who were engaged or committed or diagnosed with any type of psychological disorder were also excluded from the study.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample consists of 282 unmarried university women (Mean=26.24 years, *SD*=1.45). Postgraduate participants were 210 (75%), and PhDs were 72 (25%). One hundred ten participants had three or fewer siblings (39 %), and 172 participants had four or more siblings (61%). Seventy-nine participants were first born (28 %), 75 participants were second born (27%), 68 participants were middle born (24%), and 60 participants were last born (21%). Two hundred fourteen participants (76%) belonged to the nuclear family system, and 68 belonged to the joint family system (24 %). Eight participants were from the lower class (3%), 268 were from the middle class (95 %), and six were from the upper class (2%). Two hundred thirty-two participants spent 2 to 4 hours on romantic media on an average weekday (82%), 35 spent 5 to 8 hours on romantic media on an average weekday (13 %) and 15 spent 9 hours and above on romantic media in an average weekday (5 %). 177 participants spent 2 to 4 hours on romantic media on weekends (63 %), 74 spent 5 to 8 hours on romantic media on weekends (26 %), and 31 spent 9 hours and above on romantic media on weekends. Sixty-seven participants watch romantic dramas, films, songs and couple vlogs (11 %), 57 watch romantic short clips and memes (20%) and 35 watch all types of romantic content (n = 13).

Assessment Measures
Career Aspiration Scale (CAS–R)

Career Aspiration Scale by Gregor and O'Brien ([2015](#)) has 24 items and three subscales designed to assess the degree to which women 1) aspire to leadership positions, 2) pursue education, and 3) achievement aspiration, with reliability of .81, .87 and .90, respectively.

Perceived Realism Scale

Perceived Realism Scale, developed by Rubin ([1985](#)), measure the extent to which a person internalizes the information presented in media and begins to believe that it reflects reality. It consists of 5 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the scale given by the original author was .82.

Fantasy Rumination Scale

The Fantasy Rumination Scale, developed by Segrin and Nabi ([2002](#)), measures the extent to which an individual thinks or fantasizes about marriage. It comprised an items Likert scale with a reliability of scale 0.79.

Fear of Being Single Scale (FOBS)

Fear of Being Single Scale by Speilmann et al. (2013) was designed to estimate anxiety among people without a romantic companion. It assesses the insecurity about singlehood consisting of 6 items. High scores indicate that single women have a greater desire to get married and are afraid to remain single. The reliability of the scale given by the original author was .86.

Procedure

For data collection, permission to use scales was obtained from the authors through email. After providing information to the participants about various aspects of the study and instructions on how to participate, informed consent was taken. There was a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality for all the participants. The participants were given the right to withdraw from the research. Filling out all of the assessment measures took about 10 minutes for each participant. Monetary or non-monetary compensation was not provided. Then, for analysis, the received data was entered into SPSS. Following that, the data was organized, and various statistical analyses were used to test the hypothesis.

Results
Table 1

Psychometric properties of subscales of career aspiration scale, perceived realism scale, fantasy rumination scale and fear of being single scale

Scale	M	SD	Range		Cronbach's α
			Potential	Actual	
Career Aspiration Scale	71.24	15.22	0–96	34–96	.90
Achievement Aspiration Scale	24.90	5.34	0–32	10–32	.76
Leadership Aspiration Scale	22.51	6.16	0–32	0–32	.76
Educational Aspiration Scale	23.84	6.07	0–32	6–32	.86
Exposure to Romantic Media Contents					
Perceived Realism Scale	14.15	4.34	5–25	5–25	.76
Fantasy Rumination Scale	12.97	3.79	4–20	4–20	.81
Fear of Being Single–Scale	9.46	6.78	0–24	0–24	.87

Note: N= 282, M= mean, SD= standard deviation, α= alpha reliability

Results show that all the scales have good reliability as Cronbach's α value for all scales is (>.70), which indicates good internal consistency.

Table 2

Intercorrelations for career persuasion attitude, exposure to romantic media content and anuptaphobia among unmarried women

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Achievement Aspiration	—					
2. Leadership Aspiration	.66**	—				
3. Educational Aspiration	.71**	.53**	—			
4. Perceived Realism	.04	.01	.05	—		
5. Fantasy Rumination	.07	.15*	.05	.45**	—	
6. Anuptaphobia	−.04	−.00	.01	.30**	.40**	—

Note: N= 282, *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$

Results revealed that achievement aspiration and educational aspiration have a non-significant correlation with perceived realism, fantasy rumination and anuptaphobia whereas leadership aspiration has a significant positive association with fantasy rumination and a non-significant correlation with perceived realism and anuptaphobia. Perceived realism has a significant positive correlation with fantasy rumination and anuptaphobia. Moreover, fantasy rumination has a significant positive correlation with anuptaphobia.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression results for anuptaphobia

