Research Paper

A Study on Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships

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ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of Over-the-top (OTT) media platforms and various forms of media has led to people talking and relating to media characters and figures. It, therefore, is interesting and also the aim of the study to understand if there is a relationship between romantic attachment styles, and one's parasocial relationships. The study was conducted on a sample of 170. The method for analysis used was correlational analysis. The correlation between the two variables is also interesting as the sample only consisted of young Indian adults in the age group of 18-25. Previous studies were only done either on undergraduate students, or on adolescents. Another gap that the primary investigators noticed was that the previous studies used only celebrities to study Parasocial relationship. Hence, the researchers wanted to fill this gap. The scales used for this study were (a) Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990), and Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale (Tukachinsky, 2010). It was hypothesized that there would be no significant correlation between romantic attachment style, and parasocial relationships; and there would be a significant correlation between romantic attachment styles (Secure, Preoccupied, Dismissing, and Fearful) and Parasocial Relationship respectively. It was found that there is no significant correlation between romantic attachment styles, and parasocial relationship. However, there may be other factors that must have contributed to this result, and conclusion.

Keywords: Romantic Attachment Style, Parasocial Relationships

I n the present study, the researchers are trying to find if there is a relationship between Romantic Attachment Style (also known as Adult Attachment Style), and parasocial relationship.

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Romantic Attachment Style

Romantic Attachment Style, also known as the Adult Attachment Style, is a concept that tries to explain if individuals are comfortable, and confident in close relationships, their fear of rejection, their yearning for intimacy in these relationships, and finally, their preference for self- sufficiency or interpersonal distance. This concept originates from Bowlby's Attachment Style which is the foundation on which a person's adult attachment style develops (Meyer & Pilkonis, 2001). Therefore, it becomes important to understand the concept of Bowlby's and Ainsworth's Attachment Style, following which it would become easier to understand the concept of Romantic Attachment Style.

John Bowlby was a psychoanalyst and believed that childhood experiences do impact a child's life. He saw that attachment to the attachment figure acts like a secure base from which a child tries to explore the world. This secure base also becomes important when a child wants to receive emotional support, and safety, and therefore also becomes a safe haven.

In continuation to Bowlby's theory Mary Ainsworth (1991) also showcased this through her famous experiment called the "Strange situation". This study was conducted in 8 stages for 3 minutes. After observing 100 infants between the ages of 12-18 months, she came up with three attachment styles i.e., secure, anxious, and avoidant. Secure attachment is when the child is securely attached to the caregiver, and shows less anxiousness. Anxious attachment is when a child feels that they would not receive responsive care from the caregiver, and in Ainsworth's study seemed to be resistant towards their mother's. Avoidant attachment style is when the child shows no interaction or distress when separated from their caregiver. Apart from these three attachment styles Main and Solomon (1982), had come up with a fourth attachment style, known as the dismissive attachment style. These infants do not fit any of the above categories, and show either contradictory behaviors or they show freezing movements. This attachment style may develop due to some sort of unresolved attachment trauma (as cited in Feeney & Noller, 1990).

These early attachment styles form the foundation of how adults would form an attachment with individuals in their life. These attachment styles along with the social interactions that one has with different individuals, therefore shapes a person's adult attachment style. This then even translates into the romantic love life of individuals, and hence adult attachment style is also known as Romantic Attachment Style. This concept was first discussed by Hazan and Shaver (1987). According to Hazan and Shaver, there is an internal working model of attachment which determines if the attachment style established in childhood continues into adulthood as well (as cited in Feeney & Noller, 1990). The concept of internal working model was also given by Bowlby (1969), which refers to the mental representations of the idea of attachment. In infancy according to Bowlby there is only one internal working model, but as children grow up they start having multiple internal working models, and this can be different from the attachment style with their parent. The measure for romantic attachment style is measured on the model of self, and others, which further determines an individual's anxiety, and avoidance in terms of relationships. The anxious dimension reflects a person's model of self, whereas on the other hand the avoidant dimension reflects a person's model of others. Therefore, anxiety, and avoidance become the two dimensions on the basis of which romantic attachment styles are determined. Hazan and Shaver (1987) had initially proposed three types of romantic attachment styles, which was further elaborated into four romantic attachment styles by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). They did so by

differentiating between fearful attachment style and dismissing attachment style (as cited in Levy et al., 2011, Meyer & Pilkonis, 2001).

Therefore, according to Bartholomew (1990), there are four attachment styles, they are (a) secure, (b) preoccupied, (c) fearful, and (d) dismissing. Under secure attachment style, individuals are low on anxiety and avoidance dimension. These individuals have a high self-esteem, and are comfortable with forming close relationships with others. Under preoccupied attachment style are high on anxiety, and low on avoidance, which means that they want approval and acceptance from others. A fearful attachment style is when an individual is high on anxiety and avoidance. Such individuals have a negative self-view, and have a tough time trusting others. Lastly, Dismissive Attachment Style is when an individual is low on anxiety, and high on avoidance dimension. Individuals who have this attachment style have a positive self- view, but may dismiss close relationships as not important (as cited in Korver-Nieberg et al., 2015).

Thus, romantic attachment style becomes important in understanding how people in their adulthood may perceive their relationship with others, and how their understanding of themselves affects their relationships. Thus, it would be interesting to look at how in the media run world attachment styles are related to parasocial relationships.

Parasocial Relationships
The concept of parasocial relationships and parasocial interactions was formally introduced by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) in their work 'Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance (1956).' This concept, according to Horton and Wohl (1956), provides distinctive, particular characteristics to what they considered the newer forms of mass media in the 1950s, comprising television, radio and films. The characteristics henceforth mentioned by Horton and Wohl (1956), refer to the ability of these forms to create 'illusions' of interactions in the audience, whom they term 'spectators,' about the 'performers' involved. The 'performers' refer to the individuals presenting themselves in the media being communicated to the audience. Horton and Wohl (1956) state that these illusionary relationships cause the audience to respond to the 'performer' in a manner that replicates one's interactions with their primary group.

Parasocial relationships hence, are mostly one-sided since the performers do not reciprocate the audience members' feelings for them (Horton & Wohl, 1956). According to Horton and Wohl (1965), parasocial relationships cannot be created by the audience, they can only be chosen from the existing choices offered to them. Performers assume fictional roles designed to be woven into narratives that are later broadcasted over media to appeal to large audiences. For the performer, the fictional roles disappear once they take a bow, or once the broadcast is over. For an audience member who develops a parasocial relationship, the fictional character role is still alive.

Celebrities are mostly commodified for the sole purpose of developing these 'parasocial relationships' as a way to sell products to audience members who will most definitely buy them because they believe that they are being specially addressed by these individuals (Gamson, 1994). In this light, Horton and Wohl (1956) describe the appeal of a term they coin 'the persona,' and the role it plays in maintaining this phenomenon. A persona refers to the image or figure created by and for the purpose of radio and television broadcasting. Their presence is considered 'intimate' in the context of a pale shadow or outline of the original term, and adequately provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment to the audience

members who perceive them. The persona is one that is regularly present to the audience. In that way, they are dependable and stray away from volatility because the spectators know exactly when and where to seek the persona. Television and radio provide detailed snippets of the persona's life, providing a history and context for the spectator to perceive a 'bond' of intimacy with them.

