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Celebrity worship and psychological well-being among young adults: Examining the role of self-regulation

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ABSTRACT

As young adults become increasingly exposed to digital spaces where celebrities shape trends, identities, and everyday interactions, understanding the psychological implications of celebrity worship has become increasingly important. The study investigates the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being among young adults, examining whether self-regulation moderates this relationship. A total of N=429 Filipino college students, aged 18–25 years were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling. The participants completed an online questionnaire through Google Forms, containing the Celebrity Attitude Scale-7, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, and the Self-Regulation Scale. Results reveal that celebrity worship negatively predicts psychological well-being (B = -0.4451, p = .027), while self-regulation positively predicts psychological well-being (B = 2.3835, p = <.001). However, self-regulation did not buffer the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being (B= -0.0305, p = 0.449), suggesting the constructs may operate independently rather than interactively. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of promoting a balanced celebrity engagement and adaptive self-regulatory capacities among young adults.

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KEY WORDS:

celebrity worship; moderation; psychological well-being; self-regulation

Introduction

In today's media-driven world, adolescents and emerging adults increasingly look to celebrities for inspiration, identity exploration, and emotional connection (Fraser & Brown, 2002; Greenwood, 2013; Zsila et al., 2021). Exposure to celebrity content and engagement with celebrity culture have been shown to influence individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and psychological functioning, leading to growing research on its effects, particularly among younger populations (Dix et al., 2010; Fraser & Brown, 2002; Lin et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2024; McCormick, 2016; Morgan et al., 2024; Zsila et al., 2018). While admiring celebrities is often seen as harmless and inspiring, studies suggest that intense attachment is also linked with negative psychological outcomes like body image concerns, identity diffusion, poor mental health, well-being, and lower life satisfaction (Houran et al., 2004; Maltby & Day, 2011; Maltby et al., 2004a; Maltby et al., 2005; McCutcheon et al., 2006; Nnubia et al., 2020; Reeves et al., 2012). Such attachment could lead to celebrity worship, a continuum of behaviors, ranging from casual interest and admiration to intense emotional attachment and excessive forms of admiration (Aruguete et al., 2024; Brooks, 2021; Gupta et al., 2023; McCutcheon et al., 2002; 2021; Morgan et al., 2024). At lower levels, it is often considered normative and even beneficial, as it can provide individuals with a sense of belonging, emotional comfort, inspiration, and opportunities for identity exploration (Aruguete et al., 2024; Derrick et al., 2009; Tukachinsky & Stever, 2018; Yue & Chang, 2000). However, when admiration intensifies, it may develop into maladaptive patterns characterized by over-identification with celebrities, obsessive thoughts, compulsive behaviors, and exaggerated devotion that may negatively affect well-being and daily functioning (Harthman, 2016; Maltby et al., 2005; McCutcheon et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2024; Sansone & Sansone, 2014; Zsila et al., 2024).

This continuum is further elaborated in the three levels of celebrity worship: entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological (McCutcheon et al., 2002). At the entertainment-social level, individuals engage in healthy and simple admiration, perceiving celebrities as sources of

entertainment and social discussion (Aruguete et al., 2024; Griffith et al., 2013; McCutcheon et al., 2002). As this admiration escalates to the intense-personal level, individuals begin to develop compulsive feelings, frequent thoughts, and intense emotional attachment, sometimes perceiving celebrities as deeply significant in their lives or even as soulmates (McCutcheon et al., 2002; 2003; 2016). At the highest level, borderline-pathological, celebrity worship becomes extreme and maladaptive and often involves over-identification and a willingness to engage in risky or inappropriate behaviors to maintain a perceived connection with the celebrities (Maltby et al., 2006; McCutcheon et al., 2003; Morgan et al., 2024; Sansone & Sansone, 2014).

