EXPOSURE TO MEDIATED CELEBRITIES AND MATE PREFERENCES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF IDENTIFICATION AND PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Zunaira Zafar, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan Farahat Ali, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan Muhammad Awais, University of Management and Technology, Sialkot, Pakistan

Muzammil Saeed, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Exposure to media and social networking sites (SNS's) increases opportunities to glimpse celebrities' glamorous lifestyles and to interact with celebrities. The increased contact with celebrities' public and private life on SNS's has become a cause of satisfaction among consumers through identification and the connection with celebrities. This study examines how exposure to media and the use of social networking sites (SNSs) for celebrity-related information and interactions influences users' mate selection preferences. The purpose of this research is to figure out how the consumption of media can influence an individuals' mate selection behavior by considering the two factors which are identification and parasocial relationship. A sample of 500 students is taken for the study. A purposive sampling technique is used to collect the data from the respondents. The results of the study showed that exposure to mediated celebrities are a significant predictor of identification, parasocial relationship, and preferred mate attribution scale. The role of celebrity persona identification as a mediator was not significant between exposure to mediated celebrities and preferred mate attribution. Parasocial relationships performed a significant mediating role between the relationship of mediated celebrities and preferred mate attribution. Celebrity persona identification and parasocial relationship role as serial mediator was significant among exposure to mediated celebrities and preferred mate attribution.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Parasocial Relationship, Celebrity Persona Identification, Mate Attribution

INTRODUCTION

The presence of traditional media and social media has enhanced the learning opportunities for the life of its viewers and users. Social networking sites (SNS's) provide information about the rich, the poor, famous and not so famous people on a single click. People mostly use social networking sites because they can have information about their favorite celebrity very easily. Celebrity studies proposed that celebrities represent and symbolize the core values of a capitalist economy, such as individualism, consumerism, and materialism (Seo & Hyun, 2018). The text and images of celebrities broadcasted by the media highlight a successful, happy, and glamorous life of celebrities (Giles, 2000; Lagerwey, 2018; Xu, Reijnders, & Kim, 2019).

Social networking sites have increased the promotion of celebrity information and it has also increased the disclosure of private and personal aspects of celebrity's lives which is usually associated with the luxurious life behind the stage and high consumption (Jefferson & Stake, 2009). Due to the increased exposure to celebrity both public and private life, the consumption of SNS's has become a cause of satisfaction among consumers through identification and the enhanced connection with celebrities, which has increased the chances comparison among consumers with the busy and expensive life style of celebrities which could have strong consequences on the life satisfaction of users (Krcmar, Giles, & Helme, 2008).

Earlier studies have mostly focused on celebrities' SNS self-presentation strategies (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012; Marwick & Boyd, 2011), celebrities SNS's interactions and engagement with fans (Seo & Hyun, 2018), and celebrity SNS's endorsement effects on consumer attitudes and behaviors (Lookadoo and Wong, 2019; Jin & Phua 2014). The famous people known as celebrity attracts a huge number of fans following on twitter, Facebook, and Instagram by sharing various sides of their life through sharing important information with the followers. The scope of the information posted by celebrities further distributed by the followers in their own SNS network. Regardless of dense growth in appearance of celebrities on social networking sites the research in this area in past is limited.

Prior studies have examined the effect of media consumption on relationship beliefs and outcomes of relationship puzzle (Hudson, Huang, Roth, and Madden, 2016; Bedard and Tolmie, 2018). The idea of celebrity worship proposes that celebrities might be used as examples of social ideals (Giles & Maltby, 2004). For instance, media character may signify unique social comparison targets, whose physical appeal and condition provide data about socially idealized standards of attractiveness. According to Harrison (2000) recent research shows links between celebrity worship and symptoms of eating disorders. Self-celebrity body shape inconsistencies were described to be linked with symptoms of eating disorders (Shorter, Brown, Quinton, & Hinton, 2008). A significant relation is observed with the obsession with the body shape and celebrity worship (Maltby, Giles, Barber, & McCutcheon, 2005). Usually worshiping of celebrity is also linked with stress and anxiety (McCutcheon, Ashe, Houran, & Maltby, 2003; Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Houran, & Ashe, 2006), this might affect self-image and alteration in body image (Brown & Tiggemann, 2020).

Brown and colleagues presented a celebrity influence model which talks about the exposure to mediated celebrities (Brown & de Matviuk, 2010; Fraser & Brown, 2008). The predicted influence of mediated celebrities in forecasting a diversity of intellectual, emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes is studied through celebrity influence model. The model has two psychological concepts, first concept is parasocial relationships and second is identification. An informal relationship that an individual think he has with mediated figures is defined as parasocial relationship (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). While a psychological procedure in which a person starts carrying a mindset or an attitude of some other person to maintain a kind of relationship that he or she desire with the person he or she likes is called identification (Kelman, 1958).

Several theories for example cultivation theory, social learning theory and general learning theory talks about the impact of media on the consumers, perception about the world around him which can be applied in the framework of media related to romance. The work of researchers suggested that consumption of media have both short- and long-term effects (Prot et al., 2014).

But the previous studies did not paid much attention how media is linked with creating the unrealistic beliefs and what are mediating variable between the relationship of media use and unrealistic beliefs about mate preference (Blumenthal-Barby & Ubel, 2018; Vannier & O'sullivan, 2017). The purpose of this study is to examine how the exposure to

media and use of social networking sites (SNSs) for celebrity-related information and interactions influences users' mate selection preferences**.** The focus of this study is to reduce the gap by exploring the role of mediated celebrities through movies films, dramas newspaper magazine, social networking sites in mate preferences of media consumers.

Mediated Celebrities and Social Networking Sites

Presence of media has made it very easier for people to show themselves to the world which was associated with celebrities previously and was handled by conventional media in past. While comparing the emerging culture with the concrete culture of past, celebrities have strengthened the culture because they also performed the role of an educational model and a role model to the society as well so that their viewer can learn from the things that are being shown to them through the new media. The increase in the birth of micro celebrity is the prominent sign of celebrities' handling social networking sites self-promotion of viewers (Khamis, Ang, and Welling, 2017). Micro celebrity is defined as a unique way of performance which is done online while consuming various digital networking tools to become famous (Senft, 2008). Two terms which are self-presentation and self-branding are define as giving the reference of personalities who use online platform to share their life every day for example "*camgirl*" and beauty instructor on YouTube (García-Rapp, 2017; Senft, 2008), influencer mother who uses social networking sites as a platform to communicate to its audience (Abidin, 2015), and other famous Instagram consumers.

