

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY (EXTRAVERSION AND NEUROTICISM) ON BODY IMAGE, MEDIATED BY CELEBRITY WORSHIP, AMONG THAI FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN BANGKOK

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the current investigation was to examine the direct and indirect influences of the two dimensions of personality (extraversion and neuroticism) on body image, being mediated by celebrity worship, among adolescents in Bangkok. A total of 250 female adolescents were recruited from various locations/sites in Metropolitan Bangkok through convenience sampling. The participation involved the filling in of a set of Thai-translated questionnaires. The scales used were Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS), The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised Short Form (EPQR-S), and the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS). Results indicated that there are no indirect influences of personality (extraversion and neuroticism) on body image, being mediated by celebrity worship dimensions (entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological). Furthermore, it was demonstrated that extraversion has no impact on body image. There is, however, a significant direct negative influence of neuroticism on body image such that the higher the female adolescents' level of neuroticism, the more negative is their body image. There is also a positive influence of extraversion on intense-personal celebrity worship which suggests that the higher the level of extraversion, the more intense and personal is the level of celebrity worship. In addition, entertainment-social celebrity worship has a positive influence on body image such that the higher the female adolescents' level of entertainment-social celebrity worship, the more positive is their body image.

Keywords: Celebrity Worship, Personality, Body Image.

Introduction

Brad and Angelina, Tom and Katie, Beckham and Victoria – people can't get enough of hearing about details of celebrities' lives. It is like being “star struck”, a phenomenon that is not only bigger than life but is bigger than ever (Carr, 2006). There are individuals in society who become so enthralled with the lives of celebrities, a notion that is not unfamiliar within modern culture (Ketsoglou, 2013) where

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celebrities and their fans are familiar phenomena and the idolization of famous people is an easily recognizable popular social practice (Barber & Callaghan, 2010).

Celebrity worship is a term that was first coined by McCutcheon and her research colleagues in the early 2000s (Griffiths, 2013). The concept of celebrity worship is not only a topic of media interest, but is now a focus of psychological investigation (Sheridan, North, Maltby, & Gillett, 2007). Its derivative term “celebrity worship syndrome” has become known as an obsessive-addictive disorder in which a person becomes overly involved with the details of a celebrity's personal life. Rojeck (2011, as cited in Ketsoglou, 2013) believed that celebrity worship syndrome was coined by psychologists to explain the phenomenon that is seen as a neurotic, unhealthy, even morbid obsession with fame which results in dysfunctional behavior. Maltby, Houran, and McCutcheon (2003) further conceptualized celebrity worship as an abnormal type of parasocial relationship that is driven by absorption and addictive elements. McCutcheon et al. (2003) suggested a single celebrity worship dimension; however, subsequent research on much bigger samples by Maltby et al. (2004) identified three independent dimensions of celebrity worship seen as a continuum: entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological. The entertainment-social dimension expresses low levels of celebrity worship such as talking about a favorite celebrity as in “My friends and I like to discuss what my favorite celebrity has done”. The intense-personal dimension describes uncontrollable feelings and thoughts about a celebrity as in “I have frequent thoughts about my favorite celebrity, even when I don't want to.” The borderline-pathological dimension is the most severe form of celebrity worship as in “If I were lucky enough to meet my favorite celebrity, and he/she asked me to do something illegal as a favor, I would probably do it” (Sheridan et al., 2007).

Maltby, Giles, Barber, and McCutcheon (2005) suggested that the type of interactions between individuals and the celebrities they worship may have important consequences for aspects of mental health, including body image. In a similar vein, Sansone and Sansone (2014) demonstrated that preoccupation with a celebrity is associated with a number of potential emotional and psychological difficulties including concerns about body image. Harrison (1997, as cited in Maltby et al., 2005) included in her study a measure of attraction towards thin celebrities that predicted body image disturbance and other symptomatology in her undergraduate sample. Maltby and his team (2005) went on to examine the relationship between celebrity worship and body image. Given the importance of celebrity attachments in adolescence, it was anticipated that the association between body image and interest in a same-sex celebrity with an admirable body will be stronger in this age group than either undergraduates or adults in general. It was also hypothesized that the association will be stronger for females than males and associated more readily with an intense-personal interest in celebrity worship, rather than other dimensions of celebrity worship. The latter hypothesis was supported by US-based research findings indicating that a large number of female students were dissatisfied with their own body image as a result of comparing themselves to the ‘ideal’ images presented in various mass media such as magazines, television, and the Internet (Laohapongphan, 2015). Grohol (2008) argues that these findings are not surprising when taken into context. Teens seek positive role models that they can emulate; however, society and

