



Correlational Study on the Relationship between Parasocial Relationship, Self-Esteem and Coping among Pop Fans

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Abstract: Study explores how parasocial relationships relates to self-esteem and the way people cope with stress, especially among pop music fans. A total of 110 participants between the ages of 18 and 30, completed standardized questionnaires including the celebrity persona interaction scale, Celebrity Attitude Scale, Self-Esteem Scale by Rosenberg, and the brief Cope scale. Relationship between parasocial interaction and self-esteem was significantly negative, meaning that people who have a stronger emotional bond with celebrities typically have slightly lower self-esteem. Avoidant and emotion-focused coping were likewise associated with parasocial relationships, whereas problem-focused coping was not, which suggests that fans may turn to their favourite celebrities for emotional support or distraction rather than actively solving problems. Interview was also conducted of two pop fans, and both described how watching their favourite celebrities helped them feel happier and less stressed, especially during tough moments. They didn't feel inadequate or compared themselves rather, these relationships gave them comfort and a sense of connection. With SNS making it simpler than before to interact with celebrities and attend fan events, parasocial relationships are becoming more two-way and emotionally meaningful. This research helps us understand how digital fandom entertainment it's isn't just part of how many young people today manage emotions and feel supported.

Keywords: *Parasocial Relationships, Self-Esteem, Coping, Fandom, Celebrity Culture, Pop Fans, Emotional Well-Being*

1. Introduction

In today's world where everything is digitalized from shopping, consulting doctors online to connecting to people all over the world. It vital to understand how meeting or connecting to people online we haven't meet in real life affects us mentally. Do these relationships we form online have any effect on us? Do they change our perception about our own self? While asking such questions this study focus on how parasocial relationship affects young pop music artist fan. In this study we are just going to focus on does parasocial relationship have a relationship with self-esteem and coping of pop fans. parasocial relationship is "a kind of psychological relationship experienced by members of an audiences in their mediated encounters with certain performers in the mass media, particularly on television" (Horton and Wohl 1956). This was the first ever definition of parasocial relationships, but due expansion of internet and media parasocial relationships are not just restricted to television it now formed through social media platforms such as Instagram, twitter, YouTube, streaming apps etc. parasocial relationships are formed with social media characters (such as influencers ,actors , singers etc), imaginary person which is viewed or encountered through media or a real person like pop music artist. Parasocial relationships are one sided attachment an individual forms towards media persona real or imaginary. Although in today's world this one-sided attachment has become a partially reciprocal relationship since celebrity or media persona interact with the fans in real time and answer their questions through live streaming, fan meeting, concerts, events, by engaging in replying to twits of the fan or using other apps and websites to interact with the fans. Audiences or fans forms emotional attachment to these media figures when they feel like they understand the media figure and can predict their behaviour which only happens with close social relationships but to information available online about the media figure and things audiences learned about them interacting through social media allows them to predict their behaviour which increase the emotional attachment, emotional attachment are also formed when audiences starts resonating with the media figure, when they that their media figure is actually similar to them or when they believe that the media figure has experienced similar situations, hardships or challenges as them. parasocial relationship has both positive and negative consequences on one side parasocial relationship provides sense of belongingness, friendships through (online chat room, fan events and fandom meeting etc), support, conscious identification, shaping

identity of the audience and learns through media. On the hand it can become toxic as it can negatively impact our body image, increase aggression or violences in individual's who consume aggressive media content or resonate with aggressive media figure, sometimes extreme parasocial relationship or celebrity worshipping(when an individual cannot distinguish reality, and wishes a reciprocal relationship or may think that they somehow own their media figure) leads to stalking , violent behaviours such as breaking and entering in celerity house, completely neglecting their own personal relationships and compromise their career for the celebrity. Although parasocial relationships should not be confused with mental health issues such as delusion, anti-social behavioursetc, because even though when audiences say we know the celebrity they say "I know the celebrity as if my friend" they can rationally distinguish reality.

It is important to understand parasocial relationships because of emergence of virtual reality and digital age where fandoms, pop culture holds immense influence on young generation. In today's world where technology is everywhere a person starts interacting with media figure or character as young as one year old even before entering school. So, these parasocial relationships also effects developmental stages of an individual they help an individual form an identity, moral values and sometimes they even set a standard for right and wrong based on these characters. Hence it is, necessary to study and understand parasocial relationships because pop culture celebrity influence how a person dress, talks, what kind of friendships they hold, kind of personality they have etc. As the young generation see these pop icons and media figure as mentor and coach as well, not just someone who entertains them. they often model their behaviour by observing their favourite pop culture icons behaviour. This can been evidently in bandura bobo doll experiment and his social cognitive theory where he explains how watching aggression or certain behaviour on media can lead to imitation of such behaviour in real life.