By observing the increasing values of self-depiction in the context of greater social and high-tech transformation researcher worked on the gathering of viewers itself and identity with the reference of persona study. A survey about online gaming groups and among fringe artists was conducted in past (Marshall, Moore, & Barbour, 2015). Marshall (2014) discussed in his work about the researchers work on individuality and public identity in the light of persona, by observing the increase in importance of self-display on the grounds of revolutions in fields of technology and social networking.

While conducting research on online gaming communities, Williams, Kennedy, and Moore (2011) analyzed the gaming societies of internet. Work on fringe entertainers was done by Barbour (2015). The circumstances in which the vast online networks work as the source of connection between celebrities and their fans was analyzed and they concluded that before social networking sites people use other platform of technologies to share their culture, their love for the favorite personalities, and other self-created stories (Bury, 2005; Jenkins, 2006). Fans are always looking for the gossip and news related to celebrities because of the high use of social networking sites on which the celebrities are always sharing their personal and non-personal information.

Mediated Celebrities and Celebrity Persona Identification

Identification is a mechanism in which people build a fluctuating level of identification with the celebrity whom they are viewing everyday through different media outlets (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Viewers have different degrees of identification which depends on the parasocial relationship. In high level of identification viewers will adopt maximum change. Adams-Price and Greene (1990) proposed that teenager identifies with celebrity. Teenagers are more attracted toward the opposite sex personality than same sex personality. In a study Alperstein (1991) named the connection with celebrity as pseudo relationship.

In media, identification is defined as a process in which a person starts taking a fictional character very seriously that he adopts the characteristics and attitude like them. In the development of this process the person becomes sure that the celebrity and him have the

same lifestyle and habits (Cohen, 2001). This relation makes them belief that there is identification between fan and celebrity, not like steady media with whom a person feels more related because he or she see them every day or several time in a day.

Prior empirical research concluded that more identification could lead to parasocial relationship (Cohen, 2001; Brown & de Matviuk, 2010). Kosenko, Binder, and Hurley (2016) pointed out strong ties among, parasocial relationship and identification. Above literature helps the researchers to formulate following hypothesis.

H1: It is hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between media exposure of celebrities and identification.

Cultivation theory and Identification

Cultivation theory talks about the adoption of ideas, values, and beliefs due to the intense consumption of media (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). According to cultivation theory if the content that is being consumed by viewer is violent the heavy viewer will think that the world is meaner place (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). This theory was applied on different domains for instance beliefs about gender roles. There are chances that frequent experience of watching romance can make consumer to start believing in idealization become the reason for viewer to always look for idealization in relationship in actual world. Segrin and Nabi (2002) concluded that high amount of media content experience forecast lower levels of ideal marital prospects, heavier contact to romantic on media foretold higher levels of ideal marital prospects. Adolescence are expected to be impacted by media for instance music movies and internet (Pardun, 2005). Youngsters spend more time on television as compare to other individual.

Mediated Celebrities, Parasocial Relationships, and Ideal Mate Preference

A parasocial contact is defined as a connection of friendship (Horton & Wohl, 1956) which involves emotional relational connection with the celebrity or media character (Rubin & Perse, 1987). In parasocial relationship a person think he identify with media personality for example having the views that they know the media character, thinking of media character as a friend, and wish to meet the media character personally (Rubin and Perse, 1987). Consumers might have feeling of connection and their favorite media character have cause believe that they understand the acts and experience of characters' specific situation (Pera and Viglia, 2016; Schäfer & Eerola, 2020). Repeated viewing of specific content can increase the intensity of parasocial relationship (Lim, Choe, Zhang, & Noh, 2020). But past research found that parasocial relationship, operationalized as the affective involvement in the media personality (Rubin, 1985), happens when the consumers do not have any previous history with the media character (Auter, 1992). When the consumer is involved in a story parasocial relationship occurs. An experimental research Analyzed that the self-concept of adolescent girls with normal to strong levels of media character identification was significant in viewing the romantic movie twilight compared to the control group (Vandenbosch, Frison, & Eggermont, 2012). Young girls show developing interest in sexuality because of the stimulating of developing sexual identity (Weinstein & Rosen, 1991).

Brown and colleagues worked on parasocial relationship in depth and figured out that parasocial is not build only by observing the media characters and audience but also build by the repetitive connection through various media outlets (Brown & Basil, 1995). Sun and Wu (2012) concluded that people build parasocial relationship with celebrities through watching sports events, televised sports, films, and advertisements endorsing sports celebrities. Parasocial relation can left determinate effect on the audience. ''Hum Log'' (''We People''), a show (soap opera) on aired in India enhanced the position of women and value of family

unity through parasocial relationship (Brown & Cody, 1991). Because of the sense of intimacy with famous soap character in peru viewer build para social relationship and showed their increased interest in literacy programs ''Maria,'' the cast of the Peruvian telenovela ''*Simplemente Maria*'' (''Simple Mary''). Parasocial relationship with Will Smith Encouraged teenager about what they got to know about fresh prince of Bel Air (Babb & Brown, 1994). In the case of radio, the parasocial relationship is linked with the hearing effect (Rubin, Step, and Hofer, 1996). A research on a tv program inspired of an Angel depicted significant parasocial relationship with multi angel character and issue that were discussed by the character were more famous among audience (Piper, Keeler, & Brown, 1997). Above literature helps the researchers to formulate following hypothesis.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between exposure to mediated celebrity and parasocial relationship.

H2: There is a positive relationship between parasocial relationships and ideal mate partner preferences.