Adolescents and emerging adults are particularly susceptible to celebrity worship due to developmental factors in identity formation. Drawing from Erikson's psychosocial theory, adolescence is a critical stage characterized by identity exploration, heightened self-consciousness, and the development of both real and ideal selves (Santrock, 2020). During this period, individuals often turn to social media as a space for self-expression and feedback, where celebrities become highly accessible and influential role models (Feist et al., 2020; Greene & Adams-Prince, 1990; McLeod, 2022; Orenstein & Lewis, 2022; Jamilah et al., 2020; Santrock, 2020). While such admiration of celebrities may provide individuals with an emotional connection that helps in coping with isolation or feeling a sense of belonging (Stever, 2010), those with weaker self-identities are more likely to engage in more intense and potentially problematic forms of celebrity worship (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Maltby et al., 2005). This tendency may persist into emerging adulthood, where individuals continue to seek emotional intimacy and aspirational figures (Maltby & Day, 2011; Nurhayati & Sary, 2024; Raviv et al., 1996; Reyes et al., 2021; Salsabila et al., 2024; Yugiputri & Halim, 2022), highlighting the importance of examining how celebrity worship influences psychological well-being across these developmental stages.

As conceptualized by Ryff (1989), psychological well-being involves self-regulation, awareness of personal limits, and sense of purpose in life (Gómez-López et al., 2019; Keyes et al., 2002; Viejo et al., 2018). Studies suggest that higher levels of celebrity worship are associated with emotional, psychological, and social difficulties, indicating lower psychological well-being (Maltby et al., 2003; 2004a; 2006; McCutcheon et al., 2002). In this case, Ryff (1989) observed that previous definitions of psychological well-being were not strongly theory-guided, leading her to develop a multidimensional model with a theoretical foundation of multiple frameworks.

Based on this model, Ryff (1989) defined psychological well-being as reflecting the presence of positive psychological functioning within an individual. This comprises six core dimensions, including: 1) self-acceptance, which holds a positive attitude towards oneself; 2) positive relations with others, which suggests having warm, trusting, and quality relationships with others; 3) autonomy, which suggests that one should live in alignment with their personal beliefs; 4) environmental mastery, the capacity to control over one's circumstances; 5) purpose in life, believing that their life holds meaning and significance; and 6) personal growth, a sense of one's ongoing development as a person. Ryff's model of psychological well-being has been applied to various psychological contexts and studies have found that psychological well-being is influenced by various behavioral and contextual factors, such as body image (Hicks et al., 2022; McKinley, 2004), spirituality (Aggarwal & Singh, 2017; Danylchenko, 2020), and social media or mobile devices (Basterra-Gotari et al., 2024; Jung et al., 2017). Findings from these studies indicate that an individual's decision, thoughts or behaviors may affect one's psychological well-being. In the context of celebrity worship, studies suggest that higher levels of celebrity worship are associated with emotional, psychological, and social difficulties, indicating lower psychological well-being (Maltby et al., 2003; 2004a; 2006; McCutcheon et al., 2002).

Despite the growing literature on celebrity worship and psychological well-being, the findings remain inconclusive and contradictory to each other. Some studies report a negative association, due to individuals showing neglect of real-life responsibilities and relationships and a sense of reality (Maltby et al., 2001; Nurhayati & Sary, 2024). Findings from Maltby et al. (2001) showed that depressive symptoms like depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction can be accounted for at less pathological stages (entertainment-social and intense-personal). While borderline-pathological does not instantly correlate with either poorer or richer psychological well-being of an individual, arguing that it may be caused by methodological limitations. Yet, Nurhayati & Sary (2024) found that only individuals at the borderline-pathological stage have a low psychological well-being.

Other studies indicate a positive relationship, where individuals have a good quality of life (Nawardi et al., 2020). Implying that celebrity admiration can be a source of inspiration and motivation, fostering positive outcomes like identity development (Yue & Cheung, 2000). Additionally, intense-personal found to be associated with self-esteem, suggesting that having a deep emotional connection with celebrities may provide inspiration and higher self-worth (North

et al., 2007). Likewise, other studies showed similar results of having a positive link with, including enhanced self-esteem, motivation, emotional support, and a sense of purpose (Brotokusumo & Swasti, 2024; Rachmawati & Ramdhani, 2024).

