

The Effect of Parasocial Relationships on the Personal Interactions, Emotions and Behaviors of Brazilian Adolescents and Young Adults



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Abstract

*Nowadays, the internet plays a major role in people's lives, especially in the formation of relationships in society. One major form of interaction that gained a lot of space because of the internet is the parasocial relationships, which is defined as one-sided connections with celebrities, media figures, or characters. Considering how much space social media figures have in adolescent's routines and the fact that **adolescents (approximately ages 10–22) are more easily influenced and emotionally reactive due to the maturing of the prefrontal cortex, it is important to investigate the relationships they are building and the content they are consuming. Because of that, this paper seeks to expand knowledge on the nature of parasocial relationships by investigating the effect of these relationships on Brazilian adolescents and young adults. The goal is to investigate how they impact their relationships, emotions, and behaviors.** The research findings were based on analyses and discoveries made through a questionnaire designed by the writers and observational research conducted through the study of previous works. Through that, both positive and negative effects of parasocial relationships were discovered. It was found that the adolescents were indeed influenced, so strongly, in fact, that there was an increase in their consumerism habits according to what was promoted by their idols. However, parasocial relationships were not the main reason for young people's screen time, differing from the common belief. Additionally, these relationships have provided comfort to most participants, supporting the hypothesis that many parasocial relationships are established because they help individuals.*

I. Introduction

It is no secret that the internet plays a significant role in people's lives. According to some studies, 90% of adults own a smartphone [1], and more than 71% of American adolescents, ages 13–17, regularly use Facebook [2].

So, it is impossible to deny the space social media occupies, especially in adolescents' routines, and how much it is responsible for imprinting behavioral values and mediating relationships [3]. One of these types of relationships—which became more common

with social media—are the parasocial relationships, defined as one-sided connections with celebrities, media figures, or characters (which can be real or fictional) [4]. As shown by Figure 1, these connections are primarily built in through the media platforms [5].

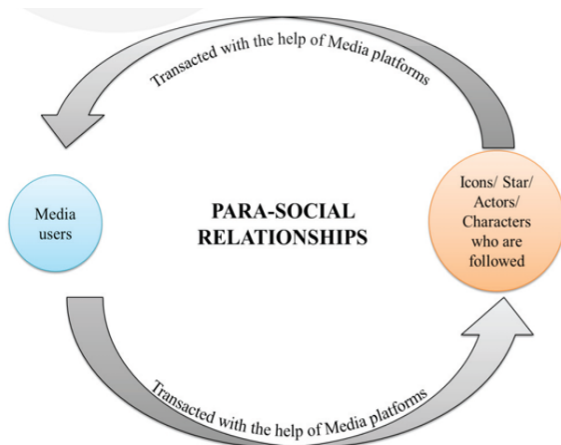


Figure 1: How Parasocial Relationships are formed in the digital era
Source [5]

The audience usually imagines these relationships since they do not have contact with the person they are following. Still, these relationships can affect viewers' personalities, emotions, and behaviors [6].

According to Giles [7] and Lana [8], these interactions started to be established more frequently in the twentieth century with the rise of TV and cinema, allowing celebrities and artists to gain the public's admiration. Now, with these public figures on social media, the audience can follow their routines more closely and get to know them, creating a sense of familiarity [9].

As studies show, these parasocial relationships can satisfy emotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs [10]. Just like friends and family do, these connections help viewers feel less lonely [11], impact buying decisions [12], and affect people's view of their bodies [9]and [13]. As shown by the chart below (Figure 2), these relationships depend on several factors, such as attraction to media figures, dependency on media, etc. [14].

