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Do Worshipping Celebrities Correlates With Body Image Problem? Correlation Study Among Adolescent Girls

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine relationship between celebrity worship and body image on adolescent girls. This study was done using quantitative method with 288 samples of adolescent girls who idolize female celebrity. Hypothesis was analyzed using pearson-product moment correlation. The results showed that all three dimensions of celebrity worship positively correlated with body image. However, mild pathological dimension of celebrity worship had the strongest relationship with body image with coefficient r = 0,234 and significancy of 0,000 (p<0,01).

Keyword : Celebrity worship, body image, adolescent girls, female celebrity

Background

Adolescents experience a growth spurt, where their height and weight is rapidly increase. This transformation may cause some adolescents to give more attention to their physical appearance. Males tend to emphasize muscle-related body parts, while females tend to emphasize weight-related body parts (Fisher, Dunn, & Thompson, 2002). Body dissatisfaction experienced by adolescent females is not only limited to their weight and body shape, but also to their face characteristics, skin appearances, fitness, and strength (Wertheim & Paxton, 2011). Swami, Begum, and Petrides (2010) stated that negative body image is normatively experienced by adolescent girls and adult women.

Media exposure, such as magazines and music video, have roles to females' body image problem, in which they can increase females' body dissatisfaction (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). In *Huffington Post*, Gross (2005) stated that celebrities had created unrealistic body image cycle which cause adolescents to expect to have body and physical appearance like them.

Modeling from social learning theory can be used to explain media figures and negative body image. An effective modeling process can be encouraged with a high status model (Miltenberger, 2012) and model's interpersonal attraction (Bandura, 1977), and celebrities are usually perceived as having a high status as well as having interpersonal attraction. Attraction towards individuals with thin body positively related to body dissatisfaction (Harrison, 1997). If adolescents idolize celebrities with thin body and perceived having an ideal body, they will try to mimic these celebrities. Body image problem then rise when adolescents' body is different compared to celebrities' perceived ideal body (Greenwood, 2009).

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Admiring as well as having mild attachment to media figures is normal in adolescents (Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). The reason is because adolescents are still dependent to other people and they are not yet able to give inspiration to themselves, therefore they need other figures to inspire them (Yue & Cheung, 2000).

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to promoting messages of thin-body ideals because they are at a time where they are looking for information from outside to form self-identity (Botta, 1999). At the same time, they are also experiencing body transformation rapidly. Adolescent females experience, among others, cumulation of fat, twice as much as adolescent males, growth of body hair, and appearance of acne and comedone as a result from more active sebaceous gland. Adolescents' body condition that are different in comparison to those being displayed in media can cause body image problem.

Individuals who are dissatisfied with their body tend to try to mimic persons that they perceived of having ideal body and appearance. Celebrities can be one of those persons. According to Maltby, Houran, and McCutcheon (2003) celebrity worship is a parasocial interaction where persons with assumed intact identities become virtually obsessed with one or more celebrities.

Celebrity worship is a part of parasocial relationship. According to Giles (2002), parasocial relationship is a one-way relationship in which users of mass media respond to human representation that is appeared in media (such as a presenter) as though in a typical social relationship. But, what separates celebrity worship from parasocial relationship is that celebrity worship only discuss about individuals parasocial relationship with celebrities, such as singers, actors, and actress, while parasocial relationship includes, but not limited to celebrities. People can have parasocial relationship with presenter, certain figures that is considered merit in an area or even a fictional characteristics from movies and cartoon. Moreover, celebrity worship has been conceptualized as an abnormal type from parasocial relationship that is driven by absorption and addictive element (Sansone & Sansone, 2014).

Celebrity worship consists of three dimensions, they are entertainment-social, intense-personal feeling, dan mild pathological (McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002). Entertainment-social is a low level of worship, involve individualistic behavior such as watching, reading, and learning about, keeping up with or listening to celebrities. Intense-personal feeling is a slightly higher level of worship, characterized with social activities such as watching, hearing, and talking about the celebrity in the company of other fans. Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe, and McCutcheon (2002) in the following research then explain that this dimension reflects compulsive and intense from individuals to celebrities. The highest level of celebrity worship is mild-pathological or borderline-pathological. This dimensions reflects individuals' pathological attitude and behavior as a result from idolizing celebrities.

McCutcheon, et al. (2002) stated that from psychometric perspective, celebrity worship ia a unidimensional construct but its items show a qualitative differences across celebrity worship dimensions. At the lower level, celebrity worship is characterized as solitary behaviors that reflects a sensation seeking and entertainment. Then these behaviors take on social component at higher levels. At the highest levels, celebrity worship

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reverts back to private sphere with obvious obsesssive-compulsive features.