Mediated Celebrities and Ideal Mate Preference

According to Furman, Simon, Shaffer, and Bouchey (2002) adolescence in considered the period in which a person has high interest in romance. Romantic relationships are started to form mixed gender groups that were formed in adolescence (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004). Studies conducted on adolescents have shown the significance of ideal beliefs on the depictions of relationships based on romance (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Furman & Simon, 1999). Romantic belief denotes to the views that comprise the romanticism ideology and naturally contain the romantic mate idealization and connection and the ideal mindset that love can fight with all the fences and problems, the belief that there is only one right person and also the belief of love at first sight (Sprecher & Metts, 1989, 1999).

These romantic beliefs are arranged in a romantic movie script which can be explained as psychological illustration of arrangements of actions based on romance (Abelson, 1981). The values linked with the beliefs and therefore, added in romantic movie are consumed to arrange and analyze a person's attitude, to guess and understand the attitude of a possible romantic mate Furman & Simon, (1999); Sprecher & Metts, (1989). Consequently, studies show that ideal romantic beliefs forecast the excellence of potential relationships (Bőthe, Tóth-Király, Demetrovics, & Orosz, 2017). Indeed, the views predict the results linked with enhanced and declined relationship value. For example, an idealized romantic belief of marriage enhances the chances to become dissatisfied in a relationship (Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Idealized romantic belief usually does not match with the real relationship and became the cause of dissatisfaction for example negative emotional response to relationship issue. On the same side ideal romantic beliefs can also damage the emotional state about romantic relationship. For example, people who permitted the romantic ideal more powerfully than the people who permitted it less strongly feel the love in their current relationship more deeply (Tukachinsky & Dorros, 2018; Park, Impett, MacDonald, & Lemay 2019).

On media the romantic stories that we usually witness revolves around the abundance, shortage, and competition. for the potential romantic partner. The review of some notable romantic shows revolves around with a story in which multiple females are competing for love attention of a single male for example wedding planner (Jenkins, 2013) and 27 dresses or in other films number of male competing for the love of a female or a female is supposed to choose among number of romantic choices for example while you were sleeping and when harry met sally these romantic stories are also a part of plays, YouTube series and dramas by taking in consideration all the fact given above we can consider that these depiction of role in

media reinforce male and female to look for a mate similar to the character because to abundance and shortage. Above literature leads the researchers to formulate following hypothesis.

H3: There is a positive relationship between media exposure of celebrities and ideal Mate partner.

H4: Celebrity Persona Identification will mediate the relationship between exposure to mediated celebrities and mate preference.

H5: Parasocial relationship will mediate the relation between media exposure and ideal mate preference.

H6: Celebrity Persona Identification and parasocial relationship will mediate the relationship between media exposure and ideal mate partner.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

This study consisted of 500 participants which were selected through purposive sampling technique. The actual sample size was composed of 600 participants 100 questionnaires were eliminated because either the participants were not serious while filling the questionnaires or they left it incomplete or participants did not return it to the researcher. The sample included university students from 6 different universities who were doing bachelors, masters, and post-graduation. Majority of the participants belonged to media and communication department and the remaining belonged to the department of psychology, chemistry, English, biology, physics, and business. The ages of participants varied between 17 to 32. And there were two participant whose ages were above 40 and were enrolled in bachelors. The six universities from where the data was collected were situated in Lahore.

The purpose and the reason of research was well conveyed to the participants before filling the questionnaires and a consent form was also attached on the front of questionnaire. Majority of participants found the topic of research very interested and were excited and interested in giving their input in the research. And the participants who did not filled the questionnaire attentively were discarded mostly because they were incomplete.

Measures

Celebrity-persona identification scale (CPI), Preferred Mate Attributes Scale, and Exposure to the mediated celebrity, Para social relationship scales were utilized in this study.

Exposure to the mediated celebrity scale

This scale works on how frequently the participants were exposed to the celebrity on a variety of media. The participants must mark their answer on a 5-point scale in which option 1 = never option 2 = rarely option 3 = sometimes option 4 = often option 5 = always. The scale contains 5 questions.

Parasocial Relationship Scale

We adapted some part of this scale from Rosaen and Dibble (2008) and Kim et al.(2015) study to develop this scale.

The scale is based on a 1-5 scale, in which the participants must indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement in which option 1 is strongly disagree option 2 is Disagree option 3 stands for Neutral option 4 stands for Agree option 5 indicates strongly agree. It consisted of 20 questions.

Celebrity-Persona Identification Scale (CPI)

This is the scale which is designed to measure how the identification is developed by the users of media with media celebrities and popular fictional persons of media industry. This scale was developed by Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea in 2003. The participants selected their options based on a 1-5 scale which indicates participant's agreement or disagreement with the statements from the scale where 1) strongly disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree 5) Strongly agree. This scale consisted of 20 questions.

Preferred Mate Attributes Scale

This scale was developed by Buss and Barnes in 1986. This scale has 44 characteristics in the questionnaire that is designed for boys and 37 characteristics in the questionnaire which is designed for girls. The participants keeping the media celebrities in mind, please rate each of the following characteristics on how important or desirable it would be to you in choosing a marriage partner. From the scale where 1=Very Unimportant, 2=Unimportant, 3=Neutral, 4=Important, 5=Very Important.

Procedure

Permission was granted to the researcher from university to conduct the research by gathering the data from the student body of six different universities of Lahore. The permission letter was given to the researcher which the researcher was supposed to show to the management of each university before conducting the research in the institute. A consent form was also attached with the questionnaire for the participant on which the purpose and the details of research were written clearly. The permission from the class teacher was also taken before conducting the research. Before distributing the questionnaires, researcher explained the details about filling the questionnaire and shared the information about the topic and the purpose of the study verbally to the participants. The researcher collected the data in 10 days by visiting all six universities on assigned days by the having telephonic conversation with the management of universities and with the person who is assigned to help the researcher in this regard. SPSS was used to input the data for the results.

Data analysis

In this research the data has been analyzed by the assistance of SPSS version 25.0 and PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012) to find the direct effect and serial mediation. Initial step was the screening of data to pinpoint the missing values, non-normal distribution, and multicollinearity in the data. SPSS PROCESS was used to analyse the direct and indirect effect. Five thousand bootstrap sample was used to create 95% bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals to examine the significance of indirect effects which are significant at $p=<.0001$, if the 95% confidence interval does not include zero.