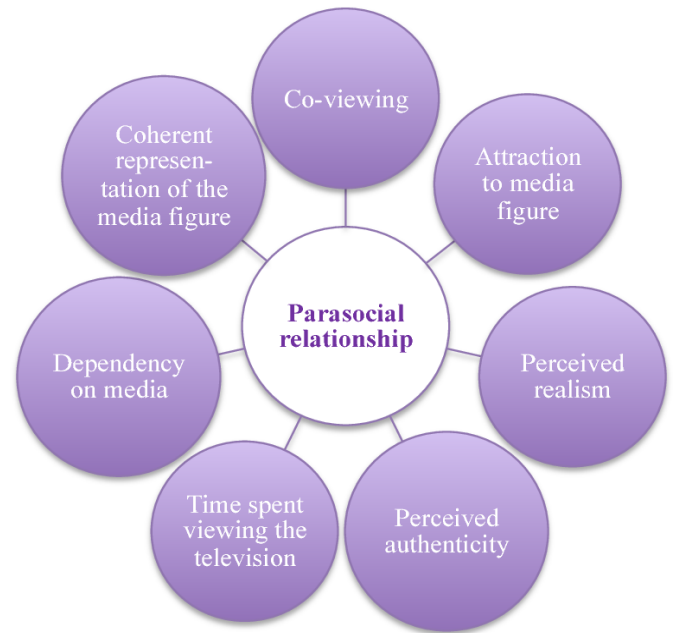


Figure 2: Drivers of parasocial relationship formation in mass media.
Source [14]

According to a study conducted by Lotun et al., parasocial relationships established with nonfictional figures can even contribute to lowering the number of cases of explicit prejudice and intergroup anxiety, showing how much positive impact these connections might have [9].

In contrast, some studies have pointed out a positive correlation between social media usage and the development of disordered eating, body image concerns among teenagers, high rates of suicidality and depressive symptoms among adolescent girls, tobacco and alcohol usage, and a negative correlation with self-reported happiness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem among adolescents [15]-[24].

Considering how parasocial relationships are mainly established on social media platforms and how teenagers are more susceptible to being influenced during this time because of the ongoing development of their prefrontal cortex [25]-[28], it becomes necessary to analyze more deeply how much parasocial relationships are affecting these groups. Are these relationships able to stimulate good habits and behaviors? Do

they have a paper on creating bad habits for teenagers? What is the influence of these relationships on teenagers' mental health? Do they positively or negatively impact the development of these mental illnesses? Considering these questions, the present research aims to understand the influence of parasocial relationships on Brazilian adolescents aged 12 to 22, investigating the effect of these relationships on their behaviors, social interactions, and emotions.

II. Literature Review

Adolescence (approximately ages 10–22 years) — defined as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood — is marked by changes in social interaction, acquisition of mature cognitive abilities, and behavioral development [25],[29] and [30]. Because the prefrontal cortex (represented in Figure 3) and other brain regions associated with motivation's control, emotion, and cognition are still maturing during adolescence [25]-[28], they are more vulnerable, easily influenced, and have heightened emotional reactivity. This possibly indicates that they are more influenced by people and the content they consume than a full-grown adult [28].

Considering the current generation was born in the digital era, the social media content they consume plays a tremendously important role in their lives [31] and [32]. According to a Brazilian study, data collected from teenagers in 2019 indicated they spent almost 5,8 hours connected on their phones on weekdays and 8,8 hours on weekends [33]. These numbers call the scientific community's attention to analyze the interactions these teenagers build in the digital environment, especially when considering how their characters and personalities are shaped based on whom they interact.

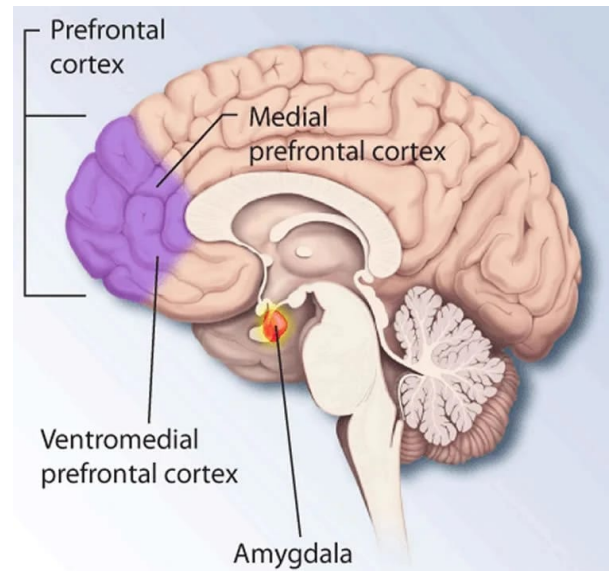


Figure 3: Location of the prefrontal cortex
Source: [34]

Some emerging studies from developmental neuroscience indicate that the adolescent brain is highly plastic and undergoes a significant "social reorientation" [35], which might make them susceptible to social influencers and celebrities that are present on the platform [36]. As described in previous studies, people tend to create bonds with celebrities and fictional characters [37]-[39], establishing what is known as parasocial relationships. Although nonreciprocal, these relationships look a lot like those developed with real, flesh-and-blood humans [40] and share similar processes of formation and maintenance of real-life social relationships [41]-[43].