culture continuously reinforce the importance and value of celebrities. It is no shock that teenage girls might focus their attention on them. In other instances, advertisements feature ultra-thin models in an appealing way, in the hope of selling clothing, accessories, and other products. Hence, being thin has become the norm for present-day culture (Van Vonderen&Kinnally, 2012). This phenomenon of comparing oneself to the ideal image may lead to unpleasant feelings including depression, sadness, shame, over concern over one's weight, and negative attitudes toward one's own body. 'Thinness' is believed to have the capability to influence the behavior of adolescents. They may feel the need to cope with their negative feelings in risky behavior such as inappropriate eating, excessive exercise, or unhealthy behavior like purging (Laohapongphan, 2015).

Some findings suggest that individuals who engage in celebrity worship have certain personality characteristics. For example, Maltby and associates (2004) investigated the relationship between celebrity worship and models of self-reported mental health and *personality* in a UK adult sample and found that celebrity worship is significantly related to poor psychological well-being. A total of 372 respondents completed measures of celebrity worship, personality, coping styles, general health, stress, positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction. The results demonstrated that celebrity worship for intense-personal reason is associated with poorer mental health, claiming that neuroticism leads to higher celebrity worship. Along similar lines, Swami, Tran, et al. (2013) claimed that there are associations between personality dimensions and body image constructs. More specifically, neuroticism was found to be significantly associated with actual-ideal weight discrepancy (positively) and body appreciation (negatively).

According to the findings of Sansone and Sansone (2014), higher scores on a widely-used measure of celebrity worship indicating greater preoccupation with a celebrity are associated with a number of potential emotional and psychological difficulties including sensation-seeking, cognitive rigidity, identity diffusion, and poor interpersonal boundaries. Additionally, psychological and interpersonal difficulties may include narcissistic personality features, dissociation, addictive tendencies, criminal tendencies, stalking behavior, compulsive buying, depression, anxiety, and general social dysfunction. Maltby et al. (2005) demonstrated that the intense-personal aspects of celebrity worship are associated with poorer mental well-being through signs of neuroticism, worry, anxiety, and depression. It was suggested that many people suffering from depression also possess a negative body image. Furthermore, people ranking high on the measure of intense-personal aspects of celebrity worship may be prone to establishing worry or distortion in their body shape (Maltby et al., 2005). A possible explanation for this may be that people who worship celebrities intensely would usually compare themselves to the celebrities, resulting in lower body appreciation.

Many personality studies indicated that extraverts tend to be happier than introverts because they perceive fun activities as being more enjoyable; thus, they respond to the 'pleasure system' in the brain much more than their counterparts do (Oerlemans& Bakker, 2014). It could also be that extraverts tend to perceive themselves as being competent, assertive, and responsive; thus, they often have a high degree of self-acceptance and are less likely to be affected by the social culture. It

can, thus, be inferred that extraverted individuals are less likely to be affected by celebrities; this, in turn, enhances their body appreciation.

Celebrity Worship

‘Celebrity worship’ is described as a specific kind of idol worship of a recognized person who receives a high degree of public and media attention, and covers a narrower range compared to idol worship. The popular celebrity could be a singer, actor, TV personality, fashion icon, member of royalty, athlete, scientist, politician, artist, or businessman. According to Liu (2013), celebrities are primarily worshipped for their charisma, wealth, physical appearance, personal achievements, and social influence. In the current study, celebrity worship was measured by means of the *Celebrity Attitude Scale* (CAS), developed by McCutcheon, Lange, and Houranin (2002). This scale was designed to assess the behaviors and attitudes of respondents toward their favorite idols.

Personality

‘Personality’ refers to a combination of long-lasting and distinctive behaviors, thoughts, motives, and emotions that typify how an individual reacts and adapts to other people and situations (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011). The American Psychological Association provided its own version of the term; that is, ‘**personality**’ refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. The study of personality focuses on two broad areas: (1) understanding individual differences, in particular, personality characteristics such as sociability or irritability; and (2) understanding how the various parts of a person come together as a whole (APA, n.d.). In this study, Eysenck’s dimensions of *extraversion* and *neuroticism* were utilized to explain the concept of personality. The current researcher decided not to include the third dimension of ‘psychoticism’ as it falls beyond the scope of this study. According to Eysenck, extraverts are sociable, active, and enjoy meeting people (as cited in Boeree, 2006), whereas neurotics are nervous people who are more susceptible to neurotic problems than the average person, and who tend to set high standards which cause them much stress when they are not able to reach it (Simon, 2008). In the current study, personality was measured by means of selected items derived from the short form of the *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire–Revised* (EPQ-R), developed by Hans Jurgen Eysenck and Sybil Eysenck in 1985.

