



Celebrity Worship, Compulsive Buying Behaviour and Self-concept Clarity: A study on Emerging Adults

Dr.Megha Arya¹, Bhanvi Khichi², Kunika Bishnoi³, Nikita⁴, Swati Badaya⁵, Vrinda Sharma⁶

Abstract

The main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between celebrity worship, compulsive buying behaviour and self-concept clarity in emerging adults. The participants of the study were emerging adults composed of three twenty-five (n=325) participants, one eighty-two (n=182) girls and one forty-three (n=143) boys. Data was collected using Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) by McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002), Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) by Valence, Astous and Fortier (1988), and Self Concept Clarity Scale (SCC) by Campbell (1996). Research design involved Casual research. Results showed that celebrity worship was positively and significantly correlated with compulsive buying behaviour ($r=.541$, $p<0.01$). However, Celebrity worship was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with self-concept clarity ($r=-.461$, $p<0.01$). Also, compulsive Buying (CB) was significantly predicted by Celebrity Worship (CW) ($\beta = .541$, $p<0.01$) and Self-concept Clarity (SCC) significantly predicted Celebrity Worship (CW) ($\beta = -.461$, $p<0.01$). Higher levels of celebrity worship led to more compulsive buying intent and the lower levels of self-concept clarity would make emerging adults to immerse themselves in more celebrity worshipping.

Keywords: *Emerging Adults, Celebrity Worship, Compulsive Buying Behaviour, Self-Concept Clarity*

¹Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, IIS (Deemed to be University) Jaipur, India.
Email: megha.arya@iisuniv.ac.in

² Research student, Department of psychology, IIS (deemed to be university) Rajasthan, India.
Email: bhanvikhichi@gmail.com

³Research student, Department of Psychology, IIS (Deemed to be University) Rajasthan, India. Email: kunbishnoi27@gmail.com

⁴Research student, Department of Psychology, IIS (Deemed to be University) Rajasthan, India.
Email: nikitasoni31996@iisuniv.ac.in

⁵Research student, Department of psychology, IIS (deemed to be university) Rajasthan, India.
Email: swatibadaya27137@iisuniv.ac.in

⁶Research student, Department of Psychology, IIS (Deemed to be University) Rajasthan, India.

Introduction

Celebrity worship syndrome is defined as an obsessive-addictive disorder in which an individual becomes excessively focused on the details of a celebrity, typically a TV, movie, or pop star. The term “celebrity worship” was first coined by researchers McCutcheon and Maltby (2003).

In the 2003 review, the group driven by McCutcheon and Maltby recognised three sorts of perspectives regarding celebrities, and three psychological wellness profiles related to these mentalities.

Entertainment-Social: People who found it enjoyable to follow their favourite celebrities and speak about them with friends were at the lowest degree of celebrity worship, which the researchers dubbed Entertainment-Social.

Intense-Personal: It is typified by intense and obsessive sentiments towards celebrities, such as believing that a certain pop singer was their soulmate.

Borderline-Pathological: Individuals who matched the highest degree of celebrity worship. They have intense ideas and dreams about celebrities, such as being prepared to pay thousands of dollars for a modest personal item used by their hero.

Self-clarity is described as the coherence of an individual's identity, how confident one is in one's traits, and how consistent and stable these attributes are (Stinson, Wood, & Doxey, 2008). It denotes the degree to which views about oneself are clearly and firmly defined, internally consistent, and stable across time (Campbell et al. 1996).

Compulsive conduct is defined as the repetition of an action despite unfavourable consequences. Obsessions drive compulsions (for example, obsessive thoughts of contamination). Compulsive purchase is characterised by an excessive preoccupation on

shopping or poor impulse control, as well as negative consequences such as marital conflict and financial difficulties.