By creating a persona, or a fictional personality just for the purpose of presenting it on television and radio - the managers and producers essentially create a hyperreality (Baudrillard et al., 1994), where the line between what is real and what is fake is blurred. The personality is merely created for television and does not have any grounding in reality. According to Horton and Wohl (1956), this owes to the personas following a set line of predictability and desirable qualities that remain fairly stable compared to the unpredictable and constantly changing reality that the audience reside in. In this sense, the spectators begin to prefer the hyperreality created by the persona, more than the reality consisting of actual relationships (Baudrillard et al., 1994).

Although the terms 'parasocial relationship' and 'parasocial interaction' are often used interchangeably, Klimmt et al. (2006) and McDonald and Hu (2005) have stated that the terms in fact differ in their meanings. Klimmt et al. (2006) discuss that parasocial interactions occur during the process of media perception. Parasocial relationships, on the other hand, refer to the perceived relationships the spectators develop with the portrayed characters (Klimmt et al., 2006). Further, McDonald and Hu (2005) state that parasocial relationships are developed after the process of media observation and not during the process of media observation (McDonald & Hu, 2005). The spectators form parasocial relationships beyond the process of media observation due to the fact that they perceive these relationships in the same way that they would perceive real life relationships (McDonald & Hu, 2005).

Young Adulthood
The first conception of adolescence can be traced back to G. Stanley Hall's publication of Adolescence (Hall, 1904). In his work, Hall defines adolescent development as a period from ages 14-24, where rapid new changes occur. This period according to him is also referred to as 'new birth' (Hall, 1904). Hall's work extensively described similarities between what psychologists now call 'adolescence' and people in their early 20s, in terms of their social relationships and need for romance and sexual desires (Hall, 1904). Hall reveals that "reading craze" among individuals within the age group of 14-24 are trapped by the 'reading craze' in an attempt to "have their feelings stirred" (Hall, 1904). This also draws attention to the influence of media such as television and books in enhancing feelings of romance and sexual desires.

According to Arnett (1996) studies found during the early 1900s substantiate the idea that media was used by adolescence for mood regulation. However, Arnett (2006), explains that Hall's presumptions about adolescence and categorizing individuals aged between 14-24 was deeply flawed at the time since many psychological concepts had not yet been defined and researched. Hence, many of his findings do not confer with our current findings in research and psychology.

Erik Erikson's theory on psychosocial development classified human development into eight sequential stages (Erikson, 1959). This theory clearly demarcated adolescence from young adulthood stating that adolescent development is centered around identity formation versus

role confusion (Erikson, 1959). Young adults on the other hand must grapple with the formation of partnerships with maintenance of a balance between intimacy (love) and independence (productive work). The connection between adolescent and young adulthood development can be clearly seen in this theory. A delay in identity formation during adolescence caused by role confusion could result in delay into young adulthood which might be a consequence of socio-cultural changes.

In 1970, Kenneth Keniston postulated a developmental stage between adolescence and adulthood, which he termed, youth. Youth refers to a transitional stage between adolescents in their early and late teenage years, to adulthood. Modern technology, prosperity, consumerism, social unrest, and advanced education were recognized as contributing factors leading to this limbo phase in life (Keniston, 1970). Keniston's theory of youthhood was criticized as it was highly influenced by the cultural context in which the concept was developed and provided little insight into the universal and stable characteristics of this stage.

The Theory of Emerging Adulthood by Arnett in 2004 provided a more concrete idea of young adulthood. This theory argues that the age between 18-25 is a distinct transitional phase for people who are neither adolescents nor adults. Emerging adulthood is characterized by five main features: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and openness to new possibilities and change (Arnett, 2004).

The shift from emerging adulthood to adulthood is only possible when individuals obtain a secure living space, attain a degree, establish a career, and lastly form a stable and committed relationship with their partner. Arnett (1996) states, however, that with every new generation these markers tend to change as well. Emerging adults in the early 2000s vastly differ from the ones in the 1960s and 70s. Their expectations, especially in the romantic sphere have dramatically changed. Certain demographic changes have also led to this alteration and resulted in a delay in people moving into adulthood. In countries with a high secondary education rate there is a delay in the adolescent population's ability to achieve the prescribed developmental tasks of young adulthood. As a result, their entry into subsequent developmental stages is further pushed. Therefore, this study has collected data from samples that fall within the age group of 18-25 years.

Findings from works by Hall (1904) and Tomlinson (2019), have revealed that young adults and their attachment styles influence romantic consumption behaviour. People identify with characters and their romantic experiences that they are exposed to via media sources like video games, shows, movies, and books. This study focuses on young adults in India to discern whether there exists an association between their attachment styles and tendency to form Parasocial relationships.

Scope
There have been no previous studies that look at the relationship between Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationship exclusively. In relation to these topics, the sample for studies has never been Indians living in India. There was only one study found to have included Indians. However, the numbers of Indians in the sample was negligible. It was one conducted by Cole & Leets (1999). The scope is limited to 170 individuals who are between the ages of 18-25 who are Indian citizens, living in India. Their responses will be obtained through online and offline means over a period of one month.

Significance of the Study

The study's goal is to determine whether there is a link between one's romantic attachment styles and the formation of a para-social relationship between the individual and the fictitious character. In our study, we will use correlation to determine the degree and direction of the association between romantic attachment styles and para-social relationships. A major gap observed is that no study on the Indian population has been undertaken. The bulk of research has only looked at undergraduate students, which will elaborately be discussed in the Review of Literature. The significance of our findings will help provide valuable insights and deepen the current understanding on the effect romantic attachment styles has on para-social relationships specifically in the Indian cultural context between the ages of 18-25.

Statement of Research Problem

The study wants to research more about how romantic attachment style has a significant association with parasocial relationships and how this relationship works out in the Indian context.

Research Objective

O1: To study how romantic attachment styles are associated with one's para-social relationships involving fictional couples

Research Question

Q1. Is there a significant association between romantic attachment styles of an individual and their para-social relationship with fictional characters?

Hypotheses

H0 – There is no significant association between the attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H1 – There is a significant association between the secure attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H2 – There is a significant association between the preoccupied attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H3 – There is a significant association between the dismissive attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H4 - There is a significant association between the fearful attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Attachment

There have been a few studies over the years which pertained to attachment styles in relation to Parasocial Relationships. The current research focuses on the relation between Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships. Bleske-Rechek et al. (2021) studied whether a person's rearing impacts their Romantic Attachment Style. However, the study showed that there was no relation between a person's Romantic Attachment Style and their rearing environment.

The oldest study reviewed was in 1997. It aimed to look at the linkage between Romantic Attachment Styles and Parasocial relationships. The study was conducted before the advent of social media when people did not have direct access to celebrities and their lives. Despite that, it is a good indicator of there being a relationship between Romantic Attachment Style

and Parasocial Relationships. MacNeill and DiTommaso (2021) studied why Parasocial Relationships were formed based on Attachment Styles. They concluded that people formed Parasocial Relationships with those similar to them, meaning that they sought representation. A study by Stavropoulos (2018) looked at the relation between multiple factors such as, age, gender, romantic engagement, excessive internet use and the factor most relevant to our research- romantic attachment style. The results concluded that individuals in relationships were more likely to have and form the Avoidant Attachment Style, whereas those who used the internet excessively were less likely to have and form Avoidant Attachment Style. The study's limitations include its focus on the Greek cultural context and only a specific critical developmental period.