RESULTS

The sample was 500 in which 230 (46%) are male. Mean age in male participant is M=21.16 and SD=2.146. The percentages in the educational program in male participant are BA/BS 184 (80.0%), Masters 37 (16.1%) and MPhil 9(3.9%).

In remaining respondents 270 (54%) were female with mean age M=22.07 and SD=2.883. In female participants the percentages in educational programs are BA/BS 127 (47.0%), Masters 66 (24.4%) and MPhil 77 (28.5%). Missing values were found in the dataset. Those participants from the dataset were removed which resulted in decreasing sample. Skewness and kurtosis values for each remaining fluctuated between -2 and +2 which confirms the normality assumption (Field 2017). Bivariate correlation values were not above 0.90 in the study. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values were also estimated. The values were ranged between 1.334 and 1.616 which depicts that multicollinearity was not a problem in the research.

To test our hypothesis for male participants celebrity persona identification and Parasocial relationship were taken as mediators between exposure to mediated celerity (EMC) and preferred mate attribution. These two serial mediators included one direct and three indirect pathways (Hayes, 2012). This table displays the path coefficient values and indirect effect for the anticipated serial mediation model.

Direct effect of different variable of the study is shown in Table 1. Exposure to mediated celebrity is positively related celebrity persona identification (β=.24, p<.001), parasocial relationship (β =.16, p<.001) and preferred mate attribution (β=.04, p<.001). Celebrity persona identification significantly and positively predicted the parasocial relationship (β =.62, p<.001) and preferred mate attribution (β =.01, p<.001). Parasocial relationship is significantly and positively related to preferred mate attribution (β =.23, p<.001). Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2, and H3 are accepted.

The first indirect effect of exposure to mediated celebrity on preferred mate attribution through the mediator (celebrity persona identification) was valued as product of path coefficient (EMC→CPIS→PMAS) was observed negative and not statistically significant (Boot LLCI=-.0360 to Boot ULCI= .0368). Additionally, the second indirect effect (EMC→PR→PMAS) was positive and significant as bootstrap CI values were below zero (Boot LLCI=.0058 to Boot ULCI=.0717). The third indirect effect path (EMC→CPIS→PR→PMAS) was found positive and significant (Boot LLCI=-.0080 to Boot ULCI=.0680). So, H5, and H6 are accepted but data could not support H4 hypotheses in Table 1 & 2.

Table 1
DIRECT EFFECTS OF EMC, CPIS, PR AND PMAS (MALE)

		Consequent									
		CPIS				ParaRela				PMAS		
Antecedent	Coeff.	SE	p		Coeff.	SE	p		*Coeff.*	*SE*	*P*	
EMC	.236	.252	< .001		.155	.147	<.001		.0422	.4287	< .001	
CPIS	-----	-----	-----		.6168	.0376	<.001		.0108	.1378	< .001	
ParaRela	------	------	-----		-----	-----	-----		.2260	.1892	< .001	
Constant	42.822	4.102	< .001		26.8647	2.8315	<.001		109.7628	9.5370	< .001	
	R^2 = 0.057 $F (1,228) = 13.432$, p<.001				$R^2 = 0.450$ $F (2,227) = 92.721, p$<.001				$R^2 = 0.621$ $F (3,226) =4.987, p< .001$			

Table 2
INDIRECT EFFECTS OF CPIS AND PR BETWEEN EMC AND PMAS (MALE)

| **Mediators** | PMAS | | | |
	$β$ Coeff.	*SE*	*Boot LLCI 95%CI*	*Boot ULCI 95%CI*
EMC→CPIS→PMAS	.0025	.0184	-.0360	.0368
EMC→ParaRela→PMAS	.0351	.0170	.0058	.0717
EMC→CPIS→ParaRela→PMAS	.0329	.0153	.0080	.0680

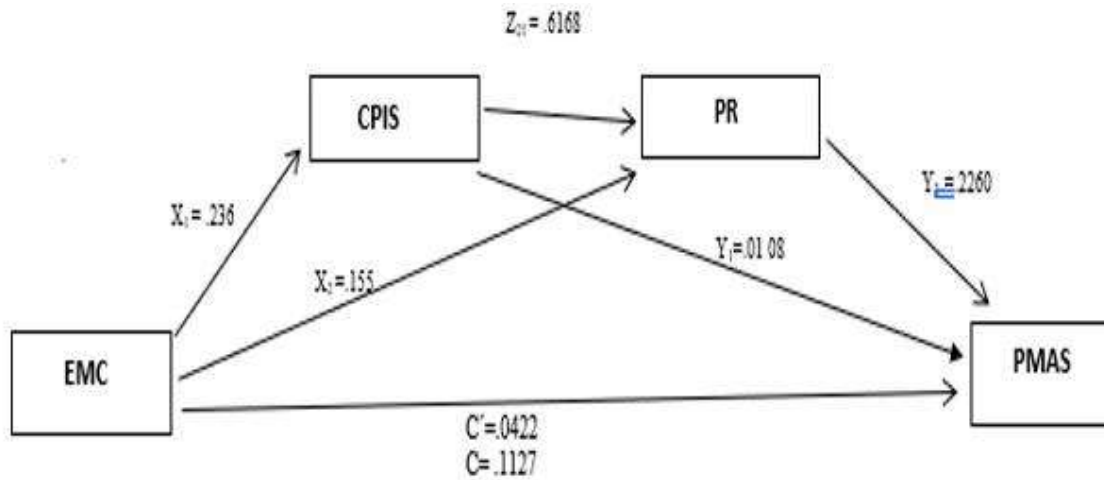Note. β Coeff. = standardized regression coefficient

FIGURE 1
SERIAL MEDIATION MODEL FOR MALE

In the female participants, as shown in Table 3, exposure to mediated celebrity is positively related with celebrity persona identification (β=.21, *p*<.001), parasocial relationship (β =.20, *p*<.001*)* and preferred mate attribution (β=.21, *p*<.001). Celebrity persona identification significantly and positively predicted the parasocial relationship (β =.51, *p*<.001) and preferred mate attribution (β =.03, *p*<.001*)*. Parasocial relationship is significantly and positively related to preferred mate attribution (β =.25, *p*<.001*)*. Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2, and H3 are accepted for female participants Figures 1& 2.