Materials & Methods

The participants of the study were emerging adults composed of three hundred and twenty-five (n=325) participants, one hundred and eighty-two (n=182) girls and one hundred and forty-three (n=143) boys in the age range of 18-25. Data was collected using Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS). The scale was developed by McCutcheon, Lange, and Houran in 2002 with 23 items. Items of the scale measure three key domains of celebrity-worship: Intense-Personal (IP), Entertainment-Social (ES), and Borderline-Pathological (BP). There are 13 items on the compulsive buying scale given by Valence, Astous, and Fortier in 1988. It is a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The scale appropriately taps the consumer's propensity to engage in compulsive buying behaviours. Self-concept clarity scale was developed by Campbell in 1996. The scale consists of 12 items which measure the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable. It is a 5 point Likert-scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. Sampling technique was purposive. Research design involved Casual research design.

Results

Correlational analysis between variables under study, i.e., Celebrity Worship (CW), Compulsive Buying (CB) and Self-Concept Clarity (SCC)

Table 1

Variables	1	2	3
1 CW	1	.541**	-.461**
2 CB		1	-.460
3 SCC			1

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level**

Above table shows Pearson's Correlation among the variables under the study. Celebrity worship shows a highly significant and positive correlation with Compulsive buying ($r=.541$, $p<0.01$). However, there is a highly significant and negative correlation between self-concept clarity and celebrity worship ($r=-.461$, $p<0.01$).

Table 2

Coefficient Table showing prediction of Compulsive Buying from Celebrity Worship

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	17.215	1.766		17.215	.000
CW	.313	.027	.541	.027	.000

Dependent Variable: CB

Predictor Variable: CW

Note: Fit for model $R^2=.293$; Adjusted $R^2=.290$; $F(1,323) = 133.577$, $p<0.000$

As evident from the above table Compulsive Buying (CB) was significantly predicted by Celebrity Worship (CW) ($\beta = .541$, $p<0.01$)

Table 3

Coefficient Table showing prediction of Celebrity Worship from Self Concept Clarity

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	94.543	3.541		26.697	.000
CW	-.914	.098	-.461	-9.324	.000

Dependent Variable: CW

Predictor Variable: SCC

Note : Fit for model $R^2=.212$; Adjusted $R^2=.210$; $F(1,323)=86.94$, $p<0.000$

As evident from Table 4.8, Celebrity Worship (CW) was significantly predicted by Self-concept Clarity (SCC) ($\beta = -.461, p < 0.01$)

Discussion

Discussion

In the present study sample size of 325 emerging adults was taken because emerging adults may form parasocial relationships with celebrities as a way to fulfil unmet social needs, such as companionship, belongingness, and intimacy (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956).

They may engage in celebrity worship as a way to engage in upward social comparison, where they compare themselves to celebrities who are perceived to be more successful, parasocial, attractive, or popular. This comparison can lead to aspirations for similar success or a desire to achieve a comparable lifestyle (Festinger, 1954).

Emerging adults who are in the process of forming their identities may look to celebrities as role models, trying to adopt their values, attitudes, and behaviors. The admiration and identification with celebrities can contribute to the construction of a desired self-image and boost self-esteem (Maltby, 2003).

It appears that people are most likely to worship celebrities at the age when they first begin looking for identification figures other than their parents, and so imagined intimacy with a favoured celebrity may be linked to processes of identity formation and autonomy development (Gleason, 2017). The decrease in CW with age may be due to the aspects of CW associated with identity development becoming less important after adolescence (Swami, 2011).

Research proved that Celebrity worship and compulsive buying shared a significant and positive correlation and celebrity worship significantly predicted compulsive buying.

Septianasari (2021) in work on adolescents used correlation analysis which showed a significant and positive relationship between celebrity worship and compulsive buying ($r = 0.270; p < 0.01$). The findings meant that the higher the score of the celebrity worship, the higher the compulsive buying, conversely the lower the celebrity worship, the lower the compulsive buying. Suggesting that adolescents with compulsive buying tend to shop without planning.