Body Image

‘Body image’ comprises the attitudes an individual has regarding self-perception, cognition, affect, and behavior of the physical body (Wood-Barcalow, 2006). It is also described as one’s psychological picture of the physical self, a unity of experiences of the past coupled with present body sensations which are organized in the sensory cortex of the cerebrum (Head, 1920, as cited in Breakey, 1997). The measure of body image deals with the perception or ability to accurately estimate the actual size and shape of the body (Wood-Barcalow, 2006). In the current study, body image was measured by means of the *Body Appreciation Scale* (BAS), developed and validated by Avalos, Tylka, and Wood-Barcalow in 2005. The BAS was constructed, specifically, to evaluate the level of one’s positive image (Tylka, 2011).

Conceptual Framework.

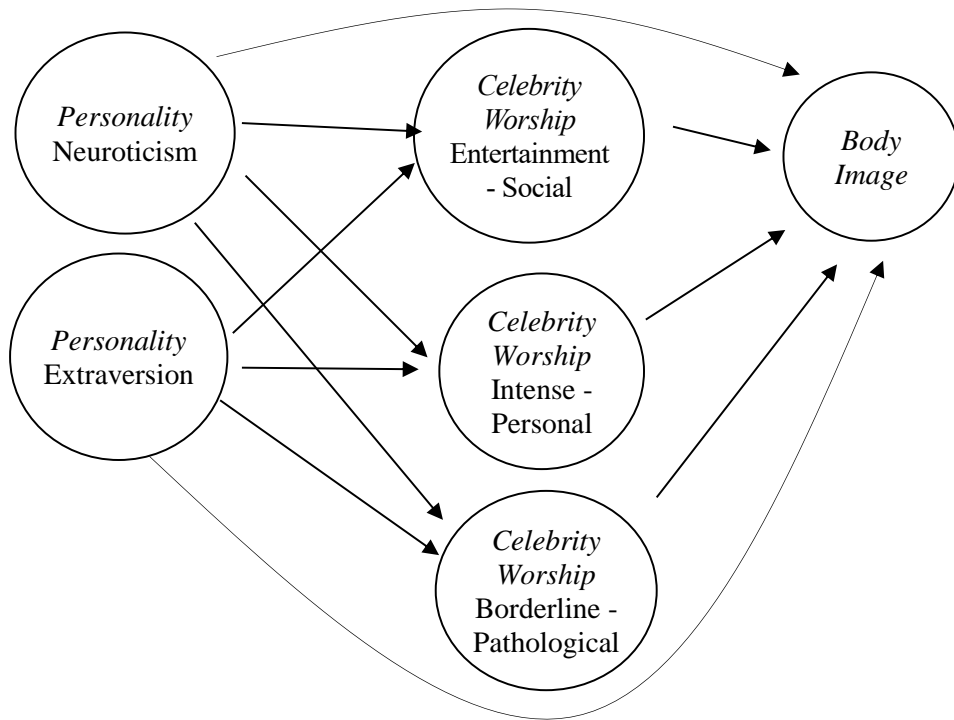


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study Showing the Direct and Indirect Influences of Personality (Neuroticism and Extraversion) on Body Image, Being Mediated by Celebrity Worship (Entertainment-Social, Intense-Personal, and Borderline-Pathological)

Research Questions

From the conceptual framework, the following research questions were drawn:

1. Are there direct influences of personality dimensions (neuroticism and extraversion) on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok?
2. Are there indirect influences of personality dimensions (neuroticism and extraversion) on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok, being mediated by the dimensions of celebrity worship (entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological)?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were generated for testing:

- H1. The personality dimension of neuroticism has a direct negative influence on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok such that the higher their level of neuroticism, the less satisfied they are with their body image.