Variables	B	95 % CI for B		SE B	β	R²	ΔR²
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.13	.13***
Constant	2.97	−15.06	21.01	9.16			
Age	.10	−.61	.80	.36	.02		
Education	1.94	−.35	4.24	1.17	.13		
No of Siblings	.30	−1.37	1.98	.85	.02		
Birth order	−.32	−1.06	.42	.38	−.05		
Family System	−.08	−1.89	1.72	.92	−.01		
Socioeconomic Class	−1.35	−4.79	2.10	1.75	−.04		
No hours spent on romantic media on an average weekday	.25	−1.32	1.83	.80	.02		
No hours spent on romantic media on the weekend	3.10***	1.85	4.34	.63	.31***		
Type of Romantic Media Exposure	.20	−1.31	.90	.56	−.02		
Step 2						.13	.01
Constants	6.16	−12.45	24.77	9.45			
Achievement Aspiration	−.16	−.39	.07	.12	−.13		
Leadership Aspiration	.04	−.13	.20	.08	.03		
Educational Aspiration	.03	−.15	.21	.09	.03		
Step 3						.25	.12***
Constants	−3.80	−21.41	13.80	8.94			
Perceived Realism	.17	−.02	.36	.10	.11		
Fantasy Rumination	.54***	.33	.76	.11	.30***		

Note: N= 282, B = unstandardized beta, CI= Confidence Interval; LL= lower limit; UL= upper limit, SE= standard error, β = standardized beta, ***$p<.001$

In step 1, the R² value of .13 revealed that demographic characteristics explained 13% variance in the anuptaphobia with $F(9, 272) = 4.32$, $p<.001$. Results revealed that age, education, number of siblings, birth order, family system, socioeconomic status, number of hours spent on romantic media in an average weekday and type of romantic media exposure did not play a significant role in predicting anuptaphobia whereas none of the hours spent on romantic media on the weekend positively predicted anuptaphobia (*β*= .31, $p<.001$). In step 2, the R² value of .13 revealed that the predictors of achievement aspiration, leadership

aspiration and educational aspiration explained 13% variance in the anuptaphobia with $F(12, 269) = 3.44$, $p<.001$. Results revealed that achievement aspiration, leadership aspiration and educational aspiration did not play a significant role in predicting anuptaphobia. The ΔR^2 value of .01 revealed a 1% chance in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with $\Delta F(3, 269) = .81$, $p>.05$. In step 3, the R^2 value of .25 revealed that the predictors perceived realism and fantasy rumination explained 25% variance in the anuptaphobia with $F(14, 267) = 6.48$, $p<.001$. Results revealed that perceived realism did not play a significant role in predicting anuptaphobia whereas fantasy rumination positively predicted anuptaphobia ($\beta= .30$, $p<.001$). Moreover, the ΔR^2 value of .12 revealed a 12% chance in the variance of model 2 and model 3 with $\Delta F(2, 267) = 21.59$, $p<.001$.

Results of moderation revealed that exposure to romantic media content did not moderate the relationship between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia.

Mean Differences in Career Persuasion Attitude, Exposure to Romantic Media Content and Anuptaphobia were seen with Respect to Education. Significant mean differences were seen in educational aspiration with t (280 = –2.58, $p<.05$). PhD women exhibited high scores on educational aspiration ($M = 25.38$, $SD = 5.77$) as compared to MS ($M = 23.31$, $SD = 6.10$). The value of Cohen's d was .35 (>.20), which indicates a small effect size. Findings showed that PhD women exhibited high scores on anuptaphobia ($M = 10.94$, $SD = 7.63$) as compared to MS ($M = 8.95$, $SD = 6.40$) with t (280 = –1.99, $p<.05$). The value of Cohen's d was .31 (>.20) which indicate small effect size. However, results don't show significant mean difference in achievement aspiration, leadership aspiration, perceived realism and fantasy rumination among MS and PhD women.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA for career persuasion attitude, exposure to romantic media content and anuptaphobia with respect to the hours spent on romantic media on weekends among unmarried women

Variables	2 to 4 Hours		5 to 8 Hours		9 Hours and Above		$F(2, 279)$	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Achievement Aspiration	24.62	5.12	25.04	5.68	26.10	5.65	1.06	.01
Leadership Aspiration	22.15	5.87	22.77	6.82	23.97	6.10	1.23	.01
Educational Aspiration	23.37	6.24	24.84	5.05	24.13	7.17	1.58	.01
Perceived Realism	13.53	4.09	14.46	4.36	16.90	4.64	8.70***	.06
Fantasy Rumination	12.42	3.66	13.46	3.80	14.94	3.81	6.94***	.05
Anuptaphobia	8.08	6.25	10.51	6.81	14.84	6.66	15.85***	.10

