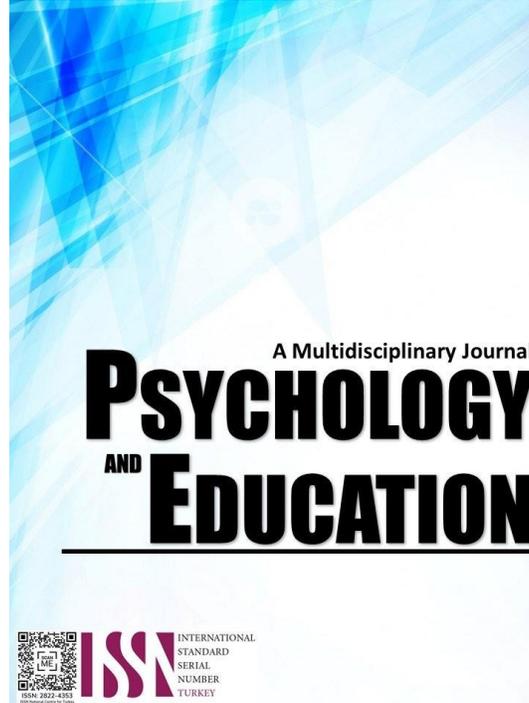


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The Need To Belong And Parasocial Relationship Among Young Adults With Absentee Parents

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the parasocial relationship that can built between the media and its viewers specifically those young adults with absentee parents. This study utilized the quantitative approach and focused on the correlational research design. This study has its total of 30 young adults respondents from Western Mindanao State University between 18-40 years of age. Moreover, the Multidimensional Measure of Para-social Relationships (MMPR) is being employed to measure how the respondents perceived the media figures. The results showed that in a group mean of 3.28, it can be interpreted that the respondents have high engagement in the affective dimension of parasocial relationship while on the behavioral dimension, it has a lower engagement with the total average mean of 2.42. On the cognitive dimension, the young adults with absentee parents has its strong engagement with a total mean of 3.13 and on the decisional dimension, it has a total mean score of 3.07 which interpreted as a high level of engagement. Therefore, this study concludes that the young adults with absentee parents is much engaged in para-social relationships in all different dimensions.

Keywords: *parasocial relationship, young adults, absentee parents*

Introduction

Loneliness epidemic has reached America (Summers, Acovino, Intagliata, & Wood, 2023). Today, human interaction in real life becomes overshadowed by the virtual world. Many people connect with others more on the internet using multimedia platforms than in person. Moreover, a research finding suggests that young people aged from 15 to 24 have decreased friend communication by 70% (Summers, et.Al, 2023). Additionally, a study found a strong linkage of social media consumption and experiencing loneliness resulting in a conclusion that 71% of extreme social platform consumers have experienced feeling lonely, rising from 53% in the previous year (Coombs, 2020).

Humans are social animals. To be socially accepted and form connections with other people is one of the important aspects of a person's life. In the theory hierarchy of needs created by Abraham Maslow, the third level is love and belongingness. This need refers to the concept of feeling loved and having a sense of belongingness from other people - including friendship, intimacy, and family (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). On the other hand, the feeling of disconnection arises when a person does not feel that they belong to the people around them and it may result in isolation. In addition, interacting with family, friends, or a certain group and forming a healthy relationship with them are one of the ways that allows an individual to satisfy their need to belong (Davis & Roundy, 2022). Members of the family are the primary source of connection and relationship that an individual forms starting from birth, especially their parents. Additionally, a research finding on children with single parents in India discovered that these children experience a lower sense of belongingness (Sangeet & Singh, 2022).

The first sense of belongingness often felt by a person is from the members of their family – feelings of being accepted and loved – however, in some cases, estranged family occurs. Family estrangement is a form of disunion within family; feelings of disconnection and withdrawal between members of the family (Li, 2023). A 2019 study cited by Fern Schumer Chapman (2023) shows that out of 1,340 Americans, 24% experienced parent estrangement and one in four Americans felt disconnected from their relatives.

Individuals who are estranged from their family may find connection through strangers. In the 21st century, forming this connection with other people often occurs in social media, different social media platforms have emerged in this modern world and several media personalities have flourished in the past years. In addition, when the pandemic occurred last 2020, face-to-face interaction was almost not occurring all around the world and technology was the most utilized medium for people to interact socially in the community. This phenomenon increased the number of people engaging in multimedia platforms every day, thus heightening the probability of 1 engaging in para-social relationships. Para-social relationship is a one-sided feeling of connection formed by a media utilizer with their favored media persona (Vinney, 2022).

Para-social relationships in some cases emerged as a relief from strained complementary relationships (Bennet, Rossmeisl, Turner, Holcombe, Young, Brown, & Key, n.d.). Therefore, the researchers wanted to discover the possible underlying linkage of a young

adult with absentee parents to the level of their need to belong, exploring the emotional aspect of the implication of their situation, and find its correlation to their social interaction through the discovery of their level of engagement in para-social relationships.

Methodology

Research Design

This study followed the quantitative research approach and focused on the correlational research design. It is quantitative in nature because the researchers collected data objectively through survey using a tool, and then analyzed the numerical data that was generated (Creswell, 2002). Moreover, correlational research is a nonexperimental type of research that utilizes correlational statistics in order to describe and measure the relationship or association of two or more variables or groups of scores (Creswell, 2012). The study particularly used the cross-sectional method of data gathering wherein it was focused on a single point in time and is descriptive, and explanatory in nature (Jongbo, 2014). Utilizing this type of research is very much beneficial because of how a notably larger number of young adults could be represented and gathered data from. It is also economically practical and is able to generate data in a more efficient way, such that it allowed the researchers to see the extent of para-social relationships among young adults and its correlation with their need to belong through a cost effective and quick method.