In terms indirect effect Table 4 shows that the first indirect effect of exposure to mediated celebrity on preferred mate attribution through the mediator Celebrity persona identification (EMC→CPIS→PMAS) was observed negative and not statistically significant because bootstrap CI values were below zero (Boot LLCI=-.0471 to Boot ULCI=.0262 . The second indirect effect between exposure to mediated celebrity and preferred mate attribution in the presence of mediator parasocial relationship (EMC→PR→PMAS) was positive and significant as bootstrap CI values were above zero. (Boot LLCI=.0149 to Boot ULCI=.0900). The third indirect effect (EMC→CPIS→PR→PMAS) was found positive and significant as bootstrap was above zero. (Boot LLCI=.0044 to Boot ULCI=.0506). So, H5, and H6 are accepted but data could not support H4 hypotheses.

Table 3										
DIRECT EFFECTS OF EMC AND CPIS PR AND PMAS (FEMALE)										
		Consequent								
		CPIS				ParaRela				PMAS		
Antecedent	Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*		*Coeff.*	*SE*	*P*
EMC	.2078	.2347	< .001		.1978	.1365	<.001		.2095	.3239	< .001
CPIS	-----	-----	-----		.5092	.0348	<.001		.0290	.0941	< .001

Table 3
DIRECT EFFECTS OF EMC AND CPIS PR AND PMAS (FEMALE)

	Consequent									
	CPIS				ParaRela				PMAS	
Antecedent	Coeff.	SE	p		Coeff.	SE	p		Coeff.	SE	P
ParaRela	------	------	-----		-----	-----	-----		.2458	.1413	< .001
Constant	40.739	3.848	< .001		31.9281	2.607	< 001		139.0029	7.5223	< .001
	R^2 = .0432 $F(1,268)$ = 12.0908, $p<.001$				R^2 =.3403 $F(2,267)$ = 68.583, $p<.001$				R^2 = .1260 $F(3,266)$ =12.7846 , $p< .001$		

Table 4
INDIRECT EFFECTS OF CPIS AND PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMC AND PMAS (FEMALE)

	PMAS			
	β Coeff.	SE	Boot LLCI 95%CI	Boot ULCI 95%CI
Mediators				
EMC → CPIS → PMAS	-.0060	.0182	- .0471	.0262
EMC → ParaRela → PMAS	.0486	.0194	. .0149	.0900
EMC → CPIS → ParaRela → PMAS	.0260	.0136	.0044	.0565

Note. β Coeff. = standardized regression coefficient

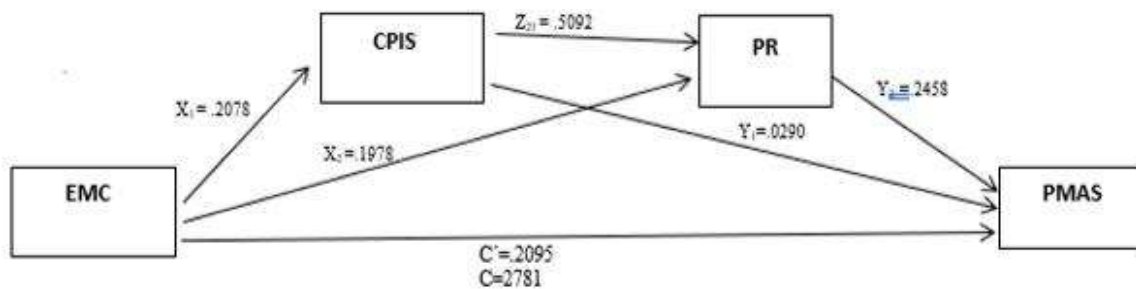*Note. β Coeff. = standardized regression coefficient*

FIGURE 2
SERIAL MEDIATION MODEL FOR FEMALE

DISCUSSION

The goal of the research is to find out whether the exposure to mediated celebrities influence media consumers mates preferences. The study focuses on the role of exposure to mediated celebrities in forming identification.

The study also examines the involvement mediated celebrities and identification in building parasocial relationship. The study also analysed that exposure to mediated celebrities is a significant predictor of ideal mate preferences in the presence of mediators which are identification and parasocial relationship.

For university study which belonged to bachelors, masters, and post-graduation programs the study results revealed a significant association between exposure to mediated celerity, celebrity persona identification scale and preferred mate attribution.

Taken together, research hypotheses were mostly supported, representing numerous ways in which EMC can be significant in influencing ideal mate preference.

Results from both samples propose that viewers who are involved with celebrities emotionally in a relationship which is imaginary have more chance to have idealized views of relationship which are based on romance and think that their better half should look like the celebrities. These results are in line with the existing research findings that romantic media enhance the ideal social beliefs and idealistic interpersonal prospects (Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Psychological process rather than media products was the main point of the study; therefore, the research was not bound to romantic media programs. For example, the study mentioned above in literature that the participants do not have parasocial relationship with the fictional romantic character. They can also develop parasocial relationship with players. Therefore, this study talks about examining media effects by the depiction of romance on the viewers, also discovering the emotional engagement with media celebrities. Individual who consume media frequently often build fantasy relationship (Halpern, Katz, & Carril, 2017; Schooler & Ward, 2006).

Outcomes of the research supported the assumed connection among exposure to mediated celebrities, parasocial relationship and ideal mate preference of individuals. And explicitly the concentration of emotional contribution of viewer with media figures was linked with inferior social satisfaction and high standards of life partner. In other words, the ideal mate preference and parasocial relationship outcome established two outcomes which were dependent on exposure to mediated celebrities and identification. Most probably the main mediator was parasocial relationship which was dependent on a person intensity of exposure to media. For instance, talking about social exchange method (Archer et al., 2012) there are possibilities that the unachievable value which a person develops because of parasocial relationship become the reason of exaggeration of expectations. These expectations remove the individual's gratification from their life partner and the relationship they have which resonates with the Kim and Song (2016). as they stated that the depth of this involvement with the media personality can possibly affect the expectation of view in their dating experience.