These relationships, established mostly through social media and TV, can significantly influence people's lives, especially kids and teenagers [44]. As some previous studies show, the likelihood that children will learn from screen media is influenced mainly by the development of social relationships (parasocial relationships) with on-screen characters, as much as by their understanding of the information presented on the screen, which directly affects their development, reflecting on the adolescent and later periods [44]. According to the analysis of

570 adolescents previously investigated as preschoolers, data revealed that those who viewed educational programs in early childhood had better grades, read more books, and were less aggressive. In contrast, those who were frequent viewers of violent programs had lower grades and were more aggressive. The television content previously consumed by adolescents predicted extracurricular activities, role models, and body image, affecting their sense of self [45].

Beyond the effect on personality traits, parasocial relationships influence adolescents' and young adults' consumerism habits, beliefs, and choices. Economics literature proves that celebrity endorsement provides credibility, and psychology shows that fans are conditioned to react positively to the advice of celebrities and role models, which can have positive and negative results, especially considering a medical context [46]. A decision made because of the advice of non-professionals could even potentially lead to death. On that account, fans need to discern the sources of information and their trustworthiness. However, adolescents, who are still in a developing stage and use parasocial relationships to detach from problems, often do not have the capability or are too influenced to have said discernment, resulting in exaggerated consumerism and bad decision-making.

III. Methodology

As described before, the study aims to investigate and understand the effect of parasocial relationships on the personal interactions, emotions, and behaviors of Brazilian adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 22. In order to do this, an online survey – which included multiple questions – was developed and distributed through different social media platforms for random and anonymous groups of teenagers to guarantee a diverse representation of Brazil's adolescents.

The survey data was collected from August 15, 2023, to August 29, 2023 (a period of two weeks) through the Google Forms platform and had 83 participants, from which 84,3% (70 participants) were female, 13,3% were male (11 participants) and 2,4% (2 participants) prefer not to identify themselves. In the study, out of the 27 states (including the Federal District) that are part of Brazil, 20 were represented by one or more participants. The states that were represented included: Alagoas (AL), Amazonas (AM), Bahia (BA), Distrito Federal (DF), Espírito Santo (ES), Goiás (GO), Mato Grosso (MT), Minas Gerais (MG), Pará (PA), Paraíba (PB), Paraná (PR), Pernambuco (PE), Piauí (PI), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Rio Grande do Norte (RN), Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Rondônia (RO), Santa Catarina (SC), São Paulo (SP) and Tocantins (TO). The states that were not included were Acre (AC), Amapá (AP), Ceará (CE), Maranhão (MA), Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), Roraima (RR) and Sergipe (SE).

The survey counted with twenty-six questions formulated in Portuguese, which could be taken in about three to seven minutes. The questions and options given to the participants were described in the order below:

How old are you?

(12) (13) (14) (16) (17) (18) (19) (20) (21) (22)

What is your gender?

(Female) (Male) (Prefer not to say)

What city and state are you from?

Note: Answer following the Salvador-BA model; Rio de Janeiro-RJ, etc.

(Open answer)

Do you consider yourself a fan of any celebrity/fictional character?

Note: This includes characters from books, movies, series, dramas, anime, drawings, and celebrities of various types, athletes (Football, Basketball, Formula One, Volleyball, etc.), actors, singers, dancers, etc.

(Yes) (No)

If you consider yourself a fan, which category does your celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) fall into?

(Fictional character(s) from shows, sitcoms, movies, books, animes, doramas, cartoons, etc.)
(Athlete(s)) (Singer(s)) (Actor(s) (Actress(es))
(Dancer(s)) (Others)

How often do you follow the news and social media of these celebrity(s)/fictional character(s)?

(Never) (Rarely) (Frequently) (Always)

On average, how many hours do you spend on your cell phone?

(Less than 1h) (1h-3h) (3h-5h) (5h-7h) (10h or more)

How much of the time you use your cell phone do you spend interacting and/or checking the social networks of your favorite celebrity(s) and/or fictional character(s)?