Alternatively, Salsabila et al. (2024) showed an insignificant relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being, proposing that inconclusive findings found in the literature can be explained by a third variable as a moderator. Similarly, Parawangsah et al. (2023) and Aini et al. (2019) suggest that there is no link between celebrity worship and psychological well-being, emphasizing the role of another variable that could affect this relationship. Overall, these mixed findings indicate no clear direction in the relationship, highlighting the possible role of moderating variables that remain underexplored (Nawardi et al., 2020; Salsabila et al., 2024; Zsila et al., 2024). One such variable is self-regulation, defined as the capacity to control one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and adjust goal-directed strategies (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Nambiar & S, 2020; Singh & Sharma, 2018). Self-regulated individuals can withstand their impulses, align their behavior with controlling thoughts, adhere to a set of standards, and modify their behavior in achieving long-term goals (Baumeister, 1999). However, when individuals deem a situation uncontrollable, they may experience psychological distress. In such cases, adjusting their thoughts, plans, and strategies accordingly is necessary to deal with the situation (Singh & Sharma, 2018).

Research shows that self-regulation positively correlates with psychological well-being, where individuals who can self-regulate tend to report better psychological well-being (Bandura, 2005; Briki, 2017; Hofer et al., 2011; Nambiar & S, 2020; Simon & Durand-Bush, 2015; Singh & Sharma, 2018; Vohs & Baumeister, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). It correlates with the core dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and purpose in life, indicating that effective self-regulation supports a balance in life and a sense of direction (Nambiar & S, 2020; Singh & Sharma, 2018; Simon & Durand-Bush, 2015). Seifert (2005) claimed that individuals with higher autonomy tend to make independent decisions and resist social pressure, while those with strong environmental mastery adapt well to stressors and changing environments, and those with high self-acceptance are keen on their strengths and weaknesses and non-judgmental about life's ups and downs. Overall, these findings support that self-regulation plays a vital role in influencing the psychological well-being of individuals (Briki, 2017; Gagnon et al., 2016; Nambiar & S, 2020; Singh & Sharma, 2018).

With this, self-regulation may act as a buffer against the negative implications of celebrity worship on psychological well-being. Although the direct relationship between celebrity worship and self-regulation remains unexplored, some studies have demonstrated meaningful associations between celebrity worship and its closely related variables like cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation, and self-control. Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to adapt cognitive strategies when facing new or unexpected situations (Cañas et al., 2003; Malik et al., 2024; Maltby et al., 2004b; Martin et al., 2003; Shabahang et al., 2019). Meanwhile, emotional regulation involves managing and expressing emotions in adaptive ways in response to experiences (Fazelirad & Noury Ghasem Abadi, 2023; Gross, 1998; Shabahang et al., 2019). Lastly, self-control refers to the capacity to suppress unwanted behaviors and resist the urge to continue them (Indraswani et al., 2025; Tangney et al., 2004). Together, these findings support the inclusion of self-regulation as a moderator given that its related variables are correlated to celebrity worship, suggesting that it may help individuals manage the intensity of celebrity attachment and buffer its potential negative effects on psychological well-being.

The present study is guided by the integration of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) and Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) to provide a framework for understanding the relationship between the variables. First, Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) posits that individuals actively engage with media content to satisfy certain psychological, social, or emotional needs such as entertainment, identity exploration, companionship, and inspiration. Within this framework, celebrity worship can be conceptualized as an active form of media engagement that enables individuals to fulfill needs for identity exploration, inspiration, and role modeling (Greenwood, 2013; Yue & Cheung, 2000; Zsila et al., 2021). In this sense, celebrity worship may contribute positively to psychological well-being when it remains balanced and adaptive. However, when celebrity worship becomes excessive or too idealized, individuals may become emotionally overinvested in celebrities and neglect aspects of their own lives, thereby placing their psychological well-being at risk. Self-Regulation Theory complements this perspective by proposing that individuals differ in their capacity to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors while pursuing these gratifications and controlling their impulses (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Accordingly, individuals with higher self-regulation may be better able to maintain healthy boundaries, critically evaluate media content, and regulate emotional investment in celebrities, which can enhance their psychological well-being (Brotokusumo &

Swasti, 2024). Meanwhile, those with lower self-regulation may lack sufficient self-monitoring behaviors and emotional balance, making them more susceptible to excessive attachment, compulsive engagement, and difficulties disengaging from celebrity-related thoughts and behaviors (Bandura, 1991; Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). In line with this, self-regulation is theorized not only to contribute positively to psychological well-being but also to influence the extent to which celebrity worship relates to psychological well-being.