Participants

The respondents of this study were composed of thirty (30) young adults. According to Erik Erikson in the psychosocial development theory, young adulthood occurs between ages eighteen (18) to forty (40) (Sutton, 2020). Therefore, the study chose respondents who are from ages eighteen (18) to twenty-five (25) years old, which falls under the range suggested by Erikson.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Young Adults from ages eighteen (18) to twenty-five (25) years old
- Respondents must be students from the English, Filipino, Political Science, and Psychology Departments of WMSU College of Liberal Arts 12
- They should have absent parents that fall into one or more of the criteria below:
 - Young adults who do not live with one or both of their parents.
 - Parents or parent who are absent in two (2) or more of the important events listed below:
 - Birthday (for at least more than half)
 - Graduation and school recognition (for at least more than half)
 - Pinning ceremonies
 - Wedding
 - Major Philippine holidays

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals who are not along the range of age classified (18 to 25)
- Respondents who are not currently residing in Zamboanga City
- A young adult who does not have absent parents

Procedure

The data collection process for this study accomplished several steps. The respondents of the study were first identified. It was already determined that the respondents were young adults with absentee parents from Western Mindanao State University's College of Liberal Arts' departments of English, Filipino, Psychology, and Political Science. However, the total population of this specific demographic is unknown. To be able to conduct the study, the sample or proportion of a larger population should be specified. According to Memon, Ting, Cheah, Thurasamy, Chuah, & Cham (2020), Roscoe (1975) set a number of guidelines or a rule of thumb in determining the sample size of a research. He proposed that a sample size of more than thirty (30) or less than five hundred (500) is suitable for the majority of behavioral studies. The Central Limit Theorem (CLT) reinforces the logic behind the rule of 30. The CLT assumes that "as sample size increases, the distribution of sample means approaches (or tends to approach) a normal distribution". That was why for this study, a total of thirty (30) respondents was gathered, adhering to the range of sample size recommended by Roscoe. Before the survey proper started, a pre-survey via an online platform called Google forms was first conducted to seek out respondents who fit the inclusion criteria that has been indicated.

After deciding on the sample size, the type of survey was specified. In this study's case, the questionnaire type was administered and was given face-to-face by pen and paper. This method ensured the reliability of the data gathered for it allowed the researchers to provide clear instructions to the respondents. This also allowed the respondents to ask for clarifications to the researchers for further understanding and clarity. The questionnaire was composed of close-ended questions from the MMPR and the NTBS. The time of completion was estimated to be about fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes for a total of twenty-eight (28) statements. This was to prevent the respondent from losing interest while answering, and to ensure that the quality of data obtained remains reliable and valid. A longer questionnaire could also cause other respondents to not participate in this study, thus reducing the response rate or limiting the number of respondents from reaching the set sample size.

Before they proceeded on answering the questionnaire, an informed consent with confidentiality clause was given, this was to ensure their willingness and permission to move forward with the study. A three-week timeframe was allotted in the data gathering process to guarantee that the sample size was completed and the respondents were those who were willing. When all the necessary data were obtained, the results were statistically analyzed. Afterwards, the survey results were written.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, a number of factors was taken into consideration to ensure that the process remains ethical. The researchers made sure to take into account the ethical guidelines that needed to be adhered in order to properly carry out the study. The following were clearly communicated to the respondents:

1. Their participation was voluntary, and they were free to not go through with their participation at any point in the study.
2. The purpose of the study together with the possible risk was indicated for them to decide whether to agree or disagree in joining the study. The researchers ensured that their safety took precedence above all other considerations.
3. Their participation remains anonymous and any data pertaining to their identity were not collected or was stated as an optional item to be answered.
4. Even if the researchers know of their identity, it would be kept confidential and all information were accessible only to the researchers.

On the basis of the material to be presented in the research, there was absolutely no practice of any kind of plagiarism. The researchers together with their adviser were the only people who are aware of the flow and progress of the study. This was done to ensure that any problems that may develop will not result in any kind of unethical behavior.

Results and Discussion

This thesis was conducted with the objective of exploring para-social relationships and in which facet of a young adult with absentee parents' life it manifests and how it correlates with their need to belong. Specifically, the objectives of this research are the following:

A. The extent of para-social relationship among young adults with absentee parents in terms of the following dimensions:

a. Affective Dimension

The preceding table contains the data retrieved from the response of young adults with absentee parent/s in the affective dimension of the Multidimensional Measurement of Parasocial Relationships. It contains the mean as well as the verbal interpretation of the mean score.

The Multidimensional Measurement of Parasocial Relationship contains four dimensions: affective, behavioral, cognitive, and decisional. The first dimension was about the engagement of the respondents to the parasocial relationship in the affective dimension. As shown in the previous table, statement number 4 accumulated a total of 3.47 mean, the highest mean score, which has the adjectival equivalent of high engagement. It was followed by the statement 1 with 3.30 mean (high engagement), then statement 2 with 3.33 (high engagement). The statement 3 got the lowest mean which is 3.03 but still has the adjectival equivalent of being in high engagement in parasocial relationships.

With a group mean of 3.28, it can be interpreted that the young adults with absentee parent/s have high engagement in the affective dimension of parasocial relationship. It can be inferred that the respondents feel strong connectedness with the media figure through their emotions and feelings. They are emotionally engaged with the media personality that they idolize. This could also mean that their emotions and feelings can be highly influenced by the media figure. The result can be explained through the attachment theory

of John Bowlby (1969) wherein he stated that the bonds formed between children and their caregivers (parents) would have lasting implications to adulthood and the challenges faced by the child will eventually lead them to seek surrogate attachment in adulthood. Individuals who are having difficulty in forming real relationships may have difficult experiences during their childhood, particularly in their relationship with their primary caregiver. Young adults with absentee parents have a high possibility of having an emotional need to form attachments with people that seems to have less source of rejection (i.e., celebrity). Their experiences of rejection from the past may have enabled them to create a mechanism to adapt to their need but in order to lessen the possible negative impact of having relationships, parasocial relationships are a seemingly perfect alternative to compensate for it.