Theoretical Implications

Theories such as social cognition and cultivation argued that the contact and involvement flawless media personalities of romantic media can cause unrealistic beliefs among viewers (Hefner, 2019; Tukachinsky & Dorros, 2018). Instead the fictional character shown on media produce gender stereotype in consumers which in result can lessen social consequences? The recent results are dependent with the hypothetical agenda and show the empirical signs of connection between parasocial relationship with mediated celebrities and ideal mate preferences as analyzed by Schachter (1959).

Social learning theory explains that how the social learning from celebrities via different networking sites and media can affect individual choices and celebrity mediation in preferring ideal mate of media consumers. Social learning theory in case of fictional character was positively related with the male and female participants. Furthermore, we found out the social learning theory with media personalities was positively related with parasocial relationship and identification. When the viewer believes that they know the celebrities which they are seeing through different medium parasocial relationship happens (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Researchers pointed out the strong influence of ideal pictures on both male and female for ideal mate partner (Grogan, 2010; Smolak, 2004). This notion explains the procedure how media consumers submerge themselves with media celebrities. The hypothetical outline of this study highlights psychological consequences of identification and parasocial relationship with media character. This research outspread the investigation of outcomes of identification and parasocial relationship to a vast sociocultural setting, for example the increase of celebrity culture, increased beauty standards. Furthermore, this research also enhances the knowledge of viewer's identification and parasocial relationship with mediated media characters by explaining that self-identity is an essential linking part of identification. Cohen (2001) claimed that when an individual build identification, one must drop self-identity. By adopting the identity of their favourite person, they start to experience their world through their point view. This phenomenon is very common in teenagers and adults at young age who are very influenced by the media character and social media stars, to have a stable personality. At this phase of life celebrity identification that are involve in behaviour like multiple marriages, extra marital affairs, and separation can have negative impact on teenagers and young people.

Remarkably the finding of this study says that because of the exposure to celebrities an individual develops some identification which leads to parasocial relationship which effect their mate preferences. The physical characteristics play a significant role in building a parasocial relationship with celebrities among media consumers. This association was found significant in university students; the concentration of parasocial relationship was associated with the mediated celebrity (Tukachinsky & Dorros, 2018). The involvement with media content shows a significant role on developing identification, parasocial relationship and mate preference (Kim, Ko, & Kim, 2015). Hence the identification parasocial relationship is associated with idea mate preference as found here.

Limitations

There are few limitations in this study which offer fascinating guidelines for future investigation. First, the use of purposive sampling may have limited the interpretation of results. Furthermore, reflective data is extremely vulnerable to remembrance and state biases. Additionally, some participants must have been involved in identification and parasocial relationship at the time of research. Thus, likewise previous study in the field (Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014; Hetsroni & Reizer, 2014).

Future Research

For future research, researchers should explore the relationship of independent and dependent variable with other mediating variables that could be involved in deciding ideal mate. Future researcher must ponder about the content of the viewer's media. Two people can have identification relationship with same media character and can have same characteristics of media character to be in their future mate. But the intensity of parasocial relationship can differ. And additional examination of the details of the youngsters' imaginations of their favorite media character can further light the ways in which a person decides their ideal mate.

REFERENCES

Abelson,R.P. (1981). Psychological status of the script concept. *American Psychologist, 36*(7), 715– 729. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.36.7.715

Abidin, C. (2016). "Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online?": Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity. *Social Media+ Society*, *2*(2), 2056305116641342.

Adams-Price, C., & Greene, A.L. (1990). Secondary attachments and adolescent self concept. *Sex roles*, *22*(3-4), 187-198.

Alperstein, N.M. (1991). Imaginary social relationships with celebrities appearing in television commercials. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *35*(1), 43-58.

Archer, L., DeWitt, J., Osborne, J., Dillon, J., Willis, B., & Wong, B. (2012). Science aspirations, capital, and family habitus: How families shape children's engagement and identification with science. American Educational Research Journal, 49(5), 881-908.

Auter, P.J. (1992). Psychometric: TV that talks back: An experimental validation of a parasocial interaction scale. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *36*(2), 173-181.

Babb, V., & Brown, W.J. (1994, July). *Adolescents' development of parasocial relationships through popular television situation comedies.* Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Sydney, Australia.

Bachen, C.M., & Illouz, E. (1996). Imagining romance: Young people's cultural models of romance and love. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *13*(4), 279-308.

Barbour, K. (2015). Registers of performance: negotiating the professional, personal and intimate in online persona creation. In *Media, Margins and Popular Culture* (pp. 57-69). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Bedard, S.A.N., & Tolmie, C.R. (2018). Millennials' green consumption behaviour: Exploring the role of social media. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *25*(6), 1388-1396.

Blumenthal-Barby, J.S., & Ubel, P.A. (2018). In defense of "denial": Difficulty knowing when beliefs are unrealistic and whether unrealistic beliefs are bad. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, *18*(9), 4-15.

Bőthe, B., Tóth-Király, I., Demetrovics, Z., & Orosz, G. (2017). The pervasive role of sex mindset: Beliefs about the malleability of sexual life is linked to higher levels of relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction and lower levels of problematic pornography use. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *117*(1), 15-22.

Brown, M.J., & Cody, M.J. (1991). Effects of a prosocial television soap opera in promoting women's status. *Human Communication Research*, *18*(1), 114-144.

Brown, W.J., & Basil, M.D. (1995). Media celebrities and public health: Responses to'Magic'Johnson's HIV disclosure and its impact on AIDS risk and high-risk behaviors. *Health Communication*, *7*(4), 345-370.

Brown, W.J., & De Matviuk, M.A.C. (2010). Sports celebrities and public health: Diego Maradona's influence on drug use prevention. *Journal of health communication*, *15*(4), 358-373.

Brown, W.J., Basil, M.D., & Bocarnea, M.C. (2003). Social influence of an international celebrity: Responses to the death of Princess Diana. *Journal of communication*, *53*(4), 587-605.

Brown, W.J., Kiruswa, S., & Fraser, B.P. (2003). Promoting HIV/AIDS prevention through soap operas: Tanzania's experience with Maisha. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, *22*(2), 90-111.