Guided by the theoretical framework and the mixed findings in previous literature, the present study aims to examine the moderating role of self-regulation in the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being among Filipino college students. Specifically, the study seeks to 1) examine the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being, 2) determine the influence of self-regulation on psychological well-being, and 3) test whether self-regulation moderates the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being. The researchers also hypothesize that (H1) celebrity worship will negatively predict psychological well-being, (H2) self-regulation will positively predict psychological well-being, and (H3) self-regulation will buffer the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being.

Theoretically, the study can deepen the understanding of the psychological mechanisms linking celebrity worship and well-being by exploring the moderating role of self-regulation, which remains underexplored. Practically, it can inform interventions such as psychoeducational seminars to address idealized portrayals and mindfulness-based interventions to strengthen self-regulation and manage celebrity-related engagement. It also offers social relevance by demonstrating how celebrity engagement affects emerging adults' psychological well-being in educational, counseling, online, and fan communities. Overall, the study may support programs that enhance self-regulation, promote responsible media use, encourage balanced fandom, and improve digital literacy and mental health.

Methods

This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional research design and used moderation analysis to investigate whether self-regulation moderates the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being. It aimed to identify associations between variables and test interaction effects, particularly the influence of self-regulation on the strength or direction of this relationship.

Participants

The inclusion criteria required participants to be Filipino college students aged 18 to 25 years who currently admire at least one celebrity and were able to indicate the specific duration of their admiration in months or years. Participants were recruited online through convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods, and data were gathered using a Google Forms questionnaire. A minimum required sample size of 107 was determined using G*Power 3.1.9.7 for power analyses.

A total of 454 participants participated in the study. However, 25 were excluded for not meeting inclusion criteria (20 did not report admiring a celebrity, 1 was a full-time employee despite being within the age range, and 1 exceeded the age limit, while 3 were removed due to unclear responses such as "since childhood" or "all my life" for duration of their celebrity admiration. After data cleaning, the final sample consisted of 429 participants. The majority were females (n=322, 75.1%), while the minority were male (n=107, 24.9%) college students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years old (M= 20.09, SD= 1.55). In terms of educational level, most participants were 3rd year (31.2%) college students, followed by 4th year (23.1%), 2nd year (21.4%), 1st year (21.4%), and 5th year (2.8%) students. The most admired celebrities were from the entertainment industry (71.6%), followed by digital content (12.1%), sports industry (7.9%), arts and literature (3.3%), others (2.8%), and broadcasting and journalism (2.3%). The duration of their admiration for these celebrities ranged from 1 to 240 months (M= 57.6, SD= 41.38) or approximately 1 month to 20 years.

Instruments

Demographic Profile Questionnaire. Simple demographic information of participants was collected, including questions confirming their current celebrity admiration, work field of celebrities they admire, the duration of their admiration to these celebrities, as well as their age, sex, and year level.

Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS-7). A 7-item scale modified by Zsila et al. (2024) is designed to measure levels of celebrity worship, involving both pathological and non-pathological tendencies. It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with the total scores ranging from 7 to 35 and a score of 26 suggesting higher levels of celebrity worship. Additionally, it has three dimensions: Entertainment-Social (3 items), Intense-Personal (2 items), and Borderline-Pathological (2 items). Psychometric testing supports the scale's reliability and validity, showing high internal

consistency and construct validity (α=0.89 for Entertainment-Social and 0.88 for Intense-Personal/Borderline-Pathological).

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS). A 42-item instrument developed by Ryff et al. (1989) is designed to measure the overall psychological well-being of an individual. It uses a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). It also consists of six subscales containing 7 items each: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance. Half of these items are reverse-scored and total scores are computed by summing responses across all items, with higher scores indicating greater psychological well-being. The scale has good psychometric properties, with internal consistency ranging from α = 0.83 to 0.91.

Self-Regulation Scale (SRS). A 10-item tool from Schwarzer et al. (1999) is designed to measure an individual's ability to regulate behavior and maintain goal-directed actions despite difficulties. It uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true), with three reverse-scored items. The total score ranges from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater self-regulation. It demonstrates good psychometric properties, obtaining an internal consistency of α = 0.76 and test-retest stability of α = 0.62.