Table 1. *Extent of Para-Social Relationship Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents According to the Affective Dimension*

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Affective Dimension	A1. I experience a feeling of connectedness with the media figure through his/ her posts on social media.	3.30	High Engagement
	A2. I experience that I get emotionally engaged when the media figure shares more private information about himself/herself (e.g., bigger life events).	3.33	High Engagement
	A3R. I don't feel like I personally can relate to the content in the media figure's posts.	3.03	High Engagement
	A4. I often feel that I get inspired by the media figure's posts.	3.47	High Engagement
TOTAL:		3.28	High Engagement

The hole that might be created from their past relationship widened the possibility of parasocial relationships to enter their affective dimension. Generally, affective dimension measures how strong the media persona was able to penetrate the emotional aspect of the individual – the extent of these personalities having an effect on the feelings of the respondents. In addition, social media in today's world can have the ability to influence the emotions of its users because it is now part of the people's daily lives. In fact, in the Philippines, the statistics estimated that there are approximately 84.24 million social media users in the country (Statista Research Department, 2023). Therefore, high engagement could increase the possibility of strong influence on the affective dimension of an individual and based on the results, these young adults with absentee parent/s seemed that they can be strongly affected by their idol in terms of their feelings and emotions through the platform of media.

b. Behavioral Dimension

The table below indicates the results gathered from the response of young adults with absentee parent/s in the behavioral dimension of the Multidimensional Measurement of Parasocial Relationships. The mean scores and its interpretation are also written in the table.

The behavioral dimension delves into the engagement in exhibiting behavior in social media that is highly influenced by the media persona (liking, commenting, sharing, and checking post updates), and not to demonstrate a significant level of copying or mimicry of the actions exhibited by these personalities. It can be seen from the data that "liking" the post of the media figure was the behavior that the respondents were highly engaged in. It gathered a mean score of 3.03 which has a verbal interpretation of high engagement and it was followed by the statement 3 with a mean of 2.70, then the statement 4 which has 2.03 mean score, both having an adjectival equivalent of moderate engagement. The data also shows that the respondents do not really write comments on the posts of their media idol. The result on statement 2 recorded a mean of 1.90 which could be interpreted as low engagement.

Based on the data, it can be inferred that compared to the mean of the previous dimension (affective), the behavior dimension resulted in much lower engagement. However, resulting in an average mean of 2.42 means that the respondents moderately engage in the behavior that is influenced by the media persona, particularly in social media. Additionally, according to Alice Elliot (n.d.), the lack of self-esteem may cause fear of commenting because it may contribute to negatively anticipating what other social media users would think about the comment; also perceiving that no one will be interested – which may give an insight on understanding the participants' responses on statement 2 (I often comment on the media figure's posts in the comment field) which gathered the lowest

engagement among all statements stated in the whole Multidimensional Measure of Parasocial Relationship.

Table 2. *Extent of Para-Social Relationship Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents According to the Behavioral Dimension*

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Behavior Dimension	B1. I always “like” the media figure’s posts on social media.	3.03	High Engagement
	B2. I often comment on the media figure’s posts in the comment field.	1.90	Low Engagement
	B3. I often forward the media figure’s posts to my friends or share them on my own online feeds.	2.70	Moderate Engagement
	B4R. I mostly just check the media figure’s updates and aren’t that active with liking, sharing, or commenting.	2.03	Moderate Engagement
TOTAL:		2.42	Moderate Engagement

The result can also be interpreted that the reason for less engagement in behavioral dimension in social media posts was the introversion of the participants. According to Jarzyna (2012), introversion was one of the factors that can influence the manner in which individuals engage in parasocial interactions. Also, Horton and Wohl (1956) were able to explain that individuals who experience social isolation, lack social skills, are older and infirm, timid and have felt rejection develops “compensatory attachment”. This leads to an interpretation that these young adults with absentee parent/s have the potential of being socially awkward and may have experienced discomfort when bombarded with real life social interactions as well as gaining spotlight or attention from a number of people. Liking on social media does not really gain attention compared to commenting on the comment section of a certain post where other social media users can read, re-read, notice, and probably reply to your comment.

Commenting something on social media involves thinking on what to write and finding the right words to express it. This activity may become overwhelming for someone who is not socially active and especially for someone who finds difficulty in interacting with other people. Moreover, these young adults may have felt rejection from their parent/s as a child due to not living in the same household with them because according to Gillette and Lawrenz (2022), parental rejection may manifest in a way of creating physical and emotional distancing and persistent rejection for a child may result in fear of emotional intimacy and low self-esteem.

In addition, the IPAR Theory posits rejection leads to heightened risk of encountering compromised self-esteem and diminished self-adequacy. Also, research conducted by Roehlkerpartain and his colleagues in 2017 discovered that developing social-emotional strengths is highly linked to having a solid developmental interaction while growing up. From this information, it can be inferred that young adults with absentee parents could have experienced being rejected as a child due to the circumstances of not living with one or both of their parent/s since childhood and also by being absent in several important events in their lives, which might have caused emotional rejection and therefore form an emotional need as an adult. The feeling of rejection and the need to compensate may have increased the chances of involvement in parasocial relationships. Additionally, the chances of having low self-esteem, fear of rejection, and the introversion of these young adults are not low due to the situation that they have and these factors may contribute on explaining why they have less engagement in behavioral dimension in their parasocial relationship, thus forming connection with the media figure was supposed to create a friendlier environment and provide lesser chance of feeling rejection.

c. Cognitive Dimension

Table 3 shows information about the cognitive dimension of para-social relationships (PSR) among young people whose parent/s don't live with them and also do not attend the majority of the important events of their lives. The Cognitive Dimension looks at how people think about and feel about their interactions with media figures. It has four statements, and the amount of engagement is shown by the mean score for each statement. The first statement (C1) says that young adults with absentee parents often think that the media figures they look up to share the same beliefs as them. The average number of 3.30 means that people are very engaged with the media figures, which means that their values may be similar to their own. This coincides with previous research of Moyer-Gusé's (2008), which shows how important media figures are for showing people what morals and ideals they want to live up to, especially when their parents aren't around to be role models.