The most relevant research was conducted by Collison et al. (2018). It studied the relation between Attachment Styles and Celebrity Attraction. The study is very closely related to the current study on Romantic Attachment Styles and Parasocial Relationships. The results showed that those with the Insecure Attachment Style were less likely to be attracted to celebrities whereas those with Secure and low trust in others were more likely to be attracted to celebrities (Collison et al., 2018). There were certain major limitations in these studies. None of them contained Indians, meaning that they might not be fully applicable to the Indian context. Many of them were in fact mainly focused on white middle-class individuals. The studies were either too specific in nature or looked at too large a relation.

Media and Internet Use
Consumer behaviour through media is an influential factor in a person's tendency to form parasocial relationships. Research conducted by Mende et al. (2018) studied how attachment styles influence individuals' consumer behaviour. The results reported that individuals with fearful and anxious attachment styles increase individuals' romantic consumption behaviour. Whereas, individuals with the avoidant attachment style tend to show a lower intensity of romantic consumption. The limitations of the study include its adherence to a gender binary, as well as its focus on a sample from a specific cultural context – which is the United States.

Ballantine and Martin (2005) examined the implicit Parasocial relationships formed by those who do not actively consume media but simply browse the internet and how these people form relationships with other online users. This paper is very important as it reveals theoretical evidence about how non-active participants in an online forum can be influenced by the active participants. Concerning the current study, this shows that it is essential to study Parasocial relationships as they are very influential in people's lives.

An article published by Thomson (2006) examined why people were likely to develop Parasocial relationships with "human brands", a persona that they see in media. Results showed that a "human brand" gives people a sense of autonomy. Individuals get firmly attached to them, and they play a very big role in people's lives. The non-probability sampling could have been a confounding factor. The study uses very little statistical data to understand the relationship between people's Parasocial relationships and their "human brands" (Thomson, 2006).

Leith (2021) examined the relation between twitch streamers and the consumers of their content. Twitch is different from other social media platforms as it allows active communication between the chat and the streamer. The study showed that streamer-targeted messages produced more of a verbal intimacy score as opposed to viewer targeted messages.

A Study on Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships

In many studies, the terms parasocial relationships and parasocial interactions are used interchangeably, which makes the distinction between them unclear (Dibble et al., 2015). However, in research conducted by Dibble et al. (2015), they aimed to clarify these concepts. Results of the study showed that a parasocial interaction is a moment or a feeling of mutual awareness, while parasocial relationships are feelings of romantic involvement. There is not enough prior research to generalize, primarily due to the lack of a college student sample (Dibble et al., 2015).

Pertaining to parasocial interactions, Jarzyna (2012) specifically looked at the use of Parasocial interaction by people with introversion to satisfy belongingness needs. Results showed that introverts have lower self-esteem and that Parasocial Interaction was linked to increase in self-esteem. Although there was little evidence to show that Parasocial interaction was a means for introverts to fulfill belongingness needs, it was seen that there is an immense need to belong. The terms Parasocial interaction and Parasocial relationships were used interchangeably (Jarzyna, 2012), which is a limitation. The usage of psychology students could have affected the results as the students would be more aware of the tools being used. It was a cross-sectional study which does not have the generalizability of a longitudinal study (Jarzyna, 2012).

Gleason et al. (2017) focused on adolescents and how they viewed celebrities. The study focused on examining para socialization among 151 adolescents. Most participants looked at celebrities as potential relationship partners. The terms Parasocial relationship and Parasocial interaction were used interchangeably, which is a limitation. Gender stereotypes were not accounted for, which would be a significant factor. A gap relevant to the current study would be the lack of inclusion of adults (Gleason et al., 2017).

Romance is a very important aspect of human life. Christine Tomlinson (2019), in "Gaming on Romance", describes how within gaming, the romance between characters becomes very real to those who play the video games. People tend to identify and get attached to these characters, thus forming Parasocial relationships. These relationships give them enthralling experiences where they can fulfill their romantic needs and experiment romantically (Tomlinson, 2019). This shows how people displace their needs from real-life romance to Parasocial romance. It will assist the current study in providing an understanding to how people are predisposed to develop Parasocial relationships based on their attachment styles (Tomlinson, 2019).

In a thesis conducted by Dyche (2017), the effects of binge-watching on the formation of Parasocial relationships and the effects of Parasocial breakups were examined. The study was conducted on viewers of the show 'Gilmore Girls.' The results of the study reported a negative relationship between binge-watching behaviour and the degree of Parasocial relationships formed. A major limitation of this study was its focus on a specific show with a more female- dominated viewership. A majority of the participants were female, and hence the results cannot be generalized for other shows (Dyche, 2017).

Cole and Leets conducted a study in 1999 to examine how audience members formed Parasocial relationships with television personalities based on Parasocial interaction. The study is very significant despite being two decades old as it is the only study found that included Indians within the sample of 115 undergraduate students (Cole & Leets, 1999). Results showed that a person's likelihood to form Parasocial relationships was heavily influenced by their attachment style (Cole & Leets, 1999). Limitations included; the removal

of certain items from the questionnaires which only focused on attachment styles, and contributing factors were not considered. A significant gap was that it focused too much on Parasocial interaction instead of Parasocial relationships (Cole & Leets, 1999).

A study conducted in 2021 assessed the relationship between people's attachment styles and their relationship with their favourite media figures (MacNeill & DiTommaso, 2021). The researchers believed that those with anxious-avoidant style attachment would gravitate towards Parasocial relationships with media figures that have a secure attachment to compensate for their lack in real life (MacNeill & DiTommaso, 2021). The results of the study showed that people are attracted to those who are like them; they seek representation instead of the belief that they wish to compensate for what they were missing. Its limitations were; the study only looked at attachment and no other aspects, only a single measure of 16PF was used, and the sample was limited to the USA and Canada. The study did not include the extent of a person's Parasocial relationship based on their attachment style (MacNeill & DiTommaso, 2021).

Social Relationships
Li et al. (2020) examined the relationships between young adults' romantic attachment styles and their amount of satisfaction in life, relationships and finance. The indirect influence on this on the individual's outcomes in life was additionally studied. The results reported that young adults who showcased a high degree of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety were associated with lower levels of relationship and life satisfaction. The limitations of the study include its focus on a sample of young adults who attended college, and not on young adults who did not attend college. The study also solely focused on participants who were in romantic relationships (Li et al., 2020).

Research done by Carol Jarzyna (2020), looked at how parasocial relationships help in reducing loneliness and fulfilling social needs that were not met, especially during the COVID- 19 quarantine. It showed that para-socialization during quarantine did help people in feeling a sense of togetherness. Its major limitation is that it did not involve statistical data and did not focus on just celebrities.

Bond (2021) examined how Parasocial relationships play a role as a functional social alternative during the period of social distancing. The results of the study revealed that people changed their communication behaviours and began spending more time in imaginative Parasocial relationships (Bond, 2021). The data collected did not look at the emotional well- being of the participants, which can be an essential factor. The lack of gender and racial diversity means that the results are not generalizable (Bond, 2021).