Note: N= 282, n^a= 177, n^b = 74, n^c =31, M= mean, SD= standard deviation, ***p<.001

The findings did not show any significant mean difference in achievement aspiration, leadership aspiration, or educational aspiration with respect to the hours spent on romantic media on weekends among unmarried women. However, a significant mean difference in perceived realism with $F(2, 279) = 8.70$, $p<.001$ was observed. Findings revealed that people with 9 hours and above exposure to romantic media exhibited high scores on perceived realism. The value of η^2 is .06, which indicates medium effect size. Results reveal a significant mean difference in fantasy rumination with $F(2, 279) = 6.94$, $p<.001$. Findings revealed that people with 9 hours and above exposure to romantic media exhibited high scores on fantasy rumination as compared to people with exposure to less no of hours. The value of η^2 is .05, which indicates a small effect size. Results reveal a significant mean difference in anuptaphobia with $F(2, 279) = 15.85$, $p<.001$. Findings revealed that people with 9 hours and above exposure to romantic media exhibited high scores on anuptaphobia as compared to people with exposure to less no of hours. The value of η^2 is .10, which indicates medium effect size. The Tukey HSD multiple comparison method was used to determine which groups are specifically significantly different. Results are presented in Table 9.

Discussion

The present study investigated whether women's attitude toward delaying marriage in favour of pursuing their careers can develop feelings of anuptaphobia. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between career persuasion attitude, exposure to romantic media content and anuptaphobia among unmarried women. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between watching

romantic material and anuptaphobia, whereas a non-significant relationship between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia was found among unmarried women. Other studies (Ali et al., 2021) show that there is a positive association between romantic media exposure and anuptaphobia and a positive correlation between career apprehension and stress about marriage among unmarried individuals. Timmermans et al. (2019) revealed that fear of being single increased when single women watched more romantic content.

It was hypothesized that career persuasion attitude and exposure to romantic media content would predict anuptaphobia among unmarried women. According to hierarchical regression analysis, career persuasion attitude is not a significant predictor of anuptaphobia in unmarried women. Contrary results have been given by Nadeem and Khalid (2018) who found a strong connection between career aspirations, gender role attitudes and women's social liberation. However, the number of hours spent on romantic media is a significant predictor of anuptaphobia. Studies revealed that watching romantic material can increase women's fear of being single (Timmermans et al., 2019). Societal norms and cultural expectations often play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' attitudes and fears related to marriage and relationships. Chang (2020) discovered that women who do not marry until a specific age have failed to live up to social expectations. In Pakistani culture, there is a prevailing expectation that women should prioritize marriage and family life. Societal judgments, perceived failure to meet societal expectations and potential loneliness in the future can lead unmarried women to develop anxieties about remaining single. Lyngstad and Jalovaara (2010) found that societal norms and expectations influence women's decisions and attitudes towards marriage. Media often portrays idealized and romanticized versions of love and marriage, creating unrealistic standards. Unmarried women who are exposed to such content might compare their own lives to these idealized portrayals and experience anxiety about not meeting those standards. They can fear that their own experiences will fall short of the romantic relationships depicted in the media.

When the moderating role of romantic media exposure between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia was analysed in this study, it was found that exposure to romantic media content did not moderate the relationship between career aspiration and anuptaphobia. One explanation may be that different individuals react to romantic media content in distinct ways. While some may balance their career aspirations with a romantic relationship, others may not be influenced in the same manner. This variability in reactions might have led to non-significant moderation. Cultural and societal norms play a crucial role in shaping career aspirations and attitudes towards being single. In some cultures, the influence of romantic media content might be overridden by traditional beliefs or societal expectations, resulting in a non-significant moderation effect. Some individuals may possess a high level of critical thinking and media literacy, enabling them to discern the idealized portrayals in romantic media from reality. This discernment can act as a protective factor, reducing the direct influence of romantic media content on career aspirations and anuptaphobia.