(Less than 1h) (1h-3h) (3h-5h) (5h-7h) (7h-9h) (10h or more)

Do you usually interact on social media with these celebrity(s) through comments on lives/posts and private messages?

(Yes) (No)

Have you created any page/fan club dedicated to this(these) celebrity(s)/fictional character(s)?

(Yes) (No)

Do you know a lot about the life of this celebrity(s)/fictional character(s)?

Note: Check yes if you know a lot about the personal life, journey and background of this celebrity(s)/fictional character(s)

(Yes) (Somewhat) (No)

Do you feel close to this celebrity(s)? Does this person(s)/character(s) bring a sense of familiarity and belonging?

Note: Mark yes if you feel like you really have a close relationship with the person you accompany.

(Yes, a lot) (A little bit) (No)

Does your relationship(s) with the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) influence(s) your everyday life?

Note: Answer yes if you have changed your way of thinking about certain subjects and adopted new habits/behaviors/quirks since you started following this celebrity(s)/fictional character(s)

(Yes) (Somewhat) (No)

Have you ever bought something influenced by the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No) (No, but I wanted to/think about it)

Do you feel offended when someone bad mouths/offends the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No)

Have you ever gotten into a fight/argument with someone for offending the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (Yes, including with close friends and family) (No)

Have you ever had positive mood swings because of any interaction/post from the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No)

Have you ever had negative mood swings because of any interaction/post from the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No)

Have you ever been to an event (show, theater, meet and greet, etc.) to see/follow the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No)

Have you ever been disappointed by the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow/support?

(Yes) (No)

Do you regret any decisions made under the influence of the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) you follow?

(Yes) (No)

Do you have any mental illness?

(Yes) (No)

If you suffer from a mental illness, please select all that apply.

(Anxiety) (Depression) (Eating disorders) (Obsessive-compulsive disorder- OCD) (Bipolar disorder) (Schizophrenia) (Post-traumatic stress disorder- PTSD) (Borderline personality disorder) (Others) (I don't suffer from any mental illness)

Do you think that following a celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) might have a positive effect(s)/negative effect(s) on the development of the mental illnesses you suffer from?

(Does not apply (I do not suffer from any mental illness) (No, there were no changes in my psychological state) (Yes, positive effects) (Yes, negative effects) (Yes, both negative and positive effects)

Are you familiar with the concept of parasocial relationships?

(Yes) (No)

Do you identify with the following definition of a parasocial relationship?

One-sided relationships established with celebrities, fictional characters, and digital influencers in which one individual exerts time, interest, and emotional energy on another person who is totally unaware of their existence.

(Yes) (No)

After each participant answered the questions, the data collected was automatically transformed into a spreadsheet and graphs through the Google Forms platform to identify patterns and correlations among participants.

Considering the limitations of the research, it was decided to follow a descriptive and correlational research design.

Note: It is important to reinforce that since the research was not conducted in a controlled environment and was solely based on participants' perceptions and opinions, some data might not accurately represent all Brazilian teenagers from 12 to 22 years old. It is also important to note that the sample, although vastly varied, includes some gaps, such as not including Brazilians from Acre (AC), Amapá (AP), Ceará (CE), Maranhão (MA), Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), Roraima (RR) and Sergipe (SE). It is also evident that there is a significant discrepancy between the data provided by men (only 13.3%) and women (84.3%), so it will be avoided in this study to draw conclusions based on gender to avoid biased conclusions.

IV. Results

The data collected from 83 Brazilian adolescents — in which 70 were women (84.3%), 11 were men (13.3%), and two said that they preferred not to identify themselves (2.4%) — ranging from 12 to 22 years old resulted in the following data collection:

Note: Before reading, be aware that the data might not completely represent all Brazilian adolescents because of the research limitations described before.

The research showed that 4.8% (4 participants) of the adolescents were 12 years old; 1.2% (1 participant) were 13 years old; 12% (10 participants) were 14 years old; 8.4% (7 participants) were 15 years old; 19.3% (16 participants) were 16 years old; 8.4% (7 participants) were 17 years old; 10.8% (9 participants) were 18 years old; 9.6% (8 participants) were 19 years old; 13.3% (11 participants) were 20 years old; 7.2% (6 participants) were 21 years old and 4.8 (4 participants) were 22 years old.