In a study conducted by Bérail et al. (2019), the relationships between social anxiety, Parasocial relationships and YouTube addiction were examined. Moreover, the relationships between social anxiety, Parasocial relationships with YouTubers and YouTube addiction were closely studied to identify the causes of YouTube addiction.The results indicated that an individual's intensity of social anxiety affects the development of Parasocial relationships with YouTubers. The limitations of the study include more female participants than male participants. The participants were told that they wanted to study anxiety, and thus this may have created a bias, showing a higher score in social anxiety. There are also cultural differences in the formation of Parasocial relationships (Bérail et al., 2019).

Yang et al. (2022) conducted a study to analyse the effects of interpersonal alienation on the development of Parasocial relationships with fictional characters through Internet fictional reading. Moreover, it studied the relationship between these imaginary relationships and the tendency to engage in excessive internet fictional reading. It also studied the effects of relational- interdependent self-construal (RISC) on the formation of Parasocial relationships. The results presented a positive relationship between interpersonal alienation and excessive internet fictional reading. Moreover, this relationship was influenced by the intensity of the parasocial relationship formed, and individuals with low RISC tended to form stronger parasocial relationships than individuals with high RISC (Yang et al., 2022). A few limitations include the study's focus on the Chinese cultural context, as well as the inability for the study to establish strong causal factors for the variables since it is a cross-sectional study (Yang et al., 2022).

Another study by Rosaen and Dibble (2016) examined the association between liked and disliked television characters by analyzing the influence of Parasocial relationships on social compensation variables and attachment styles. Results showed that lonely and anxious individuals showed strong Parasocial relationships with disliked characters (Rosaen & Dibble, 2016). The sample is just undergraduate students, meaning the findings could not be generalized. The distinction between liked and disliked could not have objectivity, and subjectivity is not a good indicator (Rosaen & Dibble, 2016).

Bernhold (2021) studied the relationship between the Parasocial relationships developed by older adults about television characters they dislike and the prediction of symptoms of loneliness and depression. The study also considers how these Parasocial relationships are influenced by the individual's attachment style and the quality of the romantic relationships that they harbour in real life. The study concluded that adults with low attachment avoidance style and a significantly lower quality of real-life relationships tend to show more depressive and loneliness symptoms as their Parasocial relationship with a disliked character intensifies (Bernhold, 2021). The limitations of the study include the sample's unbalanced proportion of gender, age and ethnicity. It tended to focus on European Americans, women and individuals who belong to the early years of the late adulthood age category. Studies show that individuals who belong to the earlier years of this category tend to consume media differently than individuals who belong to older years (Bernhold, 2021).

The study by Bernhold (2021) becomes important as it focuses on two aspects one is the idea of attachment style in terms of avoidant style, and lower quality of real life relationships, and then tracing it to the the fact that the study was done on older population. Hence demographical information of the sample becomes important while studying about social relationships, attachment, and media consumption.

Role of Demographical Details
The demographic characteristics of a population, such as age, race and place of residence play a significant role in the way Parasocial relationships are formed and maintained. The study by Bernhold (2021) specifically focuses on the age group of 55-77, pointing out the study's focus on that specific age group and not any other age group. The results of Bernhold (2021)'s study surround and are influenced by the age group chosen as the sample. Other studies focusing on age, race and place of residence have been identified to understand the role of an individual's background in the formation of Parasocial relationships.

A study by Tolbert and Drogos (2019) examined the Parasocial relationships developed by tweens with YouTubers. It also studied how tweens wishfully identify with YouTubers. The results concluded that the participants showed a gender-congruent identification pattern with certain YouTubers (Tolbert & Drogos, 2019). The study's limitations are observed in its adherence to a strict gender binary. It did not take into consideration the gender non-conforming identities of tweens. Another limitation is observable in terms of the location. All participants were recruited from a metropolitan area in the Southern United States. It is possible that Parasocial relationships can be developed differently by tweens living in other areas (Tolbert & Drogos, 2019).

A study by Grol-Prokopczyk (2018) sought to examine how a person's demographic impacts their relation to celebrities. This would in turn be relevant to the current study as it will help in understanding how a person's background affects their Parasocial relationships. This study is essential to note that the media figures that people form Parasocial relationships with directly influence their beliefs. Celebrities are seen as agents of cultural change (Grol- Prokopczyk, 2018). Media figures are very influential regarding the mindsets of people who admire them. This adds to the current research as it highlights the importance of studying the relationship between romantic attachment and Parasocial relationship as they influence mindsets to a great extent (Grol-Prokopczyk, 2018).

A thesis prepared by Amanda Laken in 2009 examined a person's race and how their choice of celebrity affected their Parasocial interaction with them. The study viewed celebrities and not fictional characters. The results showed that race was not a significant factor, but gender was (Laken, 2009). There was a strict distinction made between black and white participants.

The reasons for the participant's choice of celebrity were not questioned. The significant gap was that it made a distinction based only on race (Laken, 2009).

India is a collectivist society, so it is essential to include studies pertaining to this context.

A study that examined the influence of attachment styles on Parasocial relationships in a collectivistic setting was conducted by Dinkha et al. (2018) on a sample of 259 undergraduate students in Kuwait. The study used the Parasocial Interaction Scale along with the Attachment Scales. The results revealed that those with secure attachment styles had weaker Parasocial relationships compared to those with insecure attachment styles. People with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles had stronger Parasocial relations compared to people with avoidant attachment styles. The study was limited to undergraduate students who belonged to high-class and affluent families. A significant gap was that the study used the Parasocial Interaction Scale to make observations regarding Parasocial relationships (Dinkha et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a quantitative study. The research design for this study would be a Correlational research design. The variables of interest in this study are Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships. The other variables are Indians residing in India for a minimum of two years, aged between 18 to 25.

Sample: The sample includes young adults between the age group of 18-25, living in India. Young adulthood was chosen as the sample for this study because the notions of romance

and social affiliation are specific to the age group consistent with James Arnett's theory of Emerging Adulthood (2000). Arnett's concept mentioned young adults as individuals aged between 18-29. However, because our study is set in the Indian context, the age group was modified to 18-25.

Post 25 years, women especially, are expected to get married, and hence their expectations and norms regarding romantic relationships may change after that age. The sampling technique used was Convenience Sampling. A total of 200 participants filled out the questionnaire that was circulated online and offline. The demographic information collected included – age, gender, relationship status, state of residence, and occupational status. The demographic information was collected because data such as gender identity, and state of residence may have been variables that influenced the results of the study, which were not measured. During analysis of the data, 30 responses were removed due to the scoring process in the Adult Attachment Scale. The inclusion criteria here is that the participants must be aged between 18-25, as well as be Indian citizens residing in India for longer than a year. The one exclusion criteria in the study is that the participant should not be clinically diagnosed with any mental disorder, as it may alter the analysis and the results obtained. A study by Durham (2010), reveals that formation of extreme.

Parasocial relationships could result in the development of pathological behaviours such as thought broadcasting, which is a symptom commonly with delusions and disorders such as schizophrenia.

Procedure
The participants were asked to individually fill out the online consent form, following which the scales measured their Romantic Attachment Style as well as their Parasocial Relationship. Consent forms and questionnaires were circulated to the participants online (using Google Forms) and offline to the people who fit in the age criteria of 18-25. The participants were students, part-time employees, full time employees or unemployed people who were exposed to Indian media and society for a minimum time period of 2 years. Post the collection of data, the dataset was audited and coded so as to remove any incomplete or missing data that would influence the results of the study. The calculation of the scores obtained in each was done separately for Adult Attachment Scale (1996), and Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale (2017).

