

## **The Impact of Parasocial Relationships as Influenced by Korean Entertainment Culture on Body Image Perception in a Sample of Greek and South Korean Young Adults**

**Authors :** Despoina Christodouloupoulou

**Abstract :** The current research study investigated how connection with Korean celebrities may impact Greek and South Korean young adults' body image perception given Korea's distinct appearance norms. The study employed a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews were used for the gathering of data. Greek participants resided in Thessaloniki, Greece, whereas South Korean participants lived in Gwangju, South Korea. The study was approved by The American College of Thessaloniki's (ACT) Institutional Review Board. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the Greek sample, and online interviews with the South Korean sample. Thematic analysis was utilized to determine the findings. Findings illustrated that a close bond with Korean celebrities can impact participants' body image perception. The Greek sample's body image was positively influenced by their connection with Korean celebrities, whereas Korean sample's was negatively influenced. Such distinction is due to celebrities' nationality and their adherence to culturally acceptable standards of slimness, muscularity and facial appeal. It also appeared that Korean male celebrities promote body positivity more than their female counterparts. Findings showed that Korean culture appearance norms constitute a risk factor influencing Korean young adults' body dissatisfaction. Thus, Korean mental health professionals might be informed from this paper on preserving Korea's youth mental health.

**Keywords :** parasocial relationships, celebrity worship, Korean wave, body image concerns, body dissatisfaction, Greek young adults, South Korean young adults

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