Statement C2R shows a more complex view, with a mean score of 2.63 showing a moderate level of involvement. The statement discussed how real media figures on social media are, and the data shows that the respondents are not sure of their authenticity –



contrary to the idea of high engagement from the previous statement. However, the findings are consistent with Sundar's (2008) research on the paradox of para-social relationships, which says that people may admire media figures but also doubt their authenticity, especially now that social media personas are carefully curated. For statement C3, a mean score of 3.33 means that young people are very interested in what media figures post on social media and see it as positive. An earlier study by Cho and Lee (2013) also found that media figures who give people a sense of positivity and hope can be sources of motivation and hope for people whose parents don't live with them.

Table 3. Extent of Para-Social Relationship Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents According to the Cognitive Dimension

Dimensions	Statements	Mean	Interpretation
Cognitive Dimension	C1. I think that the media figure represents values that are important to me.	3.30	High Engagement
	C2R. I don't think that the media figure portrays himself/herself in an authentic way on social media.	2.63	Moderate Engagement
	C3. I see positive in most of what the media figure shares on social media.	3.33	High Engagement
	C4. The media figure seems to be a genuine person that I would get along with in real life	3.23	High Engagement
TOTAL:		3.13	High Engagement

Lastly, statement C4 shows that these young adults see the media figures as real people they could get along with in real life. The statement 4 (C4) gathered a mean score of 3.23, which means it was highly engaged. The result supports the notion of parasocial interaction, which says that people feel like they have a personal relationship with media figures (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). When an individual does not have strong connections with their parent/s during their developmental period, these media characters may step in as friends and role models, making them feel like they belong.

In summary, Table 3's data shows that young adults with absentee parent/s tend to have a strong connection with media figures in their cognitive dimension. They identify with their values, find good things in what they post, and even think that these figures might be real people they could connect with in real life. At the same time, there is some doubt about how real these media identities really are. This interpretation shows how important media figures are in the lives of young people with absentee parent/s. These figures could have the potential to fill in the gaps that may have been left by absentee parent/s and give them inspiration, positivity, and a sense of connection.

d. Decisional Dimension

Based on the Decisional Dimension, Table 4 shows the level of Para-Social Relationship (PSR) among young people who have absentee parent/s. The Decisional Dimension is very important for knowing how media figures affect people's choices and decisions about their lives.

The interpretation of the six statements in Table 4 reveals that young adults with absentee parent/s demonstrate a high level of engagement in decision-making influenced by media figures, reflecting the presence of parasocial relationships. These individuals prefer products and advice marketed by media figures, readily make lifestyle changes inspired by them, and trust their knowledge. However, they also exhibit a degree of independence by not always following the figure's advice, integrating their content into everyday conversations moderately, and allowing the influencer's posts to impact their life habits significantly. This pattern of high engagement in decision-making, as shown by the total mean score of 3.07, aligns with existing literature on parasocial relationships, underlining the substantial influence of media figures on young adults' choices and decision-making processes, especially in the absence of parental guidance.

In summary, the data in Table 4 indicates that young adults with absentee parents generally exhibit a high level of engagement in decision-making influenced by the media figure, as the total mean for the Decisional Dimension is 3.07, falling within the "High Engagement" category. According to the results, young adults with absentee parents exhibit high engagement with media figures,



reflecting the presence of parasocial relationships. This aligns with the notion that individuals can form strong connections with media figures, which may influence their decision making and lifestyle choices as relationships were characterized by a sense of intimacy and attachment to the media personalities despite the lack of real-life interaction. The study emphasized that viewers could feel personally connected to media personalities, similar to how individuals feel attached to real-life friends or acquaintances.

Table 4. Extent of Para-Social Relationship Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents According to the Decisional Dimension

Dimensions	Statements	Mean	Interpretation
d. Decisional Dimension	D1. I prefer things that the media figure is marketing (e.g., products, nutrition advice, training advice, etc.) before similar things that are marketed in other places	3.00	High Engagement
	D2. The media figure's posts often inspire me to make changes in my own life.	3.53	High Engagement
	D3R. I never buy products that the media figure is marketing or giving advice about on social media.	2.63	Moderate Engagement
	D4. I happily follow different tips and advice that the media figure shares because I feel I can trust his/her knowledge about these things.	3.27	High Engagement
	D5. It often happens that I, in conversations with other people in my everyday life, point out things that the media figure has mentioned in his/her posts on social media.	2.87	Moderate Engagement
	D6. It happens that the media figure's posts contribute to, that I in some way change my life habits (e.g., clothes, diet, training routine, looks etc.).	3.13	High Engagement
TOTAL:	3.07	High Engagement	

Moreover, based on Perse and Rubin's research, the concept of parasocial interaction extended to parasocial relationships (PSR). They explored how audiences' relationships with media figures could impact their attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making. The study focused on the role of television as a medium for these relationships and the various ways in which viewers felt connected to television personalities. In the context of Table 4, Perse and Rubin's research is relevant because both results demonstrated that para-social relationships can lead to real-world effects, such as changes in behavior and decision-making. The findings in Table 4, where young adults exhibit high engagement in decision-making influenced by media figures, support the idea that parasocial relationships can indeed have a substantial impact on individuals' choices and lifestyle decisions, particularly in the absence of parental guidance.