Ethical Concerns
To maintain the participants best interests the research followed all the ethical guidelines.
Prior to the distribution of the two questionnaires, the participants were presented with an informed consent form, which included the details of the study. The participants were briefed about the study and debriefed after. Participation within the study was completely voluntary and the participants were allowed to withdraw at any time. The identity of the participants were kept anonymous and their responses remained confidential. During the conduction of the study it was ensured that there was no conflict of interest between the researchers and the participants. The research and the process ensured that the participants were not harmed. Our research is free from plagiarism or research misconduct.

Tools and Measures

The scales used for this study were Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), and Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale (MPRS). The Adult Attachment Scale was used to study romantic attachment style, and Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale was used to study Parasocial Relationship in terms of the love component.

The Adult Attachment Scale, better known as AAS was developed by Nancy Collins and Stephen Read (1990). The scale was developed on the basis Bartholomew's formulation of the adult attachment scale (1990). His formulation was a revised version of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) formulation of the theory (as cited in Collin, & Read, 1990). This Adult or Romantic Attachment Style theory has 4 types of attachment styles: (a) Secure, (b) Preoccupied, (c) Fearful, and (d) dismissing attachment style. All the four attachment styles have two dimensions (a) Avoidant, and (b) Anxiety. In this particular scale, the avoidant dimension is further measured using the two sub-scales that are (a) close, and (b) depend. The anxiety dimension is measured using the anxiety subscale. To calculate the scores, and further determine the attachment style, participants are required to answer the 18-items questionnaire. The scores for each item in recorded, and added. Some items such as item no. 2 and few more items have reverse scoring. After adding the total score, for each sub scale; the total of close and depend subscale is added, and the average score is found. The average for each participant was found. The data was then filtered by comparing the average results with 3. The results which were equal to 3 for either of the dimension was removed. The value under avoidant dimension higher than 3, and lower than 3 in anxiety dimension was taken as Secure romantic attachment style. The opposite of this combination gives the fearful romantic attachment style. A higher value than 3 in both the dimensions give the Preoccupied attachment style, and lower value than 3 in both dimensions give the Dismissive Romantic attachment style (Collins & Read, 1990).

The reliability of this scale was measured using Cronbach's Alpha a sample size of 100 was 0.82, 0.80, and 0.83, for close, depend, and anxiety sub-scales. The reliability for another 2 sets of sample of sizes 173 and 130 was found out. The Cronbach's Alpha for the same sub scales for a sample size of 173 were 0.81, 0.78, and 0.85. The Cronbach's Alpha for the same sub-scale for a sample size of 130 were 0.80, 0.78, and 0.85 (Collins & Read, 1990).

The other scale that was used for this study was Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale developed by Riva Tukachinsky (2010). The scale is divided into two sub-scales namely, (a) Parasocial Love, and (b) Parasocial Friendship. For the purpose of the present study, only Parasocial Love sub-scale was used, instead of Parasocial Friendship. The author's permission was obtained, before proceeding with this step (See Appendix). The Parasocial Love sub-scale is divided into two sub-parts i.e., Emotional Love, and Physical attraction. The Cronbach's alpha for these sub-parts were 0.84, and 0.92 respectively. Validity for this scale was reported by using construct validity wherein participants were reported to have parasocial love for characters towards whom they had feelings of love rather than feeling of friendship (Tukachinsky, 2010).

The Parasocial Love component contains 10-items, which was measured using a 5-Likert Scale. There is no reverse scoring for this scale. The score for each participant was added, and an average score was calculated. Any participant who scored 3, was removed, as 3 is seen as the mid-point in the Parasocial Scale, and which means that the participant does not really have a parasocial relationship with the character (Tukachinsky, 2010).

The demographic sheet collected data on initials, age, gender, relationship status, state of residence, and occupational status. Initials and email was collected to track the participant to ensure no false submissions were made. Age was divided into two groups 18-21, and 22-25. Gender included female, male, transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary individuals. Relationship status included: in a relationship, single, and married. Under state of residence participants had to mention the current state of residence; this was done to ensure that no NRIs were included in the study. Occupational status included student, part-time employment, full- time employment, and unemployment.

Operational Definition
Romantic attachment style is based on two models: model of self (anxiety), and model of others (avoidant). On the basis of these two models we have Secure, Preoccupied, Fearful, and Dismissive romantic attachment style (Collins & Read, 1990).

Parasocial Relationship is physical attraction and emotional attraction to the fictional character among young adults who study in Indian University in the age group of 18-25 (Tukachinsky, 2010)

Analysis
The study used a quantitative approach to make the analysis and discuss the results. After calculating the results for each romantic attachment style, and parasocial relationship, the data was sorted in terms of the four attachment styles. After this process of sorting the data, the correlation between each attachment style and parasocial relationship was analyzed. There is one null hypothesis, and four alternative hypotheses. The correlation was checked using the Jamovi software. It was found that the data was not normally distributed, and hence a non-parametric correlation test was used instead of a parametric correlation test. The Spearman's Rank Correlation was thus, used to calculate the correlation coefficient. The demographic details were used to explain the results which were produced. Thus, the results would further elaborate on the findings of the study.

RESULTS

"A Study on Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships among Indians" aims to study the correlation between Romantic attachment styles and Parasocial relationships. A quantitative correlational research design was used in this study. Through this research method, we collected data to assess whether there was a correlation between Romantic attachment styles and Parasocial relationships. These variables were measured using the Multiple Para-social Relationship Scale by Dr. Riva Tukachinsky Forster, published in 2010, and the Revised Adult Attachment Scales (AAS) by Nancy Collins, published in 1996.

The following shall be discussed the Demographic Details with Descriptive statistics and Inferential statistics with their interpretations and understanding of our study.

The research question explored by this study is stated - Is there a significant association between the romantic attachment styles of an individual and their para-social relationship with fictional characters?

The following are the hypothesis based on which our study was conducted-

H0 – There is no significant association between the attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictitious couple.

H1 – There is a significant association between the secure attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H2 – There is a significant association between the preoccupied attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H3 – There is a significant association between the dismissive attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

H4 - There is a significant association between the fearful attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple.

Data Collection and Demographic Details

The demographic details included were - Initials (which we later converted to identifiers), Age, Gender, Occupational Status, State of Residence and Relationship Status. All the options under each demographic were coded. Age ranged from 18-21, coded as 1, and 22-25, coded as 2. Gender was coded as Female as 1, Male as 2, Transgender as 3, Non-Binary as 4 and Gender Non-Conforming as 5. Occupational Status was coded as Student as 1, Part-time employment as 2, Full-time employment as 3 and Unemployed as 4. State of Residence was classified according to the region to avoid unnecessary dispersion of data as the sample would need to be bigger.

North as 1, South as 2, West as 3, East as 4 and North-East as 5. Lastly, Relationship Status was coded as In a Relationship as 1, Single as 2 and Married as 3.

We received a total of 217 responses to our questionnaires. Upon cleaning of the data, responses that fell precisely the midpoint (3) were considered invalid for both the Adult

Attachment Styles Scale and the Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale as mentioned by the authors. This left us with 170 responses.