In the past, researchers have found some antecedents to celebrity worship. McCutcheon, et al. (2002) found that age (respondents' age was range from 10 to 68 years old), gender and celebrity types (e.g. sports celebrity and music celebrity). Celebrity worship was found higher in younger people and females. In addition, people also tend to worhsip sport and music celebrity in comparison to acting celebrity and other types of celebrity. Giles & Maltby (2004) found that adolescent with higher attachment to their friends as well as lower attachment with parents and higher emotional autonomy to their parents shows higher level of celebrity worship. They also found that older teenagers tend to have higher level of celebrity worship compared to the younger ones. Along with research from McCutcheon, et al. (2002) regarding age as an antecedent of celebrity worship, a conclusion can be drawn. As adolescent grow older, they will more likely to gain higher level of celebrity worship, but when adolescent phase is nearly coming to the end and individuals start entering early adulthood, their level of celebrity worship will decline.

Maltby, et al. (2003) found correlations between celebrity worship with Eysenck's three personality factors. Entertainment-social correlates with extraversion, intense-personal feeling correlates with neuroticism, and lastly mild pathological correlates with psychoticism. Then a research from Maltby, et al. (2004) found that only intense-personal feeling of celebrity worship dimension correlated positively with poorer general mental health (depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, and social dimension) and negative affect (stress, low positive affect and life satisfaction). Neuroticism correlated positively with body dissatisfaction and body surveillance (Tylka, 2004). Hence, individuals with intense-personal feeling of celebrity worshipis more likely to have problems with body image, such as anxiety and dissatisfaction towards their body.

Previous researches have shown positive correlation between celebrity worship and plastic surgery. Maltby and Day (2011) found an evidence of positive relationship between one of celebrity worship's dimension – intense-personal feeling – with plastic surgery among participants in early adulthood. Swami, Taylor, and Carvalho (2009) found that female undergraduate students with entertainment-social and intense-personal feeling with a celebrity are more likely to have positive attitude towards cosmetic surgery. However, entertainment-social was found to be a weaker predictor of positive attitudes about cosmetic surgery in comparison with intense-personal feelings. Crerand, Infield, and Sarwer (2007) found that body dissatisfaction can motivate someone to have a plastic surgery.

Research from Maltby, Giles, Barber, and McCutcheon (2005) found that there is a positive relationship between both intense-personal feeling and mild pathological of celebrity worship with atention and preoccupation towards body shape on female adolescent students. Swami, Taylor, and Carvalho (2011) found that body dissatisfaction correlates positively with entertainment social and intense-personal feelings. While Maltby and Day (2011) found that only intense-personal feelings that correlates positively with preoccupation to body shape. On the other hand, Jung and Hwang (2016) found evidence that relationship between celebrity worship and body dissatisfaction only occured to participants from United States of America, and not on participants from South Korea.

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This finding suggests that celebrities have bigger influence toward body dissatisfaction for people from USA compared to South Korean.

With all of the evidence above, this study aimed to investigate relationship between celebrity worship and body image on adolescent girls.

H1. There is a relationship between celebrity worship and body image among adolescent girls.

Method

Sample

Sampling in this study used purposive sampling method. A research questionnaire was distributed to several fan club of female celebrities, and from there, 288 data was gathered. Participants' demographic variables include adolescent girls, age ranging from 15-22 years old and must at least idolize one female celebrities. From 288 participants, 168 participants had age range from 15-18 years old, while 120 participants were from age range of 19-22 years old.

Measures

Body image was measured using a 58-item scale which was developed based on body image component from Thompson (in Kashubeck-West & Saunders, 2001) and Menzel, Krawczyk, and Thompson (2011). According to Thompson (in Kashubeck-West & Saunders, 2001) and Menzel, et al. (2011), body image component consist of perception component, behavior component, global subjective satisfaction, affective distress regarding appearance, and cognitive aspects of body image. Perceptual component of body image is how accurate an individual estimate their body size. Example for this items are *"I think I am far too fat"* and *"I think I have an ideal body, neither too fat nor too thin"*. Behavioral component of body image refers to behavior where individuals repetitively checking their body and avoid situation and subjects where they might feel uncomfortable about their body. Example for this items includes *"I pinch my stomach to estimate fat in that area"* and *"I try to not taking pictures with my friends because I look the least attractive among them"*. Global subjective satisfaction refers to indivuals' overall evaluation in terms of satisfaction. Some items for this dimension are *"My nose has a weird shape and I want to change it"* and *"I hope I can attain body weight that I have always wanted"*. Affective distress regarding appearance which is related to indivduals' emotion regarding their body. Some items are *"Thanks to my body, my choice for clothes are limited"* and *"I am anxious that people will start to talk about my pimple"*. Cognitive aspects of body image refers to cognitive process from individual regarding to their body, such as appearances' schemas, distorted beliefs about their body, and cognitive investment in appearance. Some items for this dimension are *"People who are attractive appearance wise can easily get what they want"* and *"Body size of those models from various magazines are considered ideal for many people around me"*. After dropping 11 items that is considered not good according to internal consistency test, this scale is found to be reliable with 0,942 in Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