Brown, Z., & Tiggemann, M. (2020). A picture is worth a thousand words: The effect of viewing celebrity Instagram images with disclaimer and body positive captions on women's body image. Body Image, 33(1), 190-198.

Bury, R. (2005). *Cyberspaces of their own: Female fandoms online* (Vol. 25). Peter Lang.

Buss, D.M., & Barnes, M. (1986). Preferences in human mate selection. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(3), 559−570. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.559

Chung, S., & Cho, H. (2017). Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement. *Psychology & Marketing*, *34*(4), 481-495.

Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass communication & society*, *4*(3), 245-264.

Connolly, J., Craig, W., Goldberg, A., & Pepler, D. (2004). Mixed-gender groups, dating, and romantic relationships in early adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *14*(2), 185-207.

Driesmans, K., Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2016). True love lasts forever: The influence of a popular teenage movie on Belgian girls' romantic beliefs. *Journal of Children and Media*, *10*(3), 304-320.

Field, A. (2017). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics: North American edition*. sage.

Fraser, B.P., & Brown, W.J. (2002). Media, celebrities, and social influence: Identification with Elvis Presley. *Mass Communication & Society*, *5*(2), 183-206.

Furman, W., & Simon, W. V. (1999). Cognitive representations of adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman, B. B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 75−98). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Furman, W., Simon, V.A., Shaffer, L., & Bouchey, H.A. (2002). Adolescents' working models and styles for relationships with parents, friends, and romantic partners. Child development, 73(1), 241-255.

García-Rapp, F. (2017). Popularity markers on YouTube's attention economy: the case of Bubzbeauty. Celebrity Studies, 8(2), 228-245.

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of communication*, *26*(2), 172-199.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*, *2*(1), 43-67.

Giles, D.C. (2002). Parasocial interaction: A review of the literature and a model for future research. *Media psychology*, *4*(3), 279-305.

Giles, D.C., & Maltby, J. (2004). The role of media figures in adolescent development: Relations between autonomy, attachment, and interest in celebrities. *Personality and individual differences*, *36*(4), 813-822.

Grogan, S. (2010). Promoting positive body image in males and females: Contemporary issues and future directions. *Sex Roles*, *63*(9-10), 757-765.

Haferkamp, N., Eimler, S.C., Papadakis, A.M., & Kruck, J.V. (2012). Men are from Mars, women are from Venus? Examining gender differences in self-presentation on social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *15*(2), 91-98.

Halpern, D., Katz, J.E., & Carril, C. (2017). The online ideal persona vs. the jealousy effect: Two explanations of why selfies are associated with lower-quality romantic relationships. *Telematics and Informatics*, *34*(1), 114-123.

Harrison, K. (1997). Does interpersonal attraction to thin media personalities promote eating disorders?. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *41*(4), 478-500.

Hartmann, T., & Goldhoorn, C. (2011). Horton and Wohl revisited: Exploring viewers' experience of parasocial interaction. *Journal of communication*, *61*(6), 1104-1121.

Hayes, A.F. (2012). PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling [White paper]. Retrieved from http://www.afhayes.com/public/process2012.pdf.

Hefner, V. (2019). Does love conquer all? An experiment testing the association between types of romantic comedy content and reports of romantic beliefs and life satisfaction. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8*(4), 376–384. https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000201

Hefner, V., & Wilson, B.J. (2013). From love at first sight to soul mate: The influence of romantic ideals in popular films on young people's beliefs about relationships. *Communication Monographs*, *80*(2), 150-175.

Hetsroni, A., & Reizer, A. (2014). What's the fighting all about? A comparison of reasons for romantic conflicts on television programs and in the real world. In M. Moshe (Ed.), *Psychology of emotions, motivations and actions. The emotions industry* (pp. 43–58). Nova Science Publishers.

Horton, D., & Richard Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *psychiatry*, *19*(3), 215-229.

Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M.S., & Madden, T.J. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *33*(1), 27-41.

Jefferson, D.L., & Stake, J.E. (2009). Appearance self-attitudes of African American and European American women: Media comparisons and internalization of beauty ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *33*(4), 396-409.

Jenkins, C. (2013). 'You're just some bitch who broke my heart and cut up my mom's wedding dress': Reading the wedding dress in Hollywood's romantic comedies. *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, *2*(2), 159-173.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: Exploring participatory culture*. nyu Press.

Jin, S.A.A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of advertising*, *43*(2), 181-195.

Kelman, H.C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization three processes of attitude change. *Journal of conflict resolution*, *2*(1), 51-60.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding,'micro-celebrity'and the rise of Social Media Influencers. *Celebrity studies*, *8*(2), 191-208.

Kim, H., Ko, E., & Kim, J. (2015). SNS users' para-social relationships with celebrities: social media effects on purchase intentions. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, *25*(3), 279-294.

Kim, J., & Song, H. (2016). Celebrity's self-disclosure on Twitter and parasocial relationships: A mediating role of social presence. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *62*(1), 570-577.

Kosenko, K.A., Binder, A.R., & Hurley, R. (2016). Celebrity influence and identification: a test of the Angelina effect. *Journal of Health Communication*, *21*(3), 318-326.

Krcmar, M., Giles, S., & Helme, D. (2008). Understanding the process: How mediated and peer norms affect young women's body esteem. *Communication Quarterly*, *56*(2), 111-130.

Lagerwey, J. (2018). The Great British Bake Off, joy, and the affective potential of Nadiya Hussain's amateur celebrity. *Celebrity studies*, *9*(4), 442-454.

Lim, J.S., Choe, M., Zhang, J., & Noh, G.Y. (2020). *The role of wishful identification, emotional engagement, and parasocial relationships in repeated viewing of live-streaming games: A social cognitive theory perspective. Computers in Human Behavior, 106327.* doi:10.1016/j.chb.2020.106327

Lookadoo, K.L., & *Wong, N.C. (2019). "Hey guys, check this out!# ad" The Impact of Media Figure-User Relationships and Ad Explicitness on Celebrity Endorsements. The Journal of Social Media in Society*, *8*(1), 178-210.