Table 1 Demographic Details

Variables	Responses Total=170	
	N	**%**
Age		
18-21	139	81.76
22-25	31	18.23
Gender		
Female	98	57.64
Male	60	35.92
Transgender	3	1.76
Non-Binary	5	2.94
Gender Non-Conforming	5	2.94
Relationship Status		
In a relationship	51	30
Single	116	68.23
Married	3	1.76
State of Residence		
North	12	7.06
South	109	64.11

	N	%
West	38	22.35
East	7	4.11
North-East	4	2.35
Occupational Status		
Student	149	87.64
Part-Time Employment	7	4.11
Full-Time Employment	11	6.47
Unemployed	3	1.76

Note: 'N' refers to the sample population under each variable. % refers to the percentage that makes up this sample population for each variable
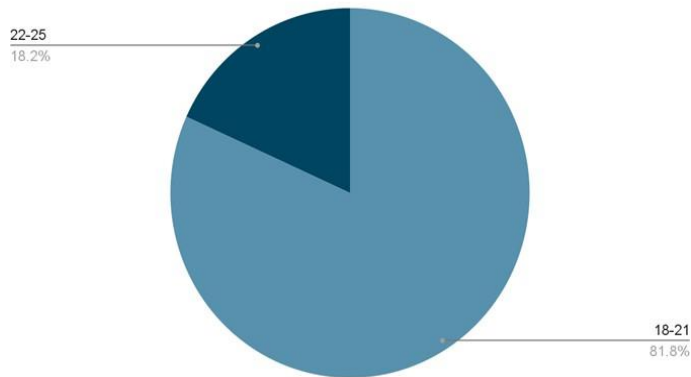
Figure 1 Age Groups

Figure 2 Gender Groups

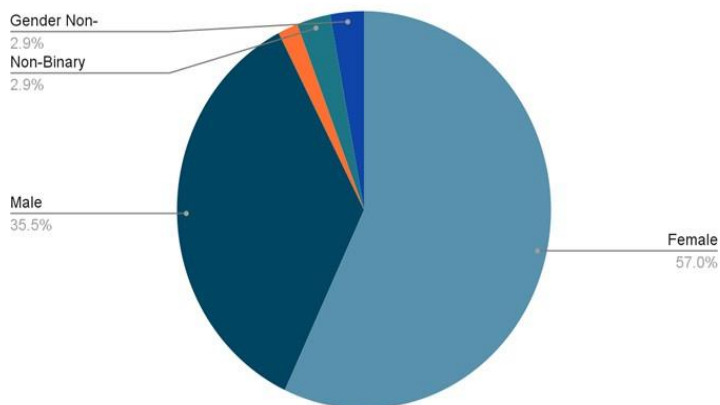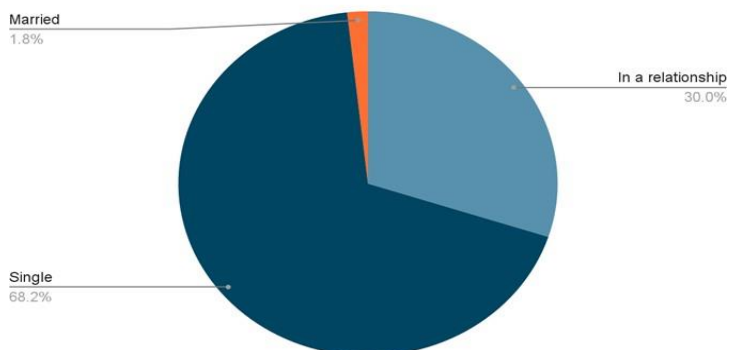### *Figure 3 Relationship Status Groups*

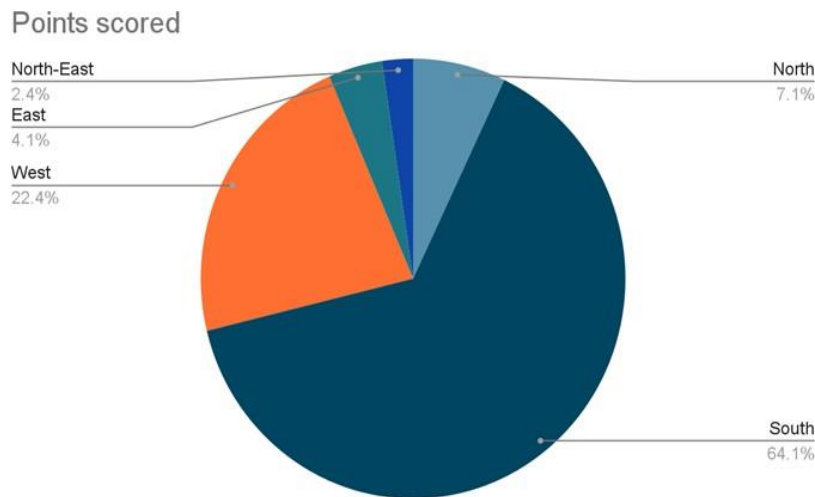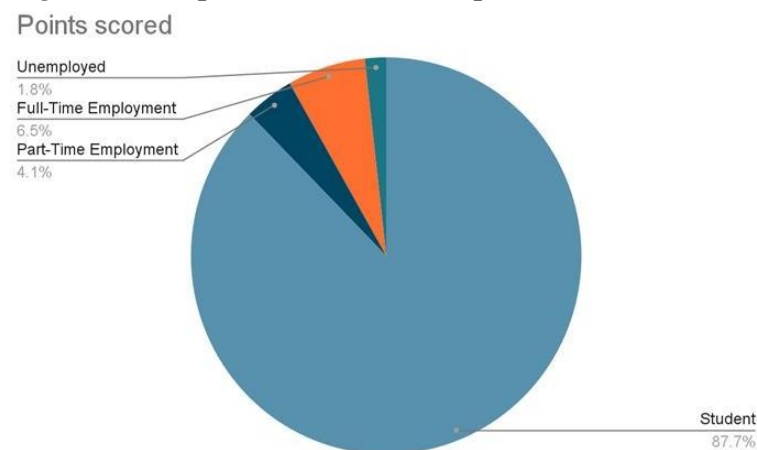*Figure 4 State of Residence in Five Directional Groups*

Figure 5 Occupational Status Groups

The above table 1 and the following diagrams showcase the demographic variables that were taken during data collection. The first thing that was taken as part of the demographic variable was age. The data was collected from the age group of 18-25. This large group was further divided into two groups consisting of age groups between 18-21 and 22-25. It was seen that the age group 18-21 had the highest percentage of response in comparison to the age group 22-25. The second demographic variable that was considered was gender. They were divided based on five groups females, males, transgenders, non-binary, and gender non-conforming.

Maximum responses came from females, and the least number of responses came from the transgender population. This has led to a heavy focus on females and less on transgender. The third variable that was considered was the relationship status. The maximum focus is on the group whose response was single, followed by the other two variables i.e., in a relationship, and married. The other variable on which the data was collected on the state of residence. The state of residence was divided into five directions: north, south, west, east, and northeast. Most responses were from the southern states, followed by North, West, East, and North East. The last demographic variable taken into consideration was occupational status. Students comprised majority of the respondents, followed by the full-time employed, part-time employed, and unemployed.

