

The Relationship between Celebrity Worship and Parasocial Interaction on Emerging Adult

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Abstract: The ease of interacting with idols all the time allows fans to develop idol worshiping behavior. When fans have developed idol worship behavior, they tend to develop a parasocial interaction with their idols. This study aimed to determine the relationship between celebrity worship and parasocial interaction on emerging adults. This study employed the quantitative method with incidental sampling technique. A total of 401 emerging adults aged 18-25 years, having an idol and students at universities in Banda Aceh involved in this study. The celebrity attitude scale ($\alpha = 0.918$) and the celebrity appeal questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.828$) were modified for data collection tools. Product-moment correlation was used for data analysis. The results of this study indicate that there was a relationship between idol worship and parasocial interaction in emerging adults ($r = 0.347$) with the significance value of ($p = 0,000$), meaning that the higher the level of idol worship developed by individuals, the higher the possibility of individual to develop interaction parasocial with his idol.

1 INTRODUCTION

Technological development so to speak has enabled humans to access various information through electronic and print media. The media provides numerous information; one of which is information from the entertainment world. Celebrity, on the other hand, is an essential element of entertainment hired as a model to attract public interest alike. Celebrity popularity has triggered the fans to take celebrities as role models or behavioral references. This very act is a form of idol worship (Sunarni, 2016). The media play a significant role in promoting behaviors of idol worship to the fans. The presence of social networks further helps facilitate interaction between fans and their idols. The ease of accessing the media allows fans to intensely develop the behaviors of idol worshiping in their lives because fans can access various information and interact with their idols at any time (Ninggali, 2011).

The behavior of individuals who admire idols, according to Raviv, Bar-Tal, and Ben-Horin (1996), is called worship, a form of admiration with unusual intensity toward certain persons. Worship can be demonstrated through behaviors such as searching for information and gathering various items related to the idols. The fans may also imitate the way they dress

and talk and even follow their daily activities and social behaviors. According to Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Houran, and Ashe (2006) idol worship is fans' behavior that follows their idol styles or at some point even considers themselves similar to their idols, which if it continues to prevail may lead to more extreme behavior and endanger themselves and others.

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of idol worship can be found in the behavior of JKT48 fans so-called "wota." Most of these wota are not only active in seeking information about JKT48 members through social media but also negate other fans who post negative comments toward their idols on social media. In the most extreme form, some wota even threaten JKT48 members because they take pictures with other people who are not JKT48 members (Widjaja & Ali, 2015). The viewers of Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2 also exhibit similar worshipping behavior. Fahri played by Fedi Nuril attract the attention of the audience. He is portrayed as someone who willingly helps anyone without exception. The image of Fahri as a good and perfect man inspire the viewers to take him as their idols (Shintia, 2017).

A simple survey conducted by the authors contributes to the data about idol worshiping behavior in Banda Aceh. The responses from 30 subjects show that 70% of the respondents developed idol worship

behavior. One of Zayn Malik's fans said that she likes Zayn Malik because of his appearance and talents. The fan also feels that she and Zayn Malik is like a close friend because she regularly searched for information about him. The subject also reported that the idol held the criteria of an ideal husband and believed that he is exceptionally perfect.

A study conducted by Sukmana and Mardianawati (2015) about parasocial interaction to female fans of EXO Bandung in their early adulthood found that 106 respondents have developed idol worshiping behavior. Such behavior should have been eroded when people get older. Emerging adult fans who worship idols and do not have a partner tend to look for partners who are similar to their idols. Fans who do not have a partner will eventually create imagination or fantasize themselves as if they have special relationships with their idols. The feelings, which fans feel that they have special relationships with the idol, are defined as parasocial interaction (Sukmana & Mardianawati, 2015). According to Stever (2009), parasocial interaction occurs when individuals develop a one-way relationship with someone or a figure, usually with a higher status, in which they believe that they know the figure well but not otherwise. Individuals also often feel that the distance between themselves and their idols is something good so they do not need to experience or feel a failure in a romantic relationship.