From the total 83 participants, 97.6% declared that they considered themselves fans of a celebrity or a fictional character, while only 2.4% of those surveyed denied such. Of those who

informed that they were fans of some celebrity or fictional character, 75.9% were fans of fictional characters (which included characters from shows, sitcoms, movies, books, animes, doramas, cartoons, etc.; 22.9% were fans of athletes (s); 65.1% were fans of singers, 42.2% were fans of actress and actors; 6% were fans of dancers and 4.8% declared that were fans of other types of celebrities, such as journalists, digital influencers and YouTubers. It is essential to know that participants could select more than one category in this part of the research to gather data about the different categories participants were interested in.

57.8% of the participants stated that they frequently keep up with the news and social media of their favorite celebrities or fictional characters. 22.8% said they rarely keep up, and 21.7% always do. Only 2.4% answered never.

As illustrated below by image four, when asked how many hours they spend on their cell phone daily, 39.8% answered from 3 to 5 hours; 31.3% from 5 to 7 hours; 21.7% from 1 to 3 hours. 7.2% declared that they spend 10 hours or more. No one answered "Less than 1 hour".

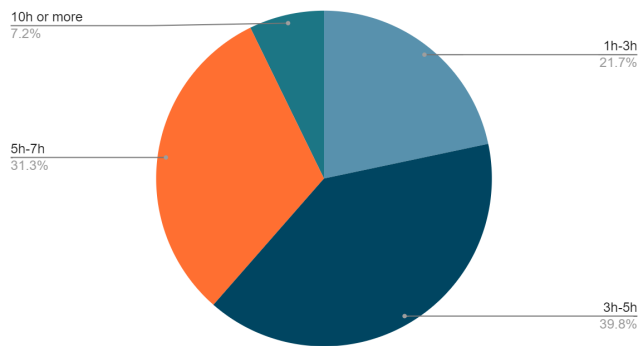


Figure 4: Hours that adolescents spent on their cell phone per day

Next, participants were asked how much of their screen time was spent checking and interacting with the celebrities/fictional characters they followed. As shown by the graph of figure five, the majority – which covers over 61.4% of participants– said that they spent less than one hour checking; 26.5% spent 1 to 3 hours; 7.2% spent 3 to 5 hours; 2.4% spent 5 to 7 hours and only 2.4% spent 10 hours or more.

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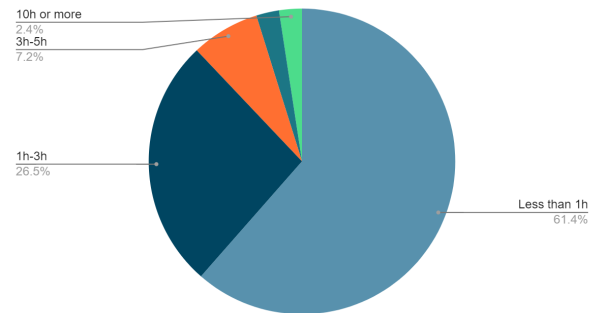


Figure 5: Time that adolescents spent checking celebrities's social media

63.9% declared that they do not usually interact on the social media of their favorite celebrities and fictional characters through commentaries on lives, publications, or private messages, while 36.1% declared that they do. 75.9% of the 83 participants also stated that they have never created a fan club or page dedicated to their favorite celebrities or fictional characters, while 24.1% stated that they have.

When asked if they know a lot about the lives of these celebrities or fictional characters, 48.2% of the 83 participants declared somewhat; 43.4% declared yes, and 8.4% no.

As Graph six shows, 41% declared that they do not feel intimate with the celebrity or fictional character; 32.5% declared that they feel a little; 26.5% declared that they feel a lot.

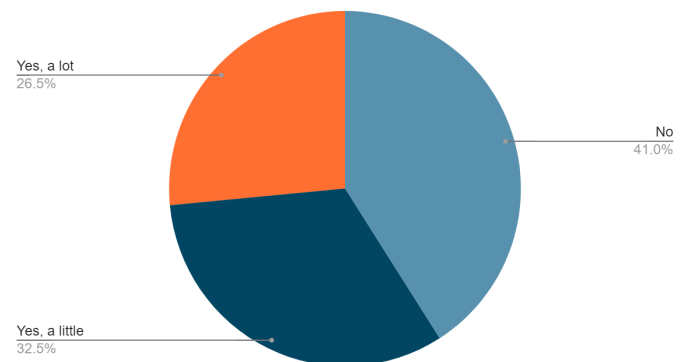
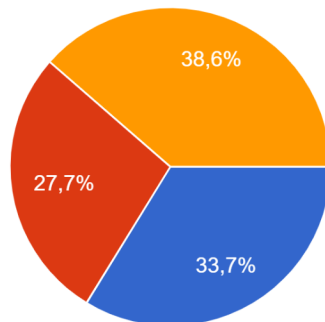