Descriptive Analysis Table 2
The Descriptive Statistics of each demographic variable and the main variables of the study

Variables	N	Mean	Median	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	170	1.18	1.00	0.387	1.66	0.764
Gender	170	1.58	1.00	0.895	2.18	5.30
Relationship Status	170	1.72	2.00	0.489	-0.507	-0.659
State of Residence	170	2.31	2.00	0.762	1.29	2.64
Occupational Status	170	1.22	1.00	0.641	2.89	7.48
Romantic Attachment Styles						
Avoidant Dimension	170	2.93	2.92	0.657	0.173	0.201
Anxiety Dimension	170	3.52	3.67	0.982	-0.562	-0.394
Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale	170	3.52	3.55	0.779	-0.419	0.118

Note: 'N' refers to the sample that was taken. S.D. refers to Standard Deviation. MPRS is the abbreviation for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale. Throughout the paper, the mean would be referred to as 'M', and the Median as 'Mdn,'
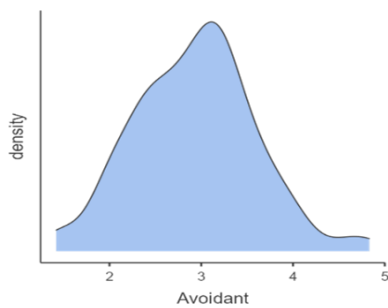
Figure 6 Graph showing Avoidant's Density

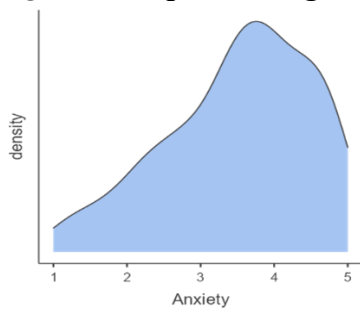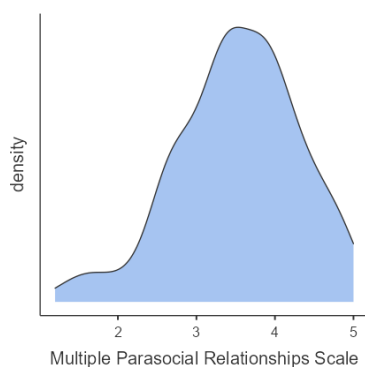**Figure 7 Graph showing the Anxiety's Density**

Figure 8 Graph showing Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale's Density

Table 2 portrays (reference the graphs) the descriptive statistics for each variable, which includes both demographic variables and the main variables. The mean, median, and standard deviation are given for each variable. Skewness and Kurtosis were calculated to understand the distribution of the data which were used to determine if that data collected was normally distributed.

The first variable to be considered is age (M=1.18, Mdn= 1.00, S.D.= 0.387). The S.D. is somewhat far from the mean, and media, which means that the data is relatively less scattered.

The skewness for this variable, as seen in the table, is more than +/- 0.5, which means the data is positively skewed. This can be seen in the Figure 6 and 7. The kurtosis for this variable can be seen as 0.764, which comes in between +/-2. Hence the data is somewhat mesokurtic. However, if both skewness and kurtosis are considered, the data does not seem normally distributed.

Similarly, for other demographic variables, i.e., relationship status (M=1.58, Mdn=1, S.D.= 0.895), relationship status (M=1.72, Mdn=2.00, S.D.=0.489), State of Residence (M=2.31, Mdn= 2.00, S.D.=0.762), occupational status (M=1.22, Mdn=1.00, S.D.=0.641). Among these variables, all the data under Skewness are above the limit of +/-0.5, hence the data is skewed either positively or negatively. The Kurtosis for only relationship status is within the range +/-2, whereas, for the other variables result goes out of this range, which means that the data is not in a mesokurtic form. Hence most of the variables are not normally distributed.

The descriptive statistics for the main variables of the study are romantic attachment styles and parasocial relationships. Under Romantic attachment styles, there are two sub-domains based on which the four attachment styles are built: Avoidance (M=2.93, Mdn= 2.92, S.D.= 0.657), and Anxiety (M=3.52, Mdn=3.67, S.D.= 0.982). The Skewness of these dimensions is 0.173, and -0.562, respectively, which are both above +/-0.5. The Kurtosis of these two dimensions is 0.201, and -0.394, which comes under the range of +/-2. However, we cannot consider this data for these two dimensions as normally distributed, because the skewness does not come under the required range. For the other variable i.e., Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale (M=3.52, Mdn=3.55, S.D.=0.779). The Skewness is between +/-0.5, which means the data is normally skewed. Even the Kurtosis is between +/-2. This means that the data for Parasocial relationships are normally distributed.

Most of the data are not normally distributed, with exceptions to Parasocial Relationships, which suggests that the data goes against the assumption of normality. In other words, if the data were to be collected at random, then the data would be normally distributed. However, for this study, such an assumption is not true. Therefore, non-parametric tests were used to do further inferential statistics, and analysis to test the hypothesis.

Inferential Statistics
Correlation has been used to analyze the relation between each of the four romantic attachment styles present in the sample and the Parasocial relationships. As was established in the earlier section, the data is not normally distributed. Therefore, the study used non-parametric test, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient.

As given in the Adult Attachment Styles Scale's description by the author, we combined the results of the Close and Depended sub-scales to give us Avoidant. To further analyse romantic attachment styles, the average of the Avoidant and Anxiety scores are taken and codes are assigned to categorize them into four domains based on the level of anxiety and avoidance. These are Secure -1, Preoccupied – 2, Dismissive- 3 and Fearful – 4.

The correlation coefficient along with the p-value is calculated for both Avoidant and Anxiety dimensions under each of the four Attachment Styles in the Adult Attachment Style Scale with the results of the Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale. The value of Spearman's' rho will be used to see if there is a negative or positive correlation, according to the sign (+ or -), and the strength of the correlation. The p-value is used to assess if the results are statistically significant which will be used to determine whether the Null Hypothesis is rejected or accepted. If the p-value is below 0.05 then the results are statistically significant, which means the Null Hypothesis is rejected. If the p-value is greater than 0.05 then the results are not statistically significant, which means the Null Hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3 Correlation between Secure Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationship

		Avoidant	Anxiety Average	Multiple Parasocial Relationship Average
Avoidant	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Anxiety	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Multiple Parasocial	Spearman's rho	0.117	-0.02	
Relationship Scale	p-value	(0.157)	(0.896)	

Figure 9 Graph showing the Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Avoidant Dimension under Secure Attachment Style

Figure 10 Graph Showing the Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Anxiety Dimension under Secure Attachment Style
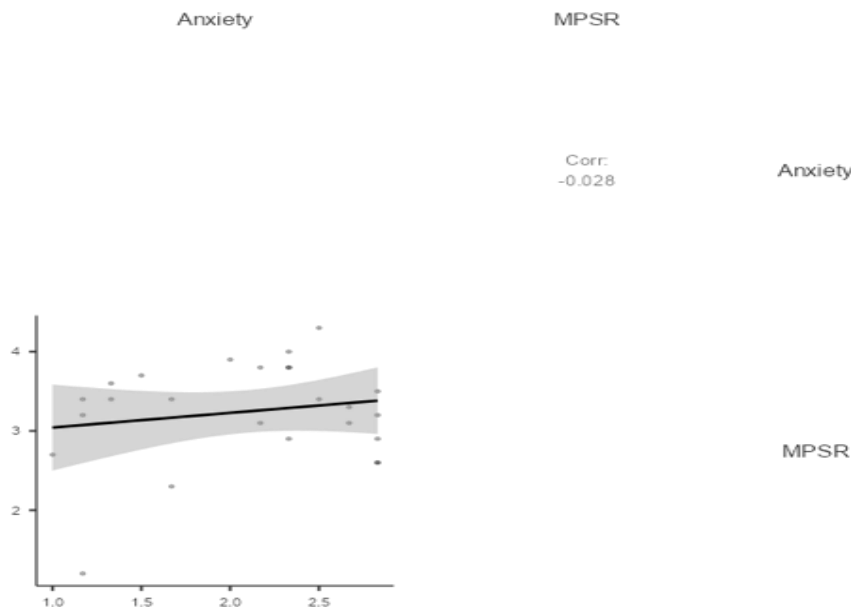
As seen in table 3, and figure 9, the avoidant dimension under secure romantic attachment style, and parasocial relationship have a weak positive correlation, r(168)=0.117, p=0.157.