e. Overall MMPR Score

Table 5. Overall Extent of Para-Social Relationship Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents

Mmpr Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation
Affective	3.28	High Engagement
Behavioral	2.42	Moderate Engagement
Cognitive	3.13	High Engagement
Decisional	3.07	High Engagement
Overall Total:	2.98	Moderate Engagement

Table 5 presents a detailed analysis of the overall prevalence of para-social relationships (PSR) among young adults who experience the absence of their parents, offering insights into four key dimensions: Affective, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Decisional. The aforementioned elements encompass the intricate characteristics of PSRs, facilitating our comprehension of how these individuals interact with media personalities as a possible substitute for parental influence in their existence.

In the Affective dimension, a significantly high mean score of 3.28 was seen. This suggests that there is a tendency for young adults who have parents that are frequently absent to develop strong emotional connections with the media personalities they engage with. The increased level of emotional involvement can be ascribed to the emotional vacuum created by the nonexistence of their guardians. Within this particular environment, it becomes progressively apparent that these young adults are actively pursuing consolation, empathy, and emotional support through parasocial ties. The aforementioned observation aligns with the research conducted by Bond and Calvert (2014), whereby they propose that individuals frequently develop strong emotional connections with media personalities as a means of coping with emotional deficiencies within their actual interpersonal connections.

In contrast, the Behavioral component displays a moderate average score of 2.42. This implies that although these young individuals actively interact with para-social personalities, they may not necessarily demonstrate a significant level of displaying their idolization publicly to these personalities. There are other elements that may contribute to this observation. Several factors may contribute to the moderate level of behavioral engagement observed in individuals with absentee parent/s. These factors may include the personality of the respondents - introvert. In the research conducted by Jarzyna (2012), introversion is one of the factors that can influence how people use parasocial interaction.

Transitioning to the Cognitive component, the average score of 3.13 serves as an indication of substantial levels of involvement. This implies that adolescents with absent parent/s actively contemplate and intellectually interact with their idolized personalities. Individuals may utilize these interpersonal connections as a mechanism for acquiring knowledge, gaining valuable insights, or obtaining alternate viewpoints pertaining to diverse facets of existence. The substantial involvement shown in the cognitive aspect is consistent with the theoretical framework put forth by Horton and Wohl (1956) in their seminal study on parasocial interaction. According to their theory, individuals frequently employ cognitive processes to comprehend their unidirectional relationships with media celebrities. This supports the proposition that cognitive engagement holds considerable importance within the realm of parasocial relationships (PSRs).

Lastly, the Decisional dimension reveals a mean score of 3.07, suggesting significant engagement. This feature suggests that young adults who have parent/s who are frequently absent may place trust and importance on the advice or opinions provided by media personalities with whom they form connections, which could potentially impact their decision-making processes. Parasocial interactions can potentially exert a substantial influence on individuals, particularly when they encounter decisions that have the potential to significantly impact their lives. This concept is consistent with the findings of Holbrook and Krosnick (2010) in their research on parasocial relationships (PSR) and highlighting the impact of these interactions on decision making, particularly in cases where individuals have limited parental guidance.

In brief, it seems that young adults who are faced with absentee parent/s tend to develop parasocial interactions characterized by significant emotional, cognitive, and decision-making involvement. However, their level of behavioral engagement appears to be only modest. These interactions play a crucial role in providing individuals with emotional support, cognitive stimulation, and can even exert an impact on their decision-making processes. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the scope and characteristics of these Parental Support Resources (PSRs) is crucial for offering specific assistance and direction to persons who are navigating life without a substantial parental influence. This understanding sheds light on the intricate relationship between media personalities and their emotional welfare, cognitive abilities, and decision-making processes.

B. The degree of the need to belong of young adults with absentee parents.

The Need to Belong Scale (NTBS) (Leary, 2013) assesses an individual's yearning for acceptance and belonging. This scale has 10 items that are rated for agreement on a 5-point Likert scale. To find the degree of belonging needs of young adults with absentee parents, the total mean score for each statement and the overall mean score was calculated and interpreted according to its adjectival equivalent. Table 6 above shows that young adults with absentee parent/s had an overall mean score of 3.25, which indicates that they had a moderate need to belong. The results show that although these young adults may desire social acceptance and connection, they are not preoccupied with it. However, their need to belong varies across statements.

It can be noted that in statements two (2) (I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me), four (4) (I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need), five (5) (I want other people to accept me), 8 (I have a strong need to belong), and nine (9) (It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans), the respondents were recorded to have a high need to belong. It can be implied that young adults with absentee parents are likely driven to maintain good relationships, are sensitive to exclusion and rejections, and are actively searching for acceptance from others. Based from the results, they try their best to behave in a way that will not cause them to be avoided and rejected by the people around them – they

want to be accepted, they also worry a lot about not being involved in plans – they want to be included, they have this need to feel that

they have someone to turn to when they are having a hard time – having a support network, and they responded that their need to belong is strong. In contrast, however, statement one (1) (If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me) with a mean score of 2.30 implies that young adults with absentee parents have a low need to belong. This indicates that the respondents may be relatively indifferent whether they are accepted or not by the people around them.