- H2. The personality dimension of extraversion has a direct positive influence on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok such that the higher their level of extraversion, the more satisfied they are with their body image.
- H3. The personality dimension of neuroticism has an indirect negative influence on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok, being mediated by the dimensions of celebrity worship such that the higher their level of neuroticism and the higher the level of celebrity worship (Intense – personal), the less satisfied they are with their body image.
- H4. The personality dimension of extraversion has an indirect positive influence on the body image of female adolescents in Bangkok, being mediated by the dimensions of celebrity worship such that the higher the level of extraversion and the lower the level of celebrity worship (Entertainment – social), the more satisfied they are with their body image.

Method

The sample consisted of 250 Thai female adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years, and residing within the Bangkok metropolitan area.

Instrument

Apart from the background Information – which aimed to tap personal information such as age, weight, and height - Other three scales were included which was Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS), the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S) and the Body Appreciation Scale.

Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) – which aimed to measure the level of celebrity worship. The 34-item scale assesses respondents' behaviors and attitudes toward their favorite celebrity. It consists of three factor-structure subscales that correspond to the three dimensions of celebrity worship; that is entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological. The CAS showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89.

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised–Short Form (EPQR-S) – The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised–Short Form (EPQR-S) is a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 48 items and four subscales; 12 for each trait of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism, and another set of 12 items for the 'lie' scale. The lie subscale is a control scale in which the whole scale is tested for social desirability bias. The EPQR-S uses a binary response format of *Yes* or *No*. Each item is scored 1 or 0, and each scale has a maximum possible score of 12 and a minimum score of zero (Tiwari et al., 2009). The current study involved only two out of the three traits of personality – extraversion and neuroticism; psychoticism was not included as it was deemed beyond the scope of this study. Hence only 36 items were used. Eysenck et al. (1985) reported reliabilities for males and females, respectively, of 0.84 and 0.80 for neuroticism, 0.88 and 0.84 for extraversion, 0.77 and 0.73 for the lie scale.

Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) – This aims to measure body image, the 13-item BAS assesses individuals' acceptance of, favorable opinions toward, and respect for their bodies. It has been utilized by researchers to understand features, correlates, and potential outcomes of positive body image (Avalos et al., 2005). More specifically, it measures four areas of positive body image: (a) favorable opinions of one's own body,

(b) acceptance of the body in spite of imperfections, (c) respect for the body especially in relation to its needs, and (d) protection of the body and rejection of unrealistic ideals. The BAS uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*. The scale evidenced high internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .91 to .94.

Procedure

The pretest of the Thai version was conducted on 20 Thai female adolescents who matched the targeted participants in terms of the inclusion criteria. Then the actual participants of the current study were recruited through convenience sampling in various designated locations in and around the Bangkok metropolitan area.

Results

Initial reliability analysis indicated that the computed Cronbach's alpha for all six scales (Intense-personal, Entertainment-Social, Borderline-pathological, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Body appreciation) ranged from .63 to .89

Path Analysis: Test of Hypothesis

The findings yielded significant direct negative (-0.12) influence of neuroticism on body image such that higher the level of the participants' neuroticism, the more negative is their body image. However, there is no direct influence of extraversion on body image. In a similar vein, there are no indirect influences of personality (extraversion or neuroticism) on body image, being mediated by celebrity worship (entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological). There is a positive (0.13) influence of extraversion on intense-personal celebrity worship which indicates that the higher the level of extraversion, the more intense and personal is the participants' level of celebrity worship. Similarly, there is a positive (0.42) influence of entertainment-social celebrity worship on body image such that the higher the female adolescents' level of entertainment-social celebrity worship, the more positive is their body image.

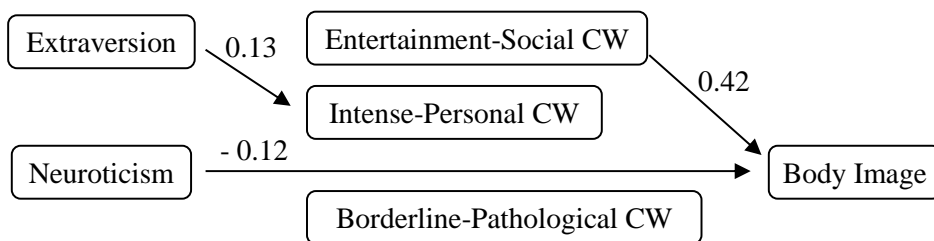


Figure 2: Path Model of Body Image as A Function of The Direct and Indirect Influences of Extraversion and Neuroticism, Being Mediated by Entertainment-Social, Intense-Personal, and Borderline-Pathological Levels of Celebrity Worship