Figure 6: Percentages of how much adolescents feel intimate with the celebrities/fictional characters they follow

Now, as Figure seven illustrates, when inquired if celebrities/fictional characters influenced their decisions, 38.6% (yellow) declared that no, 33.7% (blue) said that yes, and 27.7% said that somewhat (red).



Subtitle: Blue- Yes/ Yellow- No/ Red- Somewhat

Figure 7: Percentage of celebrities influence on teenagers' lives

Next, when questioned if they had ever bought something from a celebrity/fictional character influence, 55.4% affirmed that they had, 27.7% declared that they did not but wished or thought of buying, and only 16.9% said no.

From the 83 participants, 69.9% affirmed feeling offended when people bad-mouthed and offended the celebrity(s)/fictional character(s) they followed. Just 30.1% affirmed the contrary.

When asked if they ever argued/fought because of their celebrities, 66.3% of teenagers said they did not; 18.1% said that they had, and 15.7% said that they had to the extent of fighting/arguing with family members and close friends.

The data also showed that 82.9% of participants experienced positive mood changes because of a publication or interaction with a celebrity/fictional character, and just 17.1% did not. When asked about negative mood changes, 61.4% affirmed that it did not happen to them, and 38.6% said yes.

Also, 68.7% of the teenagers who participated in the study affirmed that they had not attended any event (show, theater, meet and greet, etc.) to

see/or follow a celebrity/fictional character, while 31.3% affirmed they did.

Of the adolescents inquired, 50.6% declared they had experienced disappointment because of the celebrities/fictional characters they follow, against 49.9% that did not. Also, 90.4% said they never regretted any decision taken by the influence of the celebrities/fictional characters they follow. Just 9.6% said the contrary.

When asked if they had any mental disease, 51.8% answered no, and 48.2% answered yes.

In sequence, the adolescents were asked what type of mental health problems they suffered. In this question, participants could select multiple options if they identified with more than one illness. As shown in the graph below, almost half of the participants (49.9%) declared that they suffered from anxiety; 16.9% from depression; 12% from eating disorders; 4.8% with OCD- Obsessive-compulsive disorder; 2.4% with Bipolar disorder; 1.2% with Schizophrenia; 2.4% with Post-traumatic stress disorder; 2.4% with Borderline personality disorder and 4.8% with others.

Next, the participants were asked if the celebrity or fictional character they liked had positive or negative effects on developing the mental diseases they suffered from. 50.6% answered that it does not apply (do not suffer from any mental disease), 32.5% declared yes to positive effects, 12% had no changes in their psychological picture, and 4.8% experienced positive and negative effects. No one stated having negative effects. All of this data is represented by the chart below.

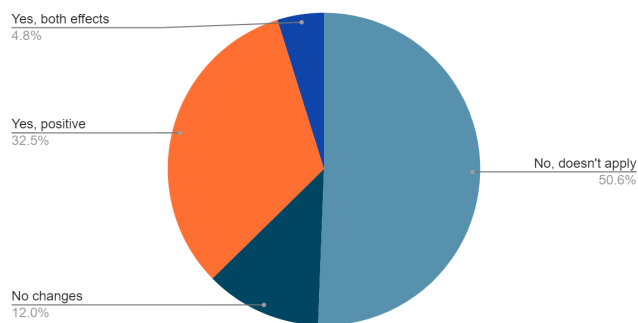


Figure 8: Effects of celebrities/fictional characters of the development of mental diseases on adolescents

78.3% answered that they are not familiar with the concept of parasocial relationships, 21.7% declared that they are.

According to the simplified definition of a parasocial relationship, as one-sided relationships established with celebrities, fictional characters, and digital influencers in which one individual exerts time, interest, and emotional energy on another person who is unaware of their existence, 51.8% of the 83 participants declared that they identify with the definition and 48.2% declared that they do not.