Table 6. *Degree of Need to Belong Among Young Adults with Absentee Parents*

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me.*	2.30	Low Need
2. I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.	3.70	High Need
3. I seldom worry about whether other people care about me.*	2.97	Moderate Need
4. I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.	4.17	High Need
5. I want other people to accept me.	3.60	High Need
6. I do not like being alone.	2.63	Moderate Need
7. Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me.*	2.77	Moderate Need
8. I have a strong need to belong.	3.53	High Need
9. It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans.	3.57	High Need
10. My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.	3.27	Moderate Need
TOTAL:	3.25	Moderate Need

Psychologists Baumeister and Leary (1995) said that the notion of the “need to belong” pertains to the intrinsic human drive to establish and sustain social connections. They postulated that there are two central aspects to the need to belong theory: (1) a framework of shared care and concern that encompasses both the past and the future; and (2) a string of positive contacts. This means that momentary interactions that do not continue on from past to present are not enough to fully satisfy one’s need to belong. The lack of bond does not make up for any amount of social interactions. And these strings of positive interactions do not have to be one where every moment spent with the other has to always be positive, just as long as it is not negative. This theory can be reflected in the experience of the respondents who are young adults with absentee parents who have not been present in their lives since they were a child or who were not present during the most important parts and events of their lives. As reflected in the results of the survey, this absence has caused, to a certain degree, the yearning of these individuals towards being accepted and the desire to have a solid support system.

Abraham Maslow (1943) has also highlighted the importance of the need for social belonging in his theory on the hierarchy of needs. Just above physiological needs, the need for belonging occupies a crucial position in defining human development. An individual's emotions, thought processes, and behavioral decisions are always influenced by this innate want to belong, which subtly shapes how they approach relationships. And those who have been brought up in single-parent households such as young adults with absentee parent/s may be among the group of people who have experienced loneliness, isolation, and rejection. According to the study of Rejaan, van der Valk, and Branje (2021), individuals from divorced families had lower levels of belonging. Which suggests that these individuals were more likely to have reduced sense of belonging towards social groups. They may also feel a sense of disconnectedness towards the people around them. The lower parent-child relationship and higher level of interparental conflict supported their findings. Furthermore, Aslanturk and Mavili (2020) examined college students' feelings of identity from two-parent and single-parent households. Researchers discovered that people from two parent biological families had higher family belonging than people from single-parent households. It was also found that on "special days" and during "difficult times," both participant groups felt the most and least connected to their families. These study's results are in congruence with the results of this current study as it shows that young adults with absentee parent/s have a high need to belong towards the people around them, and this may be due to their feeling of not having strong relations with others or the feeling of not belonging somewhere brought by the absence of their parents who are supposed to be the main pillar of support in their lives.

Locally in the Philippines, Lobos, Juliata, and Peñalba (2019) looked into the perception of 6 adolescent students with regards to the effects of being away from their OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers) parents on their well-being. Four major themes came about from their research: (1) seeking out ways that fulfill family needs; (2) becoming indebted to parents; (3) longing for parental love and care; and (4) coping with the negative effects of parental absence. This shows how not having parent/s around can have negative impacts on the emotional well-being of their children. This study can also be related to the present study at hand with how it shows having parent/s who do not physically live with their children can lead to them looking for ways to satisfy their lacking family needs. They may look for external outlets to satiate their need to belong by having a high need towards wanting to be accepted by others.

However, the overall need to belong of young adults with absentee parent/s may only be in moderation due to their difference in innate dispositions such as their personalities and levels of resilience, and other external social factors. Malik, Mahmood, and Abbas (2022) looked into whether the social development of young adults (in the form of resilience) is more closely related to the upbringing of single parents or of both parents, and how the absence of one of the two parents affects these important factors. The findings indicated that young adults from happy and dysfunctional homes had similar levels of resilience. It also suggested that the individual's education may have an impact on their resilience. They also concluded that social support is important because it promotes belonging, affection, and upkeep to alleviate anxiety. It also aided in the empowerment of young adults from broken systems. Furthermore, in another local study on the children of OFWs, Rendeza (2017) found that although they long for their parents' physical presence, they don't feel abandoned or rejected. These same ideas may also be applied to the respondents of this current research as it shows that although they may feel to a certain degree that they have a need to belong due to their parent's absence, there are internal and external factors that can be attributed to them not having an extensive or high level of belonging needs.

The results suggest that although these young adults may yearn for acceptance and have the desire to be needed by others, it is possible that they are emotionally resilient and do not take to heart the moments when they are not accepted. It can also mean that these young adults may evaluate their self-worth mainly from their own assessment of themselves and not from external sources.

C. The relationship between the para-social relationship and the need to belong to young adults with absentee parents.

Table 7. Relationship Between the Para-Social Relationship and the Need to Belong of Young Adults with Absentee Parents

Variables	M	SD	$r < .01$	Interpretation
MMPR	2.98	0.488465	0.345895	Slight Correlation, definite but small relationship
Need to Belong Scale	3.25	0.742665		

To find the relationship between the Para-Social Relationship and the Need to Belong of young Adults with absentee parents, the bivariate Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated. The strength, direction, and likelihood of a linear relationship between two interval or ratio variables are measured by Pearson's r (Chee, 2015). The results shown in table 7 above indicates that there is a slight correlation or a definite but small correlation between the parasocial relationship and the need to belong of young adults with absentee parents, given the r value of 0.345895. As their engagement in para-social relationships increases, their need to belong seems to increase as well.

Daniel Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) was the first to develop the concept of parasocial relationship. It is deemed as the illusion of relationship that occurs between a spectator and performer due to the surge of the new mass media. They gave two explanations as to why people partake in parasocial relationships: (1) deficiency or compensatory paradigm; and (2) the global use paradigm. The compensatory paradigm explains that individuals who engage in parasocial interaction or relationships see the media figures that they idolize as readily available persons who may fill in the gap of their lacking sociability and relationships. On the other hand, according to the Global-Use paradigm, many people participate in para-social relationships as a regular part of their daily lives rather than as a way to make up for their lack of social relationships.