Observing the adverse effect of idol worshiping has on the developmental task of the emerging adults especially in developing social interaction with others and it may become a concern that individuals will develop extreme parasocial interaction behaviors and will affect individual functions in their social environment, therefore the author expects that this study may facilitate this group of adults to be aware of the importance of communication and social relations in real life. Thus, emerging adult can function properly according to their developmental tasks. The study hypothesizes that there is a relationship between idol worship and parasocial interaction on emerging adults.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Idol Worship

According to Maltby et al. (2006) idol worship is an identity structure contained in individuals that facilitates psychological absorption with celebrities in an effort to build an identity and a sense of fulfillment in individuals. Like the behavior of a fan

who follows the various styles of his idol or considers himself to be similar to his idol. Furthermore, this form of psychological absorption will then encourage fans to carry out more extreme and possibly delusional behavior.

According to Maltby et al. (2006) idol worship is divided into three dimensions which can be described as dimensions namely:

- a. *Entertainment-social*
It is a dimension that is described by fans interest in their talents, attitudes, behaviors, and things they have done. This dimension describes the pleasure of fans in discussing or discussing their idols with friends.
- b. *Intense-personal*
Intense-personal is a dimension that describes feelings that are intensive and compulsive towards idols. This dimension shows behavior like fans who keep thinking about their idols even when they don't want to.
- c. *Borderline-pathological*
Borderline-pathological is the highest or extreme dimension of idol worship. This is illustrated in an attitude such as the willingness to do anything for the sake of the celebrity even though it violates the law.
There are three factors that influence idol worship (McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002), namely:
 - a. Age. Idol worship reaches its peak in adolescence, and will decline slowly with age.
 - b. Social skills. Individuals with poor social skills consider idol worship as compensation for not occurring real social relations.
 - c. Gender. Men are more likely to idolize female celebrities, while women tend to choose male celebrities as their idols.

2.2 Parasocial Interaction

Stever (2009) defines that parasocial interaction is a one-way relationship with a person or figure who usually has a higher status, where individuals know the figure well but not vice versa. Stever (2013) explains that there are three highest categories that motivate fans to develop parasocial interactions, namely:

- a. Task attraction, is the interest based on the talents and abilities possessed by the idol.
- b. Identification attraction, is an interest in being like an idol. It can also be the thought that the idol is like him.
- c. Romantic attraction, is an interest of fans to want to have more relationships with idols. This refers to the desire to establish relationships with idols.

There are several other factors that can influence the formation of parasocial behavior according to Hoffner (2002), namely motivational factors, similarity, identification, and communication between fans.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This study used the quantitative method with the correlational approach. The correlation was examined by looking at the relationship between idol worship variable and parasocial interaction variable. Correlation study is a study conducted to determine the relationship and dimensions of the relationship between two or more variables without any attempt to influence these variables or variable manipulation (Sugiyono, 2013). The population in this study were all emerging adults in Banda Aceh aged 18-25 years and had an idol. Incidental sampling technique was used to draw the samples.

The author used The Celebrity Attitude Scale developed by Maltby et al. (2006) to measure idol worship behavior. The scale consists of 26 favorable main items which were designed based on the three dimensions of idol worship, Entertainment-social, Intense-personal, and Borderline-pathological. Eight filler items were inserted to obscure the purpose of the questionnaire. The Celebrity Attitude Scale has been proven valid because it has been used in several studies. One of them was in a previous study conducted by Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe, and McCutcheon (2002). In previous studies, the validity of The Celebrity Attitude Scale was tested using content validity test by looking at the estimates of several single item measurements.

The Celebrity Appeal Questionnaires developed by Stever (1991) were modified to measure parasocial interactions. The researcher modified this measurement to adjust to the conditions and objectives of the current study because The Celebrity Appeal Questionnaire developed by Stever only aimed to measure parasocial interactions toward Michael Jackson fans. The Celebrity Appeal Questionnaire consists of 26 favorable and unfavorable items which were developed based on the three categories of parasocial interactions, task attraction, identification attraction, and romantic attraction. The Celebrity Appeal Questionnaire measuring instrument is proven to be valid because it has been used in several studies, such as in previous research conducted by Stever (1991) who tested the validity of the Celebrity Appeal Questionnaire

measurement tool using the construct validity test using the factor analysis method. Factor analysis is done by analyzing 4 factors on the scale, namely, sex appeal factor, hero / role model factor, entertainer factor, and mystique factor, but only 3 factors represent the construct except mystique factor. In addition to the validity test that has been carried out in previous studies, in this study the researchers conducted a validity test on a measuring instrument using a content validity test, this validity was estimated through testing the feasibility or relevance of the test content through rational analysis by a competent panel or through expert judgment (Azwar, 2013).