V. Discussion

As shown by the data presented, most of the adolescents and young adults who participated in the study expressed that they, in different amounts, were fans of some celebrities/fictional characters. Only 2 of the 83 participants declared they did not consider themselves fans of anyone.

When analyzing which category of media figures were most common to attract teenagers, it was observed that fictional characters from shows, sitcoms, movies, books, animes, doramas, cartoons, etc., were the ones that most attracted people, with over 75.9% of participants indicating that they were fans. The other category with a high number of fans was singers, with a percentage of 65.1%, followed by actors/actresses with 42.2%. This points out that for the sample group surveyed, the groups that most can impact and influence teenagers in the

present are fictional characters, singers, and actors/actresses, which also might be seen in future studies on a large scale if replicated.

Although adolescents in the studies showed different frequency levels of following the celebrities/fictional characters on social media, it is possible to observe that most of them did that, with only 2.4% saying that they never accessed the celebrities/fictional characters' social media accounts. This data indicates that most adolescents, although on different levels, use the internet to connect and engage with celebrities and characters they like to follow.

Regarding the number of hours spent on the cell phone per day, most declared having three hours or more (over 78.1% participants), with just 21.7% declaring an average of 1h-3h per day and none declaring less than 1 hour on the cell phone. The majority of participants (39.8%) declared having 3 to 5 hours of screen time, which agrees with similar data shown in a more detailed Brazilian study conducted in 2019, which stated that teenagers' average time was about 5.8h on weekdays and 8.8h on the weekends [33]. These numbers are concerning, considering that the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advise that children and adolescents' screen time should be limited to 1h to 2h per day [47], calling attention to this situation.

However, although these numbers are concerning, when participants were asked how much time they spent checking and interacting with celebrities/fictional characters, most (61.4%) declared spending less than one hour doing so. The other majority (26.5%) said they spent over 1h-3h, which seems to be an overall positive result, possibly indicating that celebrities/fictional characters might not be the biggest reason adolescents spend time on their cell phones. Still, it is necessary to conduct further investigation to discover if these numbers are accurate since the research did not have control over them (it was solely based on participants'

declarations), and the participants might have wrongly estimated this data. It is also necessary to investigate which types of activities adolescents use their phones to know if they contribute to their development and growth. It is necessary to do so in order for society to be aware of the activities that most grab adolescents' attention and understand how these affect their character, behavior, and emotions.

Surprisingly, when asked if they interacted with celebrities/fictional characters through comments in lives, posts, and private messages, 63.9% declared that they did not, while just 36.1% did so. When asked if they ever created a fan club page, the numbers were even more considerable, and most (75.9%) declared they did not. The reasons for these results were not described in this study — which could be the focus of future investigations — but it might indicate that although celebrities play some role in Brazilian adolescents' lives, teenagers do not engage with them as much as it is thought, maybe for not feeling close or comfortable with them. This can be correlated and backed up with the fact that most participants (41%) declared not feeling intimate with the celebrities/fictional characters they follow, with over 26.5% affirming the contrary. The other part said they felt a bit closed to the celebrities/fictional characters, which indicates they do not have a strong connection with them.

Still, when questioned about the amount of knowledge they had, most teens affirmed knowing a lot (43.3%) or somewhat (48.2%). Correlating this with the previous data, it is possible to say that although most adolescents might not feel that close to the celebrities/fictional characters, they still are aware of the most information of their lives.

Now, when asked about how much the celebrities/fictional characters influence their daily life (which included any change in thinking about certain subjects and the adoption of new habits/behaviors/quirks after meeting and

following the celebrity/fictional character), a part (38.6%) declared that not, with over 33.7% saying the opposite. The rest (27.7%) said they were somewhat influenced. Although this indicates that most were not influenced, it should be further investigated since the data can be slightly limited and inconclusive. A more thorough study will benefit this question to define with more accuracy how much Brazilian adolescents are influenced by celebrities/fictional people. It would also be beneficial to investigate how they influence these adolescents, what type of habits, behaviors, and quirks are being spread, and compare if celebrities/fictional characters hold a more considerable influence in teens' lives than parents, family members, friends, teachers, etc. to understand where these media figures stand in adolescents' lives. Nevertheless, although celebrities hold a certain level of influence on teens, it is not a strong or profound influence, as indicated by the data collected from this sample.