The compensatory paradigm may be used to explain why young adults with absent parent/s are more likely to engage in para-social relationships. In a research conducted by Jarzyna (2012), she found that introversion, the need to belong, self-esteem, and gender all influence how people use parasocial interaction, and those who had a strong need to belong benefit from parasocial interaction. Gayle Stever (2019) has also stated that the idea of television personalities or other public entertainers offering a sense of security is now gradually being studied in what was once only traditionally associated with infant-caregiver and adult romantic relationships.

John Bowlby (1969) has said that children who frequently experience having their parents absent during important occasions may struggle to establish and maintain healthy relationships. Thus, the quality of early parent-child interactions can shape an individual's capacity for forming healthy relationships later in life. Individuals who have absent parent/s could turn to media characters for company and emotional support, utilizing parasocial interactions to make up for their unmet emotional needs. The result of this study supports the theory of Bowlby as it shows that the relationship that children have with their parents from early on have lasting effects on how they form relationships throughout their lives. Young adults with absentee parent/s grew up lacking the vital presence of their parents which had an impact in their degree of belonging needs as is shown in the results of the second objective of this study. In turn, they try to compensate for the aftermath of their parents' absence by trying to find solace in building a one-sided relationship with media figures. This may be due to the fact that these media figures are curated to be ideal beings who primarily engage with audiences to appease and appeal to their needs. There is a certain level of assurance given to "fans" or audiences that can make them feel that

these media figures will not abandon them as easily as real people in their lives.

The psychosocial development theory, the intimacy versus isolation stage in particular, of Erik Erikson may also give enlightenment to the results. Love is said to be the basic virtue that is achieved upon one's success in this stage. On the other hand, the inability to form lasting, secured, and meaningful relationships may lead to one failing this stage and it can cause a sense of loneliness, isolation, and even depression (Sutton, 2020). Erikson's stages of development are interconnected with each other, and failure to achieve the basic positive virtues of the previous stages, may have an impact on the achievement of virtues in the succeeding ones. If from the beginning, hope is not achieved right from the trust vs. mistrust stage, there is a chance that the formation of meaningful relationships will not come as easy. Given this, young adults with absentee parent/s who to a certain degree have a notable level of need to belong, may feel loneliness or isolation from being rejected or left out by their peers or other important people in their lives. And this may lead them to compensate by looking into celebrities, influences, or other media figures for emotional support, thus supporting the compensatory paradigm of Horton and Wohl (1956).

Children of absent parents typically face difficulties in nearly every area of their lives. These children often exhibit deficits in social, emotional, cognitive, and attachment skills. Raised by an absent parent or parents, children may find it difficult to form relationships later in life due to the lack of emotional support and affection from their caregivers. In a study by Yoo Rha Hong and Jae Sun Park (2012) on the "Impact of attachment, temperament and parenting on human development," It revealed that kids with strong parent-child bonds typically develop into more capable and resilient adults. Conversely, those who do not feel a deep bond with their carers could find it challenging to get along with others and to develop confidence or trust in other people. This is also supported by Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2005), who said that people with insecure parent-child attachments are more prone to form close parasocial relationships with media celebrities because they provide a sense of constancy and dependability that may be lacking in their real-life interactions. In order to fill the emotional hole left by absentee parent/s, people may turn to para-social connections for comfort and connection if they lack parental support.

Overall, there is a correlation between the need to belong and para-social relationships among young adults with absentee parents, however, it is not very strong. Initially, the compensatory paradigm has been provided as an explanation. In another perspective, the slight correlation may be explained using the Global-Use paradigm. It is said that individuals may engage in parasocial interaction and relationships as a normal part of their lives as Horton and Wohl (1956) suggests. The global-use paradigm implies that idolizing and occupying oneself with celebrities or media figures is fundamentally similar to real social interactions, parasocial and face-to-face interactions complement each other in fulfilling the needs of individuals, and rather than for compensation-seeking, it is due to the general process of emotional bonding. It may be that a notable level of need to belong is not needed for one to idolize and engage in one-sided relationships with media figures.

With a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) value of 0.345895, there is a slight correlation or a definite but small correlation between para-social interactions and the need to belong among young adults with absentee parent/s. In order to fill the emotional void created by their parents' absence, young adults with absentee parent/s who lack parental support may resort to parasocial ties for solace and connection. The correlation, nevertheless, is not very strong. The study also lends credence to the idea that a person's ability for developing good connections later in life might be influenced by the caliber of early parent-child interactions.

D. Sex as a factor in determining the extent of para-social relationship and the degree of need to belong of young adults with absentee parents.

a. Multidimensional Measurement of Parasocial Relationships (MMPR)

The table 8 presents the comparison of the responses of young adults with absentee parent/s on MMPR in female and male respondents. Stipulated in the table are the mean score on both sex and also the verbal interpretation of the derived data.

Table 8. Comparison of the Mean of Female and Male respondents in the MMPR

<i>MMPR</i>	<i>Mean (Female)</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Mean (Male)</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. Affective	3.38	High Engagement	2.97	Moderate Engagement
2. Behavior	2.48	Moderate Engagement	2.22	Moderate Engagement
3. Cognitive	3.30	High Engagement	2.57	Moderate Engagement
4. Decisional	3.05	High Engagement	3.14	High Engagement
TOTAL:	3.05	High Engagement	2.77	Moderate Engagement

The table above shows that female respondents have high engagement in parasocial relationships compared to male, gaining a mean

score of 3.05. Male respondents on the other hand resulted in a mean score of 2.77 which means that their engagement was moderate. For the affective, cognitive, and decisional dimensions, the data indicates that the engagement of female young adults were high gathering a mean of 3.38, 3.30, and 3.05 respectively.