Celebrity worship was measured using 23-item Celebrity Attitude Scale developed by Maltby, et al. (2002) in five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Celebrity Attitude Scale was translated first to Bahasa Indonesia prior distribution. Internal consistency showed 0,913 in Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

Results and Discussion

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This study aimed to empirically investigate relationship between celebrity worship and body image on adolescent girls. Result of correlational analyses using pearson product moment technique suggests that the hypotheses is accepted. Celebrity worship in adolescent girls significantly have positive correlation to their body image problem (r=0.158, p<0.01). Cronbach's alpha coefficient is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age						
2. BMI	.087					
3. Entertainment social	-.030	-.020				
4. Intense-personal	.010	-.071	.731**			
5. Mild pathological	.065	-.011	.671**	.661**		
6. Celebrity Worship (Total)	.005	-.044	.918**	.924**	.807**	
7. Body Image	.066	.485**	.125*	.119*	.234**	.158**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Celebrity worship consists of three dimension and all of those dimensions correlated significantly to body image problem.

Entertainment social correlates positively to body image (r=0.125, p<0.05). Previous research from (Swami, et al, 2011) has also shown similar result. Intense – personal also shares significant correlations to body image (r=0.119, p<0.05). Previous study from Maltby, et al (2005). Other study from Maltby and Day (2011) also found that positive correlation of intense-personal celebrity worship with body image problem in female college student with age ranging from 18-23 years old.

The most severe form of celebrity worship, mild pathological, also have positive correlation to body image with good statistical significancy (r=0.234, p<0.01). Mild pathological has the strongest correlation to body image compared to the other two dimensions because, according to Chia and Poo (2009), mild pathological – other than having its own characteristics – it also has the characteristics of the other two dimensions. Previously, McCutcheon, et al (2002) also has stated that each dimension of celebrity worship has different quality and that mild pathological is the highest level of celebrity worship. Previous study also suggested similar result (Maltby,et al, 2005) with school age adolescent girls as participants. A study from Andani and Ali (2014) also shown the role of mild pathological of celebrity worship toward body image in adolescents with age ranging from 18-20 years old.

There is also a positive and significant relationship between BMI and body image. This result also following results from previous study, which suggest that BMI is correlated with body image problem (Carlson, 2004; Fitzgibbon, Blackman, & Avellone, 2000; Kostanski & Gullone, 1998; Stice & Whitenton, 2002).

Age has no significant correlation to celebrity worship (r=0.005, p>0.05). This finding can be explained with the conclusion from previous study, that as adolescent grow older, they will more likely to gain higher level of celebrity worship, but when adolescent phase is nearly coming to the end

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and individuals start entering early adulthood, their level of celebrity worship will decline (Giles & Maltby, 2004; McCutcheon, et al, 2002). This could also be observed from the result of the difference between adolesents from age range of 15-18 years old and 19-22 years old in terms of their celebrity worship scores, as presented in table 2. Adolescents with age ranging from 15-18 have slightly higher celebrity worship compared to those from 19-22 years old group.

Table 2
Age group comparison to celebrity worship

Age Group	Mean (Celebrity Worship
15-18 years old	71,58
19-22 years old	71,01

Participants who are currently dating shows the lowest score of body image problem, while those who are never dating before shows the highest (presented in table 3). Acording to Weller and Dziegielewski (2004), social support from significant other could reduce body image problem among female.

Table 3
Dating status comparison to body image level

Dating Status	Mean (Body Image)
Never dating	143,79
Currently not dating (but do previously)	140,91
Currently dating	135,89

Conclusion

This study found that there is a relationship between celebrity worship and body image among adolescent girls. This means, that hypotheses is accepted. All dimensions of celebrity worhsip is correlated positively and significantly to body image. BMI also is found to have positive correlation to body image problem.

Suggestion

This study could be an addition to the literature regarding to body image problem as well as celebrity worship. For adolescents, it might be beneficial to understand that idolizing someone, as this is very commonly occured at their age, could bring a body image problem. Social support from people around them, especially from those who is closely attached to adolescents, might help to deter and reduce the body image problem, as around this age they are more prone to such problem.

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