As expected and shown in previous studies, celebrities influenced consumerism habits [46]. More than half of the participants (55.4%) declared that they had bought something because of a celebrity/fictional character, with 27.7% affirming they did not but thought/wanted to do so. Just 16.9% declared that they did not want to buy anything influenced by the media figures. From that, it is possible to say that celebrities and fictional characters are indeed essential means for the Marketing industry to sell their products, especially for teenagers and young adults. If later investigations are made into the topic, data will probably show this more accurately.

When asked if they felt offended if someone badmouthed or offended their celebrity, the majority (69.9%) affirmed they did. Still, 63.3% affirmed they never fought/argued with anyone because of the celebrities, which means that although they feel offended, most do not let that affect them to the point of fighting/arguing. Just 15.7% declared that they had, including with

family members and close friends, and the rest had fought but never with family/close friends.

Regarding positive mood changes, although the previous data showed that celebrities/fictional characters do not strongly influence adolescents' daily lives and actions for the participants, they did have the power to impact the majority (82.9%) with positive emotions. When asked about negative mood changes, the majority (61.4%) also affirmed that they did not experience those because of a celebrity/fictional character. The data also showed that almost all the participants (90.4%) never made a decision influenced by a celebrity/fictional character that they regretted. These relieving results indicate that celebrities might be more of a positive influence than a negative. Still, it is essential to note that half of the participants (50.6%) declared they were already disappointed with the media figures they followed at some point. The reasons for this are unknown and might be further investigated.

Now, when participants were asked about their mental illness, 48.2% declared they suffered from it. According to the information collected, the three most common diseases were Anxiety (49.4%) followed by Depression (16.9%) and eating disorders (12%). As further data showed, celebrities/fictional characters were able to affect positively those who suffered from a mental health condition since 65.86% of the 49.4% who affirmed who declared suffering from such illness said that they saw positive effects on their conditions, with only 24.4% affirming not seen any change and 9,8% saying that they observed positive and negative effects in their condition. No one declared negative effects on their conditions.

Finally, when asked if they knew the concept of parasocial relationships, most said no (78.3%), showing the necessity of more discussions and the spread of information about the topic. These would allow teens to understand themselves better and maybe even pay attention more to the type of celebrity and fictional characters they are

taking as role models. Also, when they received a definition of parasocial relationships, more than half of the participants (51.8%) declared that they indeed had developed these relationships, while 48.2% affirmed the contrary. Again, it is essential to note that this cannot be seen entirely as an accurate result and more like an estimate since some participants might wrongly access the concept and affirm they have or do not have such relationships. In order to determine an accurate number, it would be necessary to conduct further studies with psychological specialists in parasocial relationships and observe each participant's behavior more closely to obtain more accurate data.

Now, although the present study aimed to focus mainly on adolescents who had a parasocial relationship, since almost half of them declared that they did not suffer from such, the results cannot be generalized and interpreted as if all the characteristics described are for adolescents with parasocial relationships.

It is also important to reinforce that although the research conducted has lots of important data that future investigations should consider and may help formulate and structure new studies, it has many limitations. Because it was conducted within a short time (only about two weeks), the sample was not as large and representative of all Brazil's adolescents as stated before. Therefore, this research should be considered the starting point for other investigations into parasocial relationships rather than a definite and conclusive study. The goal here was to call attention to the topic of parasocial relationships and start the field of research in Brazil rather than draw conclusions about the topic due to the limitations of the survey.

VI. Conclusion

The evidence proves that parasocial relationships have essential effects on the personal interactions, emotions, and behaviors of

Brazilian adolescents and young adults, both positive and negative. In the digital era, these connections have become more common and start as early as childhood, directly affecting the child's character development, which becomes even more apparent in behaviors during adolescence.

These relationships increase the vulnerability of adolescents and young adults since they become easily influenced, as shown through the increase in their consumerism habits, buying what is promoted or sold by their "idols." However, different from the common belief, according to the collected data, parasocial relationships are not the main responsible for young people's screen time.

Additionally, it is possible to say that these relationships have provided positive emotions to most participants, supporting the hypothesis that many parasocial relationships are established because they help individuals cope with their emotions, which is a benefit.

It is also important to emphasize that even though most participating adolescents and young adults (12–22) claimed to have developed these relationships, most did not know what the term meant, proving the lack of studies on the issue in Brazil as well as the little reaching of the already existing knowledge to the grand masses, reinforcing the importance of this study.

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