The study “Borderline Pathological Celebrity Worship and Impulsive Buying Intent: Mediating and Moderating Roles of Empathy and Gender” by Chen (2022) indicated that borderline pathological celebrity worship had a significant predictive effect on impulsive buying intent (β

= 0.51, $t = 5.77$, $p < 0.001$). Study also stated that the conditional direct effect of borderline pathological celebrity worship on impulsive buying intent among both female ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.22, 0.36]) and male participants ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.32, 0.48]) were both significant. This impulsive buying intent could affect daily consumer behaviour extensively, rather than leading them to focus on some specific merchandise connected to specific celebrities. Endorsements from celebrities with better reputations could positively affect a product, brand, or firm, and vice versa.

In a study titled “The effect of celebrity worship on compulsive buying purchase behaviours on fans” by Anastasia (2020) revealed that celebrity worship had a significant influence on compulsive buying behaviour.

A study titled “Worshipping Celebrities Might Make You More Prone to Impulse Buying” by Chapman (2022) revealed that individuals aged between 16 and 30 have higher levels of celebrity obsession and generally had higher levels of empathy and, consequently, greater impulsive buying intention. The research concludes this newfound link between celebrity worship and impulse purchasing “could affect daily consumer behaviour extensively.”

Reeves et al., 2012 in their study “Celebrity worship, materialism, compulsive buying, and the empty self” found that Celebrity worship was positively related to compulsive buying, with the relationship between borderline-pathological celebrity worship and compulsive buying particularly strong.

In a study “The impact of social media celebrities' posts and contextual interactions on impulse buying in social commerce” by Zafar (2021) revealed that the influence of their favourite celebrities' posts, increases the urge to impulsive buying the product in Pakistani. so, the results indicate that favourite celebrities' post authenticity has a positive direct effect on consumers' urge to buy impulsively.

Celebrities are influential figures and marketing often utilizes them to add value to products. An endorsement from a celebrity that consumers deem attractive or trustworthy can go a long way in making sales.

Research also proved that self-concept clarity and celebrity worship shared a significant and negative correlation, and self-concept clarity significantly predicted celebrity worship.

It could be comprehended that people who have less self-clarity may struggle with understanding their values, beliefs, and interests. They may seek external influences, such as celebrities, as a way to construct their own identity. By identifying with and idolizing celebrities, they may attempt to fill the void of self-uncertainty and gain a sense of belonging or purpose. Celebrity worship can provide an escape from the challenges and complexities of one's own life. Individuals with less self-clarity may find solace in living vicariously through celebrities' seemingly glamorous and exciting lives. By focusing on celebrities, they can temporarily avoid confronting their uncertainties and insecurities.

A study titled “Attributional style, self-concept clarity, and celebrity worship” by North (2007) revealed a negative relationship between borderline-pathological celebrity worship and self-concept clarity, indicating that as celebrity worship increases, self-concept clarity decreases. This suggests a complex relationship between celebrity worship, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem, and such a relationship may have important implications for mental health identified as a characteristic of individuals with borderline pathological celebrity worship.

A study titled “Finding the self through others: exploring worshipping of celebrity, identification, and self-concept clarity among U.S. adolescents” by Dajches (2021) revealed that adolescents individuate from their parents and may instead use media models for social guidance. Results showed that the adolescents' worshipping intensity was negatively associated with their self-concept clarity.

Reeves et al. (2012b) also found that Celebrity worship was associated with lower self-concept clarity.

Stepanyan (2019) in his thesis explains those with high self-clarity have an overall positive attitude. Whether they succeed or fail in life, those with low self-clarity are more vulnerable and require validation; they are more occupied with increasing their self-worth. People who score high on the celebrity worship scale are seen as having lower self-clarity; this relationship may be due to a need to view celebrity images to increase self-worth through external comparison or validation.

In a study titled, “FANatics: Systematic literature review of factors associated with celebrity worship, and suggested directions for future research”, by Brooks (2021) expected higher levels of Celebrity worship to be associated with lower self-esteem, due to the theory that Celebrity worship is linked to a deficit in self-concept or identity and acts as a compensation for an ‘empty self’. Much evidence is suggested in this study to support the idea that people lacking in internal resources (such as self-concept) may use Celebrity worship as a way of seeking external stimulation and gratification in an attempt to compensate for these deficits.