Procedure

Following approval from the Ethics Review Committee, the researchers began online data collection by recruiting participants through public materials (PUBMAT) that were disseminated through various social media platforms like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). The PUBMAT contained the university's name, study title, inclusion criteria, contact details, and a QR code with a direct link to the Google Form questionnaire for easy access. Through Google Forms, participants underwent a screening process with two questions to verify whether they were aged 18 to 25 and currently admiring a specific celebrity. Those who answered "Yes" and provided informed consent completed a demographic profile questionnaire (e.g., age, biological sex, year level, and celebrity's work field) and the duration of their admiration. Participants then answered the standardized instruments, including the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS), Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWBS), and Self-Regulation Scale (SRS).

After data collection, the researchers conducted data cleaning on the initial dataset by excluding participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Anonymity was ensured by replacing participants' names and email addresses with participant numbers. Furthermore, all files were secured on a Google Drive with restricted access. Lastly, statistical analyses, including moderation analysis on the interactions between celebrity worship, self-regulation, and psychological well-being, were performed using Jamovi software, and results were reported accordingly.

Data Analysis

All collected data were encoded and analyzed using the software Jamovi. To assess normality, Shapiro-Wilk, histograms, and outlier screening were utilized. Cronbach's α confirms internal consistency for the CAS, PWBS, and Self-Regulation scales. Pearson's correlation analysis examined the relationships among celebrity worship, self-regulation, and psychological well-being while screening for multicollinearity. Lastly, a moderation analysis through the MEDMOD module was conducted to test the main and interaction effects between the variables.

Results

All collected data were analyzed using Jamovi (version 2.4). Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize participant demographics and examine data distribution. Assumptions for parametric testing were met, and reliability analyses indicated acceptable internal consistency of the instruments.

Table 1 presents the distribution of participants across the categorical levels of celebrity worship, psychological well-being, and self-regulation. For celebrity worship, the majority of participants were classified in the moderate category (n = 207, 48.02%), followed by the high (n = 197, 45.92%) and low (n = 26, 6.06%) categories. Similarly, most participants demonstrated moderate levels of psychological well-being (n = 281, 65.50%), whereas 144 (33.57%) and 4 (0.93%) were classified as having high and low psychological well-being, respectively. Likewise, the majority of participants exhibited moderate levels of self-regulation (n = 276, 64.34%), followed by the high (n = 104, 24.24%) and low (n = 49, 11.42%) levels.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants Across Levels of Celebrity Worship, Psychological Well-Being, and Self-Regulation

	Level	*N*	%
Celebrity worship	High	197	45.92%
	Moderate	206	48.02%.
	Low	26	6.06%
Psychological well-being	High	144	33.57%
	Moderate	281	65.50%
	Low	4	0.93%
Self-regulation	High	104	24.24%
	Moderate	276	64.34%
	Low	49	11.42%

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlation

	1	2	3	*M*	SD	*a.*
Celebrity worship	—			25	5.33	0.793
Psychological well-being	–.049	—		170	25.36	0.903
Self-regulation	.095*	.471***	—	26.7	5.07	0.793

Note: * p <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001

Findings from the moderation analysis show that celebrity worship negatively predicts psychological well-being (B=-0.4451, z=-2.211, p=.027), whereas self-regulation positively predicts psychological well-being (B=2.3835, z=11.262, p <.001). Meanwhile, the interaction between celebrity worship and self-regulation was not significant (B = -0.0305, z = -0.757, p = .449)

Table 2 shows that celebrity worship is not significantly correlated with either psychological well-being (r = –.049) or self-regulation (r = .095). On the other hand, a significant positive correlation was found between self-regulation and psychological well-being (r =.471, p <.001).

Table 3
Moderating Effects of Self-regulation on the Relationship Between Celebrity Worship and Psychological Well-being

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Celebrity worship	-0.4451	0.2013	-2.211	0.027
Self-regulation	2.3835	0.2116	11.262	<.001
CW * SR	-0.0305	0.0403	-0.757	0.449