As for the males, the affective dimension resulted in a mean of 2.97, behavior dimension was 2.22, cognitive dimension was 2.57 - all has an adjectival equivalent of moderate engagement. In both sexes, the behavioral dimension received the lowest mean score among the four presented dimensions, 2.48 (moderate engagement) for females and 2.22 (moderate engagement) for males. The findings suggest that females were more engaged in parasocial relationships than males. The result supports the study conducted by Caitlyn Elizabeth Dyer (2010) wherein she concluded that females were more prone to develop parasocial associations than male. Relating to the result of this study, both findings were able to determine which sex was more prone, but in this present research, it additionally specified what is the extent of their engagement in different dimensions.

Moreover, basing on the different dimensions, female respondents score higher than male in all dimensions except in the decisional dimension. It can be inferred that male individuals' decisions in life can be highly influenced by the media persona that they follow than female individuals; the idolized media persona served as their role model and mentor. Similarly, Gleason, Theran, and Newberg (2017) found out in a research study that "boys" mostly viewed their chosen famous individual as mentors than friends and adolescent boys pertaining to their favored media figures as their role models – these results can be seen in young adults as well as discovered in the present study. In addition, for females, it was concluded in their study that they were mainly fascinated with their chosen celebrity and some, who have strong parasocial involvement viewed their favorite celebrity as a possible romantic partner.

Overall, the extent of commitment in different dimensions for engaging in the parasocial relationship of female and male young adults greatly differs. Several factors may contribute to the result gathered from the respondents which highlights the differences of the sexes' psychological needs and mental processes.

b. Need to Belong Scale (NTBS)

Table 9. Comparison of the Mean of Female and Male respondents in the NTBS

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. Male	2.87	Moderate Need
2. Female	3.365	Moderate Need

To see if there is a difference in the need to belong of young adults with absentee parents when sex is taken into consideration as a factor, the mean scores of males and females were calculated separately. Men scored on average 2.87, which indicates a moderate level of need to belong. Females, on the other hand, had a mean score of 3.365, which similarly indicates a moderate degree for need to belong. The mean scores of males and females are similar to each other, suggesting that the need to belong of male and female young adults with absentee parents have no notable difference.

This is in contradiction with the study of Hasan and Wibowo (2019), wherein the mean score of female students for the need to belong scale is higher than that of the male students, with a significance level of 0.007 ($p < 0.05$), wherein the females had a mean of 50.98 and the males had a mean of 47.85. However, this result was from teenagers of the general male and female population of Indonesian Instagram users. In another study among young adults by Adamczyk (2018), it was also found that women had higher levels of need to belong than men.

This result may be due to the respondents of the present study being young adults with absentee parents. Which may indicate that there is no notable difference in the need to belong of these individuals regardless of their sex, in comparison to the general population of young adults who do not have absent parents.

Conclusion

The result show that young adults with absentee parents have a moderate engagement in para-social relationship as suggested by the overall mean score of 2.98, with affective dimension having the highest mean of 3.28 (high engagement) – the respondents scored highest in the experience of getting emotionally engaged when the media figure they admire share more private information about himself or herself. It is followed by the cognitive dimension with a mean of 3.13 (high engagement) – based on the result, they strongly

see the media figure's post as positive. The decisional dimension came in third with a mean of 3.07 (high engagement) – they are strongly inspired by the media figure to make changes in their life. Finally, the behavioral dimension came in last with a mean of 2.42 (moderate engagement) – they often like the media figure's posts on social media, but rarely comment in the comment section. On the other hand, their degree of need to belong is also moderate as what the mean score of 3.25 implies; they have the desire of having social support and are afraid of social rejection. As for the relationship between these two variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) value of 0.345895 says that there is slight correlation and that the relationship is definite but small.

It can be inferred that young adults with absentee parents engage in para-social relationships in all of the different dimensions such as: affective, behavioral, cognitive, and decisional. The results also show that although these young adults may desire social acceptance and connection, they are not preoccupied with it. Therefore, among young adults with absentee parents, an increase in engagement in para-social relationships may indicate that there is also an increase in their need to belong. However, this does not imply that the variable causes the occurrence of the other.

Moreover, the theory of Daniel Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) played an important role in this study. They provided two explanations as to why people engage in parasocial relationships, one of which is the compensatory paradigm. This paradigm suggests that individuals who partake in parasocial interaction or relationships view the media figures that they idolize to be more convenient in filling the gap of their lacking sociability and relationships. In addition, Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs theory said that an individual has a need to belong or feel accepted by the people around them (Maslow, 1968, as cited by Baumeister, 2012). It can be concluded that, when an individual lacks meaningful relationships or social interactions in their life caused by feeling rejected as supported by the IPAR Theory (Rohner, 2016), they may have difficulties in fulfilling their need to belong. Based on the results of this study, it can be implied that young adults with absentee parents may have felt rejected by their parents, which may have made it difficult for them to build relationships and led to a need for belonging. Additionally, they may also satisfy their need by developing parasocial relationships with their media role models. Thus, having a complete family where parents are present in their child's lives has an impact on their ability to build meaningful relationships as an adult.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that future researchers conduct studies in conjunction with this, on young adults without absentee parents and compare the results with the findings of this study. Additionally, the parasocial relationship and need to belong of adolescents may also give interesting results when studied. Because, according to different studies made before this present one, it showed that they are prone to engage in parasocial relationships. This research could also be studied more thoroughly through the qualitative method to see what factors in particular cause engagement in parasocial relationships and a need to belong in young adults with absentee parents. Lastly, conducting a study on determining the correlation between introversion and the engagement in parasocial relationships as well as the need to belong could give a meaningful result because introversion was discovered to potentially have a direct influence on the results of this study.

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