It was hypothesized that PhDs would have a higher level of career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia and a lower level of exposure to romantic media content as compared to MS women. Independent sample t-test revealed that there were significant education level differences in terms of career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia as PhD women were more career-oriented and faced more anuptaphobis as compared to MS-level women. Individuals with higher education levels may be exposed to a broader array of career paths, which can contribute to a more favourable career persuasion attitude. Judge and Cable (2004) suggest that education is linked to increased career satisfaction due to enhanced skills and better access to higher-status job roles. Akkermans et al. (2013) have highlighted the relationship between educational attainment and career outcomes. Unmarried PhD women exhibited high scores on anuptaphobia as compared to unmarried women doing MS, which indicates that as age increases, it can develop feelings of anuptaphobia. These results have been supported by Ammara and Jameel (2022).

It was hypothesized unmarried women who spend more hours on romantic media would have a higher level of perceived realism, fantasy rumination anuptaphobia and a lower level of career persuasion attitude as compared to unmarried women who spend less number of hours on romantic media. One-way ANOVA reported that the more hours spent on romantic media, the more the anuptaphobia. Timmermans et al. (2019) revealed that fear of being single increased when single women watched more romantic content. Exposure to romantic media often portrays idealized and romanticized relationships. These depictions may

shape individuals' perceptions and expectations regarding romantic relationships, potentially influencing their fears or anxieties about being single, known as anuptaphobia. Individuals who consume a significant amount of romantic media may develop heightened expectations for romantic relationships, making the idea of being single more anxiety-inducing. Constant exposure to idealized relationships in the media can create a fear of not attaining or maintaining such standards in one's personal life.

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship among career pursuing attitude, exposure to romantic media material, and anuptaphobia among single women. The study found a significant relationship between romantic media exposure and anuptaphobia, whereas a non-significant relationship between career persuasion attitude and anuptaphobia. The reason may be that career-oriented women did not have anuptaphobia because, in Pakistan, females have recently had the opportunity of making their careers like Western women. They are afraid that their parents and society may deprive them of this opportunity and force them to get married. So, they are too dedicated to their career and do not have the fear of being alone. However, PhD women exhibited high scores on anuptaphobia as compared to MS women, which indicates that as age and education increase, they can develop feelings of anuptaphobia. The study revealed that an increase in romantic media consumption was associated with increased anuptaphobia in women. This implies that women's perceptions of their single status may be impacted by the media's idealized portrayals of romance and the demands society places on marriage.

Limitation & Suggestions

The sample size was around the age range of 25-28 years. A sample of over 30 years should be collected to get better differences in career persuasion and anumpta phobia. The data was only gathered from Lahore city; a larger and more diverse sample size could have been used. The study's design might not account for the potential long-term effects of exposure to romantic media content on career attitudes and anuptaphobia. Longitudinal research would be needed to understand whether these relationships persist over time. Qualitative studies should be conducted to find a detailed analysis of women's career pursuing attitude, romantic media exposure and experience of anuptaphobia. Parent's attitudes can be measured regarding anuptaphobia when the age of their daughter is increasing. An experimental study might establish causation among the variables under study. Other unmeasured factors such as joint or nuclear family, social relationship, financial strengths, age, and parents alive or dead could be influencing both career attitudes and anuptaphobia, making it challenging to determine direct cause-and-effect relationships.

Implications

The practical Implications of this research is that it can bring media literacy initiatives aimed at helping individuals, especially women, critically analyze and interpret media portrayals of relationships. This could lead to more informed consumption of media and healthier relationship expectations. Recognizing anuptaphobia as a potential mental health concern can lead psychologists to the development of mental health interventions specifically tailored to address the fears and anxieties associated with being unmarried. Counselling services and support groups could be established to help unmarried women cope with societal pressures. Related to being unmarried. The study can assist career counsellors in guiding unmarried women effectively on how romantic media exposure can affect career aspiration attitudes. Tailoring counselling to mitigate any negative impact on career goals from excessive exposure to romantic media could enhance career decision-making. The study would highlight the importance of balanced media consumption as this could potentially help reduce anxieties related to being unmarried. Balancing media consumption, career aspirations, and personal relationships is essential for overall well-being.

Theoretical Implications of this research can influence cultural practice by shedding light on how societal norms and cultural expectations affect the career choices and relationship attitudes of unmarried women in Pakistan. It made us realize the importance of observational learning theory and how romantic media influences career aspiration attitudes. It would deepen our understanding of how individuals model

their behaviour and attitudes after watching romantic media for various gratifications, such as companionship escape, using the Gratifications Theory.

The societal implications of this research are that it recognizes the potential impact of romantic media on unmarried women's fears and career aspirations, which is crucial for creating a society that empowers them. Encouraging realistic representations in media and promoting self-assurance can foster a sense of agency and independence among women. Highlighting the relationship between romantic media exposure and anuptaphobia underscores the importance of mental health awareness. Society should support mental health initiatives that address anxieties related to relationship status and encourage seeking appropriate help and support.

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