Cui and Fang (2022) in their research “Mediating effects of self-concept clarity and self-objectification on the relationship between celebrity worship and the process of considering cosmetic surgery among Chinese undergraduates” on undergraduates showed that celebrity worship, cosmetic surgery consideration, and self-objectification were positively correlated, whereas self-concept clarity was negatively correlated with all three variables.

References

Anastasia, S., Farhana, N., & Rabbin, I. (2020). The effect of celebrity worship on compulsive purchase behaviors on fans JKT 48 in Jabodetabek. *European Journal of Psychological Research*, Vol, 7(2).

Brooks, S. K. (2021). FANatics: Systematic literature review of factors associated with celebrity worship, and suggested directions for future research. *Current Psychology*, 40(2), 864-886.

Campbell, J. D., Trapnell, P. D., Heine, S. J., Katz, I. M., Lavallee, L. F., & Lehman, D. R. (1996). Self-concept clarity: Measurement, personality correlates, and cultural boundaries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 141–156.

Chapman, M. (2022). Worshipping Celebrities Might Make You More Prone To Impulse Buying. IFLScience. <https://www.iflscience.com/-64250>

Chen, O., Zhao, X., Ding, D., Zhang, Y., Zhou, H., & Liu, R. (2022). Borderline pathological celebrity worship and impulsive buying intent: Mediating and moderating roles of empathy and gender. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13.

Cui, J., & Fang, Y. (2022). Mediating effects of self-concept clarity and self-objectification on the relationship between celebrity worship and the process of considering cosmetic surgery among Chinese undergraduates. *BMC psychology*, 10(1), 259.

Dajches, L. (2021). Finding the self through others: exploring fandom, identification, and self-concept clarity among US adolescents. *Journal of Children and Media*, 16(1), 107-116.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.

Gleason, T. R., Theran, S. A., & Newberg, E. M. (2017). Parasocial Interactions and Relationships in Early Adolescence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00255>

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

Maltby, John & Houran, James & McCutcheon, Lynn. (2003). A Clinical interpretation of attitudes and behaviors associated with celebrity worship. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*. 191. 25-9. 10.1097/01.NMD.0000044442.62137.59.

McCutcheon, LE, Lange, R & Houran, J (2002), 'Conceptualization and Measurement of Celebrity Worship', *British Journal of Psychology*, 93 (1), 67-87.

North, A. C., Sheridan, L., Maltby, J., & Gillett, R. (2007). Attributional style, self-esteem, and celebrity worship. *Media Psychology*, 9(2), 291-308.

Reeves, R. A., Baker, G. A., & Truluck, C. S. (2012b). Celebrity worship, materialism, compulsive buying, and the empty self. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 674-679.

Septianasari, D. (2021). Hubungan celebrity worship dengan perilaku compulsive buying remaja wanita pengguna instagram (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang).

Stepanyan, A. (2019). New media literacy: celebrity worship, Instagram, and self-esteem (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Sacramento).

Stinson, D. A., Wood, J. V., & Doxey, J. R. (2008). In search of clarity: Self-esteem and

domains of confidence and confusion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(11), 1541–1555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208323102>.

Swami, V., Chamorro-Premuzic, T., Mastor, K. A., Siran, F. H., Said, M., Jaafar, J. L. S. B., Sinniah, D., & Pillai, S. (2011). Celebrity Worship Among University Students in Malaysia. *European Psychologist*, 16(4), 334–342. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000029>.

Valence, Gilles, Alain d'Astous, and Louis Fortier (1988), "Compulsive Buying: Concept and Measurement," *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 11, 419-433.

Zafar, A. U., Qiu, J., Li, Y., Wang, J., & Shahzad, M. (2021). The impact of social media celebrities' posts and contextual interactions on impulse buying in social commerce. *Computers in human behavior*, 115, 106178.