4 RESULTS

Normality and linearity tests were carried out to check if the test prerequisite was met before testing the hypothesis. The values of the normality test are normally distributed at $K-SZ=1.142$ ($p>0.05$) for idol worship and $K-SZ=1.162$ ($p>0.05$) for parasocial interaction. Linearity test indicated *test for linearity* = 0,000 ($p<0,05$), meaning that there was a linear relationship between idol worship and parasocial interaction.

Since the data were normally and linearly distributed, Pearson correlation test was used to test the hypothesis. The correlation test between idol worship and parasocial interaction shows that there was a strong and significant correlation value at $(r) = 0,347$ and $p = 0,000$ ($p<0.05$) respectively. It means that there was a significant correlation between idol worship and parasocial interaction in emerging adults. This correlation suggests that the higher the idol worship, the higher the parasocial interaction in the emerging adults. On the other hand, the lower the idol worship, the lower the parasocial interaction in the emerging adults.

5 DISCUSSION

The results show that 37 (9.22%) out of 401 subjects in this study developed a higher level of idol worship with the highest incidence occurred in the teenagers aged 22 years old. 278 subjects (69.32%), mostly 21 years old, were in the medium category while only 86 subjects (21.44%) aged 20 years old were in the lower category. It can be concluded that most subjects practicing idol worship were in the medium category. The fans will continue to think about the idols even

though they do not want to. One of Troye Sivan's idol reported that the subject often thinks of the idol during the school hours and the subject often check Sivan's social network profile during the study time (Maltby et al., 2006).

Similar results reported by Darfiyanti dan Putra (2012) in their study regarding pop idol worship as the bases for an intimate relationship in emerging adults. They found that three out of four subjects studied were in the medium category or intense-personal feeling while the other one was in the lower category or entertainment social. The three subjects in the low category of idol worship or intense personal feeling believe that having a relationship with their ideal type idols is a reward for them since they have little chance of being rejected.

In term of parasocial interaction, 286 (71.32) out of 401 subjects were in the lower category. While 114 (28.42) subjects were in the medium category, only one subject (0.2) was in the lower category. It can be concluded that most subjects were in the high category. At this stage, the subjects are prone to develop parasocial interaction with their idols, and they also tend to designate their idols as their partner criteria (Stever, 2009).

Regarding the marital status, 4.23% of the subjects were married, and 95.76% of the subjects were unmarried. 12 (70.6%) of the married subjects experienced a high level of parasocial interaction, while only 5 (29.4) participants in the medium category and no participants were in the lower category. These results were in contrast to the result found by Stever (2011) that an individual tends to develop a linear relationship with their idol if they do not have a partner. It seems that not only unmarried experienced parasocial interaction with their idol. Married subjects also have possibilities to develop a similar struggle.

The analysis results indicate that there is a correlation between idol worship and parasocial interaction in the emerging adults. Slightly more than half of the subjects, at around 51% developed medium idol worship and high parasocial interaction behavior. The more intense the fans develop the idol worshipping toward their idols, the higher the chance that they develop parasocial interaction with their idols. The parasocial interaction may ignite the emergence of pseudo-friendship and sense of companionship in the fans. The sense of companionship and pseudo-friendship is a long-term effect of parasocial behavior that makes individuals feel satisfied for the needs of their social interaction and creates a pseudo-sense of friendship between individuals and their idols (Hoffner, 2002).

6 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study show that there was a correlation between idol worship and parasocial interaction which means that the hypothesis is accepted. The majority of the emerging adults in the current study developed a medium level of idol worship and high level of parasocial interaction.

Emerging adults (18-25 years old) who have developed idol worship behavior are suggested to limit their idol worshipping activities by reducing the time they spend looking for information (video or news) about their idols from social and print media. Only then can they avoid developing extreme behavior such as leaving their duties to see their idols and prevent themselves from the possibilities of engaging in parasocial interaction.

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