1.1 Aim

To study the correlation between the relationship between parasocial relationship, self-esteem and coping among pop fans.

1.2 Objective

- Investigate the correlation between parasocial relationships and self-esteem among pop fans to understand how one's attachment to celebrities influences self-perception.

- Examine the relationship between self-esteem and adaptive coping strategies to determine whether higher self-esteem is associated with the use of positive coping mechanisms.
- Explore the association between parasocial relationships and adaptive coping strategies to assess whether engagement with celebrities contributes to constructive coping behaviours.
- Analyse the predictive role of parasocial relationships in determining self-esteem levels and the use of adaptive coping strategies among pop fans.

1.3 Hypotheses

H1a: There is a significant relationship between parasocial relationships and self-esteem among pop fans.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between parasocial relationships and coping strategies among pop fans.

H1c: Parasocial relationships significantly influence self-esteem among pop fans.

2. Review of Literature

O'Hagan¹ (2023) This study explores personal recovery through the Rory Gallagher Instagram fan community and investigate online music fandoms as support mechanisms for well-being. This study also analysed changes in the author's relationship with music during recovery and it also highlights the role of online communities in mental health care. The study used autoethnography to analyse personal and cultural experiences. It integrates psychosocial theory on recovery and sociological theory on music fandoms. The study finding showed that informal self-care practices aid in managing anxiety. Rewriting Rory project promotes compassion and understanding of mental health and online music communities support mental health during crises. The study highlights the importance of informal support mechanisms. Personal recovery journeys are enhanced through community engagement. Knowledge of shared struggles empowers mental health advocacy.

Xu and Abeeel (2022) The study investigates the differences in parasocial relationships with micro-celebrities and mainstream celebrities in China. College students (402) and 160 participants who followed both types of celebrities. Multiple hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test the contributions of these factors to parasocial interactions. The findings indicated that participants thought mainstream celebrities were more intimate and genuine than micro-celebrities. On the other hand, connections with micro-

celebrities were thought to be more mutually beneficial. The parasocial contacts of mainstream and micro celebrities did not differ much. Intimacy and reciprocity were better indicators of parasocial contact than genuineness. The study highlights the need for more longitudinal research to fully comprehend the dynamics of parasocial interactions over time and demonstrates how parasocial relationships are changing in the setting of social media.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

Sample of (N=110) people was collected through convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Sample consisted of people who consider themselves as activity fan or are part of fandom of pop music icons.

3.2 Research Design

The present study employs a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between parasocial relationships, self-esteem, and adaptive coping strategies among pop fans. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data from participants at a single point in time. The study includes one independent variable (parasocial relationships) and two dependent variables (self-esteem and adaptive coping strategies).

The research follows a non-experimental approach, as no variables were manipulated, and the aim was to explore natural associations between the constructs. The data were gathered through self-report questionnaires administered online using Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and ease of participation. After data collection, statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis, were conducted using SPSS to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables.

Strict adherence to ethical standards was maintained, including informed permission, participant confidentiality, and the freedom to leave the study at any moment. In the context of pop fandom, this approach enables a thorough understanding of how parasocial connections impact self-esteem and adaptive coping mechanisms.

3.3 Description of tools used

a) *Celebrity Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale (Bocarnea & Brown, 2007)*

The Celebrity Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale (CPI-0) is a 20-item measure designed to assess the degree of parasocial relationships individuals develop with celebrities. It evaluates how individuals perceive, engage with, and emotionally connect with a celebrity

figure. Every item has a 5-point Likert scale rating, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree. Higher scores indicate a stronger parasocial interaction.

Reliability: The CPI-0 scale has demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.85 to 0.90 in previous studies, indicating strong reliability.

Validity: The scale has shown good construct validity, as it correlates significantly with measures of media consumption, attachment styles, and social connectedness. Factor analysis supports a unidimensional structure measuring parasocial interaction.

b) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item measure assessing global self-esteem. It contains statements about a person's self-worth and self-acceptance, both good and negative. A 4-point Likert scale is used to rate each item. (Agree Strongly) to 4 (Agree Strongly). Higher scores indicate greater self-esteem.

Reliability: The RSES has been extensively validated and exhibits high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha typically ranging from 0.77 to 0.88. Test-retest reliability over a two-week period has been reported between 0.8 and 0.85, showing stability over time.