Note: CW=Celebrity Worship; SR=Self-regulation

Discussion

Celebrity Worship and Psychological Well-Being

The present study revealed that celebrity worship negatively predicts psychological well-being among young adults, supporting the first hypothesis and aligning with existing literature that suggests the impact of celebrity worship can vary based on intensity. At low levels, celebrity worship may serve as a source of entertainment, identity exploration, sense of belonging, inspiration, and emotional comfort or support (Brotokusumo & Swasti, 2024; Derrick et al., 2009; Griffith et al., 2013; McCutcheon et al., 2002; 2024; Rachmawati & Ramdhani, 2024; Tukachinsky & Stever, 2018; Yue & Cheung, 2000). Young adults are in a stage of balancing their sense of individuality and their need to form interpersonal relationships. So when they experience difficulties in establishing these social bonds, they may feel isolated (Feist et al., 2020). This indicates that an individual's engagement with celebrities may act as a replacement for intimacy, offering a perceived emotional bond that assists in managing feelings of isolation (Steve, 2010). However, intensified celebrity worship can lead to emotionally-charged, compulsive, and obsessive behaviors, contributing to negative psychological outcomes like anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction (Griffiths, 2024; Maltby et al., 2001; McCutcheon et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2024; Sansone & Sansone, 2014; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2008; Zsila et al., 2024).

From the theoretical standpoint, the results are consistent with the absorption-addiction model, suggesting that higher levels of celebrity worship, particularly intense-personal and borderline pathological forms, relate to poorer

psychological well-being (Maltby et al., 2001; Nurhayati & Sary, 2024). Initially, individuals may engage in celebrity worship to fulfill identity and emotional needs, particularly during personal development (McCutcheon et al., 2002). However, an unstable sense of self can lead to intensified absorption and potentially addictive behaviors, such as an overwhelming urge to follow or imitate celebrities, which may harm real-life responsibilities, relationships, and personal goals (Arguete et al., 2024; Maltby et al., 2006; McCutcheon et al., 2002). These maladaptive behaviors are associated with increased anxiety and depression, particularly among individuals with obsessive and neurotic tendencies, like being overly attached to celebrities, who may tend to have emotional difficulties (Kostanski & Gullone, 1998; Sandler & Hazari, 1960; Wolfradt & Straube, 1998). Thus, the present finding shows that individuals with high celebrity worship are more likely to present intense-personal or borderline-pathological engagement, leading to poorer psychological well-being.

Furthermore, individuals with high levels of celebrity worship may negatively impact their academic performance, as research indicates a correlation between lower psychological well-being and reduced learning resilience, ultimately undermining academic achievements (Cheung & Yue, 2003; Jamilah et al., 2020). Additionally, Ali et al. (2025) indicate that obsessive engagement with celebrities negatively impacts academic focus, suggesting that emotional resilience in young adults potentially influences academic outcomes due to increased distraction. Thus, findings highlight the need to monitor and address excessive celebrity worship among young adults due to the prevalence of celebrity culture and social media exposure.

Self-Regulation and Psychological Well-Being

Findings reveal that self-regulation positively predicts overall psychological well-being, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of self-regulation tend to report higher levels of psychological well-being. It may be because self-regulated individuals can better manage their emotions, impulses, and needs, thereby enhancing their psychological functioning. At the same time, self-regulation not only involves striving toward desired standards of well-being standards but encompasses the ability to protect oneself from psychological distress (Singh & Sharma, 2018). Furthermore, individuals who can self-regulate can cope with stressors, find a sense of direction and balance in their lives, adapt to their environment, and build healthy relationships with others (Nambiar & S, 2020; Park et al., 2012; Simon & Duran-Bush, 2015). As such, self-regulation benefits not only the individual but also those around them by shaping how they

navigate social contexts and sustain positive interactions. For instance, research reveals that students with higher levels of self-regulation tend to adjust more easily to academic and social demands and form friendships more readily. Likewise, those with stronger self-regulation report greater life satisfaction, stronger interpersonal relationships, and adaptability to different situations (Sharma & Malik, 2022).

These advantages may also extend to academic performance, as self-regulated students with higher psychological well-being are more likely to achieve positive academic outcomes (Babalola et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2025). Through self-regulation, they can manage their time effectively, set clear goals, and handle both academic and personal stressors. However, despite this capacity to manage their internal affective and motivational states, self-regulation remains a dynamic and demanding process influenced by various factors. This is supported by Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) which emphasizes the role of self-awareness in guiding individuals to regulate their impulses and make goal-directed decisions. Consequently, difficulties in self-regulation are associated with lower psychological well-being, as individuals become more vulnerable to psychological distress and susceptible to mental health issues, increased procrastination, and lower academic and life satisfaction (Balkis & Duru, 2015; Beckmann & Kellmann, 2004).