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Based on the results of first hypothesis testing, it was found that there is a direct and negative relationship between the personality dimension of neuroticism and body image such that the higher the level of neuroticism, the more negative is the perceived body image. Neurotic personality has been linked to a more negative appearance evaluation, dissatisfaction with facial appearance, higher weight preoccupation, greater self-objectification, and lower body appreciation (Swami et al., 2013). In addition, neurotic people become easily dissatisfied, thus, there are higher chances that this dimension of personality is associated with more negative body image. Neuroticism is positively correlated with actual-ideal weight discrepancy and negatively correlated with body appreciation. Hence, this result makes complete sense and is supported by similar findings reported by past researchers (e.g., Cervera et al., 2003; Davis et al., 2004).

For the second hypothesis, past research suggested a positive correlation between extraversion and body image (e.g., Swami et al., 2013; Skorek et al., 2014). Contrary to expectations, the results of path analysis showed no direct influence of extraversion on body appreciation among female teenagers in Bangkok. This can be explained by the contention that it does not necessarily follow that the more outgoing or sociable a person is, the more positive is his/her body image. It appears that the current result may not have been affected by what Murphy (2012) referred to as the “halo effect” in which people who are rated highly on one dimension (e.g., extraversion) is assumed to excel on others as well (e.g., body image). Alternatively, it can be said that, perhaps, a large percentage of the female adolescent participants have long been affected by mass media and believe that the ideal body for women is being thin; and if this is unattainable, it could lead to the development of negative body image, as similarly expounded by Murphy (2012).

Another current finding based on the third hypothesis was that the personality dimensions of neuroticism and extraversion have no indirect influences on body image, being mediated by the three levels of celebrity worship. This can be translated into saying that celebrity worship is not as effective a mediator between personality traits and body image. This outcome is not consistent with Maltby et al.’s (2005) finding which demonstrated that aspects of celebrity worship are associated with poorer mental well-being through signs of neuroticism and other negative issues and that many people suffering from such negative conditions also possess a negative body image. In addition, while it may be the case that personality does not influence body image through celebrity worship, however, according to Swami et al. (2013), personality might influence body image through parenting values. For example, an idolized parent who is more focused on appearance (e.g., figure or facial features) might influence his/her child to feel the same way. Hypothesis number four is not significant since, the current study demonstrated that extraversion positively impacts on intense-personal celebrity worship, which indicates that the more extraverted the female adolescents, the more intense and personal is their level of celebrity worship. This finding contradicts those reported by previous studies. For example, Maltby and associates (2004) reported that celebrity worship is significantly related to poor psychological well-being (extraversion suggests the opposite). On a similar note, Sansone and Sansone (2014) demonstrated that greater preoccupation with a celebrity

is associated with a number of potential emotional and psychological difficulties. Giles and Maltby (2006) explained that the entertainment-social factor of a widely-used celebrity attitude scale reflects some of the extraversion personality traits (sociable, lively, active); the intense-personal factor reflects some of the neuroticism traits (tense, emotional, moody). The disparity between the present finding and previous findings justifies why more research is needed for more definitive conclusions about the relationship between personality dimension (extraversion) and levels of celebrity worship.

Finally, it was found that entertainment-social celebrity worship positively impacts on body image such that the higher the female adolescents' level of entertainment-social celebrity worship, the more positive is their body image. On a related note, Maltby et al. (2005) suggested that certain types of interactions between individuals and the celebrities they worship may have important consequences for aspects of mental health, including body image. Grohol (2008) argues that similar findings are not surprising when taken into context. Teens seek positive role models that they can emulate while society and culture continuously reinforce the importance and value of celebrities. It is no shock that teenage girls focus their attention on them. Nonetheless, it must be taken into consideration that not everyone develops lower body appreciation due to celebrity worship since other social and psychological factors may come into play as well (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006).

Conclusion

Many women appearing on media are distorted images and far from the reality of how a woman should actually look these days. Studies have shown that when adolescents are repeatedly exposed to these images of "perfect" models, most adolescents begin to feel bad about themselves, leading to poor body appreciation. Moreover, the considerable amount of available and virtual social technologies may cause serious problems among the youth. The results of this study revealed, in part, that neuroticism-prone female teenagers may be suffering from a negative body image. A variety of coping strategies may be used in order for adolescents to emotionally and physically feel healthier such as CBT, breathing techniques, and positive talks.

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