Maltby, J., Day, L., McCutcheon, L.E., Houran, J., & Ashe, D. (2006). Extreme celebrity worship, fantasy proneness and dissociation: Developing the measurement and understanding of celebrity worship within a clinical personality context. *Personality and individual differences*, *40*(2), 273-283.

Maltby, J., Giles, D.C., Barber, L., & McCutcheon, L.E. (2005). Intense-personal celebrity worship and body image: Evidence of a link among female adolescents. *British journal of health psychology*, *10*(1), 17-32.

Marshall, P.D. (2014). Persona studies: Mapping the proliferation of the public self. *Journalism*, *15*(2), 153-170.

Marshall, P.D., Moore, C., & Barbour, K. (2015). Persona as method: exploring celebrity and the public self through persona studies. *Celebrity studies*, *6*(3): 288-305.

Marwick, A., & Boyd, D. (2011). To see and be seen: Celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence*, *17*(2), 139-158.

McCutcheon, L.E., Ashe, D.D., Houran, J., & Maltby, J. (2003). A cognitive profile of individuals who tend to worship celebrities. *The Journal of Psychology*, *137*(4), 309-322.

Pardun, C.J. (2005). Media Sex: What Are the Issues?/Sex in Advertising: Perspectives on the Erotic Appeal. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *60*(1), 92-94.

Park, Y., Impett, E.A., MacDonald, G., & Lemay, E.P., Jr. (2019). Saying "thank you": Partners' expressions of gratitude protect relationship satisfaction and commitment from the harmful effects of attachment insecurity. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 117(4), 773–806. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000178

Pera, R., & Viglia, G. (2016). Exploring how video digital storytelling builds relationship experiences. *Psychology & Marketing*, *33*(12), 1142-1150.

Pera, R., Viglia, G., & Furlan, R. (2016). Who am I? How compelling self-storytelling builds digital personal reputation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *35*(1), 44-55.

Piper, D.P., Keeler, J., & Brown, W.J. (1997, April). *Audience involvement with ''Touched by an Angel.''* Paper presented to the 42nd annual convention of the Broadcast Education Association, April 4−7, Las Vegas, NV.

Prot, S., Gentile, D.A., Anderson, C.A., Suzuki, K., Swing, E., Lim, K.M., ... & Liau, A.K. (2014). Long-term relations among prosocial-media use, empathy, and prosocial behavior. *Psychological science*, *25*(2), 358-368.

Reizer, A., & Hetsroni, A. (2014). Media exposure and romantic relationship quality: A slippery slope?. Psychological Reports, 114(1), 231-249.

Rosaen, S.F., & Dibble, J.L. (2008). Investigating the relationships among child's age, parasocial interactions, and the social realism of favorite television characters. Communication Research Reports, 25(1), 145−154. doi:10.1080/08824090802021806

Rubin, A.M., & Perse, E.M. (1987). Audience activity and soap opera involvement a uses and effects investigation. *Human communication research*, *14*(2), 246-268.

Rubin, A.M., Perse, E.M., & Powell, R.A. (1985). Loneliness, parasocial interaction, and local television news viewing. *Human communication research*, *12*(2), 155-180.

Rubin, R.B., & McHugh, M.P. (1987). *Development of parasocial interaction relationships. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 31*(3), 279–292. doi:10.1080/08838158709386664

Schachter, S. (1959). *The psychology of affiliation: Experimental studies of the sources of gregariousness.* Stanford Univer. Press.

Schäfer, K., & Eerola, T. (2020). How listening to music and engagement with other media provide a sense of belonging: An exploratory study of social surrogacy. *Psychology of Music*, *48*(2), 232-251.

Schooler, D., & Ward, L.M. (2006). Average Joes: Men's relationships with media, real bodies, and sexuality. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 7*(1), 27−41. https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.7.1.27

Segrin, C., & Nabi, R.L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage?. *Journal of Communication*, *52*(2), 247-263.

Senft, T. (2013). Microcelebrity and the branded self. In J. Hartley, J. Burgess, & A. Bruns (Eds.), A companion to new media dynamics. (pp. 346−354). Malden, MA: Wiley.

Seo, M., & Hyun, K.D. (2018). The effects of following celebrities' lives via SNSs on life satisfaction: The palliative function of system justification and the moderating role of materialism. New Media & Society, 20(9), 3479-3497.

Shorter, L., Brown, S.L., Quinton, S.J., & Hinton, L. (2008). Relationships between body-shape discrepancies with favored celebrities and disordered eating in young women. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *38*(5), 1364-1377.

Smolak, L. (2004). Body image in children and adolescents: where do we go from here?. *Body image*, *1*(1), 15-28.

Sprecher, S., & Metts, S. (1989). Development of the Romantic Beliefs Scale' and examination of the effects of gender and gender-role orientation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *6*(4), 387-411.

Sprecher, S., & Metts, S. (1999). Romantic beliefs: Their influence on relationships and patterns of change over time. *Journal of Social and Personal relationships*, *16*(6), 834-851.

Sun, T., & Wu, G. (2012). Influence of personality traits on parasocial relationship with sports celebrities: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *11*(2), 136-146.

Tukachinsky, R., & Dorros, S.M. (2018). Parasocial romantic relationships, romantic beliefs, and relationship outcomes in USA adolescents: rehearsing love or setting oneself up to fail?. *Journal of Children and Media*, *12*(3), 329-345.

Vannier, S.A., & O'sullivan, L.F. (2017). Passion, connection, and destiny: How romantic expectations help predict satisfaction and commitment in young adults' dating relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *34*(2), 235-257.

Weinstein, E., & Rosen, E. (1991). The development of adolescent sexual intimacy: Implications for counseling. *Adolescence*, *26*(102), 331-339.

Williams, D., Kennedy, T.L., & Moore, R. J. (2011). Behind the avatar: The patterns, practices, and functions of role playing in MMOs. *Games and Culture*, *6*(2), 171-200.

Xu, M., Reijnders, S., & Kim, S. (2019). *"Mingren are the respectable ones": an analysis of everyday engagements with contemporary celebrity culture in China. Celebrity Studies,* 1(1)*, 1–* doi:10.1080/19392397.2019.1611461