Moderating Role of Self-Regulation

Findings revealed that celebrity worship and self-regulation each demonstrated significant main effects on psychological well-being, but no significant interaction effect. Thus, self-regulation failed to buffer the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being. Across different levels of self-regulation, celebrity worship's impact on psychological well-being remains consistent. This finding could be explained by the domain-specific nature of self-regulation, where one's capacity to self-regulate is not present across all behaviors or emotional domains. Individuals may exhibit effective self-regulation in goal-directed areas or engage in health-related tasks, rather than facing emotionally-charged situations like celebrity worship (Billore et al., 2023; Delose et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, the framework of self-regulation theory posits that one's capacity for self-regulation can be depleted over time, indicating that when individuals are repeatedly exposed to emotionally demanding situations like celebrity worship, their self-regulatory resources are more limited, leading to decreased capacity for self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Therefore, one's self-

regulation ability weakens due to the continuous emotional demand of higher levels of celebrity worship.

In the study's sample, moderate to high levels of celebrity worship were reported, suggesting that a strong emotional attachment to celebrities was already salient. As literature suggests, higher levels of celebrity worship involve strong emotional attachment and identification, even compulsive thoughts and behaviors that exceed mere admiration or entertainment (Griffith et al., 2013; McCutcheon et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2024; Sansone & Sansone, 2014). Individuals with higher levels of celebrity worship may perceive their admiration as emotionally reinforcing and be less responsive to self-regulatory processes (Heatherton & Wagner, 2011). Thus, even individuals with moderate or relatively high levels of self-regulation may not necessarily engage in regulatory strategies to mitigate the impact of celebrity worship on their psychological well-being, thereby limiting its potential to function as a moderator.

Moreover, findings may stem from a conceptual mismatch between the measured moderator or regulatory process and the affective nature of celebrity worship. Self-regulation theory emphasizes goal-directed behaviors and cognitive control of impulses (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Consequently, the study's operationalization of self-regulation may have focused more on general behavioral or cognitive control, which insufficiently captured the emotion regulation processes that are more directly relevant to celebrity worship. In this regard, emotion regulation ability, one of the four core emotional intelligence abilities, might be a more suitable moderating variable. Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined emotion regulation ability as the capacity to regulate one's own and others' emotions, and it has been linked to both positive and negative psychological outcomes and is a strong predictor of psychological well-being (Côté et al., 2011; Ivcevic & Brackett, 2014; Wranik et al., 2007). Additionally, individuals with higher emotion regulation ability tend to have a wide range of strategies to sustain positive emotions and mitigate negative ones, thereby enhancing their psychological well-being (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Likewise, empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated that emotion regulation ability contributes to mental health and psychological well-being (Extremera & Rey, 2015; Mayer et al., 2007; Salovey et al., 1999).

From a theoretical standpoint, failure to support the moderating effect of self-regulation suggests that self-regulation may not function primarily as a psychological mechanism through which celebrity worship influences one's

psychological well-being. Based on Self-Regulation Theory (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996), individuals have the ability to regulate their thoughts and feelings, and make goal-directed decisions, yet findings suggest that being able to regulate oneself is not necessarily enough to change the negative effects related to higher levels of celebrity worship. In this case, the results imply that celebrity worship and self-regulation operates independently in predicting psychological well-being instead of interacting with one another. Consequently, the findings refines the Self-Regulation Theory by demonstrating its limitations in providing explanations for an individual's engagement in emotionally-driven contexts, like celebrity worship. Thus, the nonsignificant moderation effect may reflect a conceptual mismatch rather than the absence of self-regulation, as general self-regulation may be less effective as a moderator and less sensitive to the emotional dynamics underlying celebrity worship.

Limitations

Certain limitations encountered during the conduct of the study were recognized. First, all instruments utilized were self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and minor self-perception inaccuracies. Second, the sampling method carries a potential risk of self-selection bias by overrepresenting highly active online fans with strong celebrity attachments. This overrepresentation could distort the moderation analysis and limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader young adult population. Third, the insignificant interaction may be from a mismatch between the affective nature of celebrity worship and the cognitive-behavioral focus of the self-regulation measure, limiting its moderating effect. Lastly, the study primarily focused on general analysis and assessment of the variables without considering their sub-domains.