Validity: The scale demonstrates strong construct validity, correlating significantly with other self-esteem measures and psychological well-being indicators. It also has good convergent validity, aligning with self-perception and depression measures.

c) Brief COPE (Carver, 1997)

The Brief COPE is an 8-item scale designed to measure various adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. However, for this study, only the adaptive coping mechanisms are taken into consideration, such as acceptance, positive reframing, emotional support, and active coping. Participants use a 4-point Likert scale to indicate their answers. (I've been doing this a lot) to 4 (I haven't been doing this at all). Higher scores on adaptive coping subscales indicate greater use of constructive coping strategies.

Reliability: The Brief COPE has shown acceptable to good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.60 to 0.90 depending on the specific coping subscales. The adaptive coping subscales (e.g., active coping, emotional support, and positive reframing) generally exhibit higher reliability.

Validity: The scale has been validated across different populations, demonstrating good factorial validity with distinct coping strategies emerging in factor analysis. It also correlates significantly with mental health outcomes, supporting its criterion validity

3.4 Procedure of study conduction

In this study Pop fans' self-esteem, adaptive coping mechanisms, and parasocial relationships were all examined in this study using a quantitative, correlational research approach. Convenience sampling was used to find participants through fan networks and internet channels. Prior to data collection, informed consent was acquired, guaranteeing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Three standardised measures—the Celebrity Persona

Parasocial Interaction Scale (CPI-0), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and the Brief COPE (adaptive coping methods only)—were administered after demographic questions in the Google Forms-created survey. Responses were automatically entered into a Google Forms-connected Excel sheet. After data collection, the dataset was cleaned and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were computed, and Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between variables. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether parasocial relationships significantly predict adaptive coping strategies, with self-esteem as a potential mediator. Throughout the study, ethical principles such as anonymity, voluntary involvement, and withdrawal rights were rigorously maintained.

4. Result

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N = 110)*

Variable	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parasocial (CCPI)	67.10	68.00	12.74	32	94	-0.17	-0.13
Self-Esteem (RSEQ)	18.39	18.00	6.48	0	30	-0.33	-0.04
Celebrity Attitude	67.62	69.50	18.65	25	114	-0.31	-0.15
Problem-Focused	16.45	17.00	3.68	6	24	-0.22	-0.03
Avoidant Coping	21.32	20.00	6.57	10	37	-0.44	-0.46
Emotional Coping	31.25	31.50	6.31	12	46	-0.16	-0.35

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Min = Minimum value; Max = Maximum value.

5. Discussion

The descriptive statistics show that participants reported moderate levels of parasocial interaction and celebrity attitude, with a slightly above-average mean self-esteem score. Among the coping styles, emotional coping had the highest mean, followed by problem-

focused and avoidant coping, suggesting that participants may lean toward emotional regulation strategies.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to explore the complex psychological dynamics between parasocial relationships, self-esteem, and coping strategies among pop music fans. The findings suggest a significant negative relationship between parasocial interaction and self-esteem, indicating that individuals who engage more intensely in one-sided emotional relationships with celebrities (pop music artist) may experience lower levels of self-worth. Additionally, parasocial relationships were found to be positively associated with emotion-focused and avoidant coping, but not with problem-focused coping, suggesting that such relationships may offer emotional comfort while potentially discouraging direct problem-solving approaches to stress. Regression analyses further supported the findings that influence of parasocial relationship predicts self-esteem and specific coping strategies. Qualitative insights gathered from two interviews enriched the quantitative data, revealing how fans personally use these relationships to manage emotions and navigate psychological challenges. These results highlight the emotionally supportive nature of parasocial relationships: while they are one-sided relationships, they can offer comfort, inspiration, and a sense of belonging, particularly during times of stress or emotional difficulty. Rather than reinforcing maladaptive coping styles or negatively affecting self-perception, the findings suggest that parasocial relationship may provide a form of informal emotional care, helping individuals feel less alone, more hopeful, and psychologically support. Overall, this research contributes to a growing understanding of literature that emphasizes the meaningful role of social media figures (pop music artist) in fan culture and highlights the importance of understanding parasocial relationship as a meaningful part of identity formation, emotional regulation, and coping among young adults. As fan–celebrity interactions become more accessible and interactive through social media and increasing disposable income, these connections are no longer just distant fantasies. Instead, they are becoming dynamic, evolving relationships that shape how people experience comfort, identity, and connection in their everyday lives.

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