Implications

This study may provide empirical support for existing literature on the role of celebrity worship and self-regulation in predicting psychological well-being. Findings reinforce that excessive celebrity worship may undermine one's psychological well-being, while higher self-regulation is associated with better outcomes. Although self-regulation did not significantly moderate the relationship, the results remain valuable in showing how these variables independently influence psychological well-being of young adults, and contributing to the underexplored area of moderation-mediation effect between variables. Additionally, the lack of significant interaction between celebrity

worship and self-regulation may suggest that young adults may perceive celebrity admiration as harmless, hence not requiring self-regulation as it does not cover the emotionally-driven domains, highlighting the need for further research on this relationship. Theoretically, the study may contribute to understanding the psychological processes underlying celebrity worship and its link to psychological well-being, emphasizing the need to investigate other potential moderating or mediating variables in the study.

Practically, the study is relevant for young adults, particularly college students who frequently engage with social media and celebrity-related content. Understanding how celebrity admiration interacts with self-regulation may help educators, parents, and social media managers to foster healthier strategies of admiration that inspire rather than impair one's psychological functioning. Educators and counselors may improve psychoeducational programs and counseling interventions, parents may guide their children on how to develop more mindful and balanced engagement with social media, and social media managers can design healthier communication strategies and fan engagement practices with celebrities.

Furthermore, the study carries societal relevance by emphasizing that celebrity admiration is not merely an entertainment habit but a meaningful experience, particularly among younger populations where it may serve as a source of coping, role modeling, inspiration, or even emotional support. However, it also carries some risks despite its harmless intention. The findings can raise awareness of both its positive and negative impact and encourage more mindful engagement with celebrity content. These insights may also promote healthier practices within peers and fan communities. In this way, the study can contribute empirical, practical, and psychosocial efforts to enhance individuals' psychological well-being, especially in the age of heightened social media use and prevalence of celebrity culture.

Conclusions

The present study explores the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being, proposing self-regulation as a moderating factor that may explain how varying levels of celebrity worship affect one's psychological well-being, while addressing the inconclusive findings from previous literature. Findings revealed that celebrity worship negatively predicts psychological well-being, supporting theoretical perspectives that extreme forms of celebrity worship are linked to poorer psychological well-being. Conversely, self-

regulation positively predicts psychological well-being, which highlights the importance of adaptive coping and overall functioning in young adults. But despite these significant findings, the study found no evidence that self-regulation moderates celebrity worship and psychological well-being. This indicates that, although self-regulation is generally associated with higher psychological well-being, it does not alter the strength or direction of this relationship. This offers social relevance by demonstrating how celebrity engagement affects emerging adults' psychological well-being in educational, counseling, online, and fan communities. Additionally, the study may support programs that enhance self-regulation, promote responsible media use, encourage balanced fandom, and improve digital literacy and mental health. Overall, the study still contributes valuable information to the growing body of research on celebrity worship, self-regulation, and psychological well-being. The findings highlight the importance of examining not only the behavioral aspects of celebrity worship but also taking into account the emotional mechanisms underlying it. The study is also meaningful in such that it opens an avenue for more nuanced investigations into the psychological processes associated with celebrity worship and psychological well-being.

Recommendations

In line with the aforementioned limitations of the study, the researchers provide some recommendations for future research. First, it is encouraged to consider a qualitative approach, or mixed-methods, specifically sequential explanatory design to further contextualize the statistical findings, or longitudinal designs to understand the relationship of celebrity worship, self-regulation, and psychological well-being over time. Second, use other possible moderating or mediating variables that could better explain the relationship between celebrity worship and psychological well-being. Third, to investigate the sub-domains of each variable instead of fixating on a single global construct, as it suggests that it could generate more discerning patterns in psychological well-being. Fourth, consider cultural factors as it influences how individuals express celebrity admiration. Finally, educators and mental health professionals are encouraged to implement programs focused on building self-awareness, critical media literacy consumption, and emotional regulation in admiring a celebrity.

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