However, since the p-value is more than 0.05, the correlation cannot be considered significant. The correlation between the other dimension i.e., Anxiety and parasocial relationship, is a weak negative correlation r(168)= -0.02, p=0.896. The p-value in this condition is also greater than the level of significance. Hence there is no significant correlation in this condition. This can be seen in the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the Avoidant dimension under Secure Attachment Style. The upward sloping line is indicative of a positive correlation. Figure 10 is the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the Anxiety dimension under Secure Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping upwards and the responses along the line, which means that there is a weak positive correlation. Hence, there is no significant correlation between secure attachment style, and parasocial relationship. Therefore, H1 is rejected.

Table 4 Correlation between Preoccupied Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationship

		Avoidant	Anxiety Average	Multiple Parasocial Relationship Average
Avoidant Average	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Anxiety Average	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale	Spearman's rho	0.164	-0.227	
	p-value	(0.222)	(0.089)	

Figure 11 Graph showing the Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale and Avoidant Dimension under Preoccupied Attachment Style
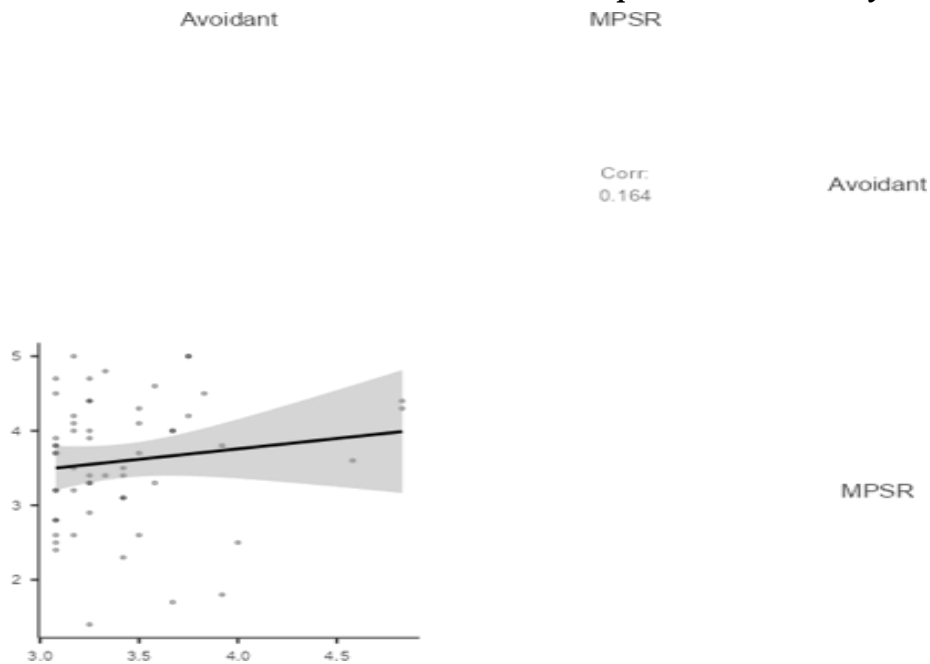

Figure 12 Graph Showing Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Anxiety Dimension under Preoccupied Attachment Style
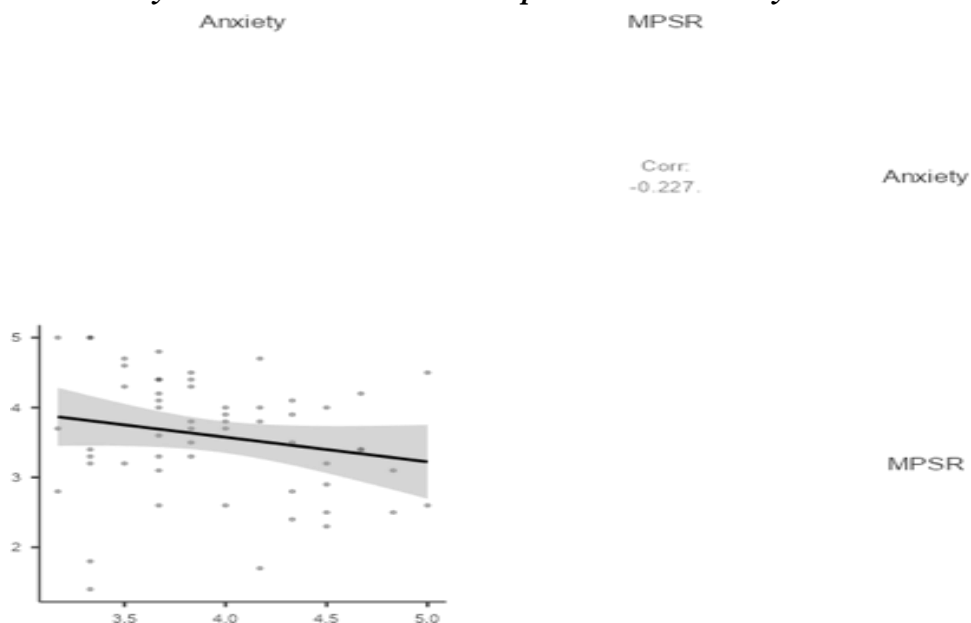

Table 4 and figures 11 and 12 above indicate that the correlation between avoidant dimension under preoccupied attachment style and parasocial relationship is of a weak and positive nature, $r(168)=0.164$, $p=0.22$. The p-value, under this dimension, is more than 0.05, which means that the negative correlation is not significant. In the case of the other dimension i.e., anxiety, there is a weak negative correlation between this dimension and the parasocial relationship $r(168)=-0.227$, $p=0.089$. The p-value is again above the assumption of the level of significance, which is 0.05, and therefore goes against the assumption. Thus, the correlation is not significant. The upward-sloping line in Figure 12, suggests that there exists a positive correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the

Avoidant dimension under Preoccupied Attachment Style. The responses are scattered along the line, indicative of a weak correlation. Figure 12 is the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the Anxiety dimension under Preoccupied Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping downwards. This means that there is a negative correlation. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between preoccupied romantic attachment style, and parasocial relationship. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H2) is rejected.

Table 5 Correlation between Dismissive Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationship

Avoidant		Anxiety Average	Multiple Parasocial Relationship Average
Avoidant Average	Spearman's rho	—	—
	p-value	—	—
Anxiety Average	Spearman's rho	—	—
	p-value	—	—
Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale	Spearman's rho	-0.291	-0.051
	p-value	(0.178)	(0.817)

Figure 13 Graph Showing Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Avoidant Dimension under Dismissive Attachment Style

Figure 14 Graph Showing Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Anxiety Dimension under Dismissive Attachment Style
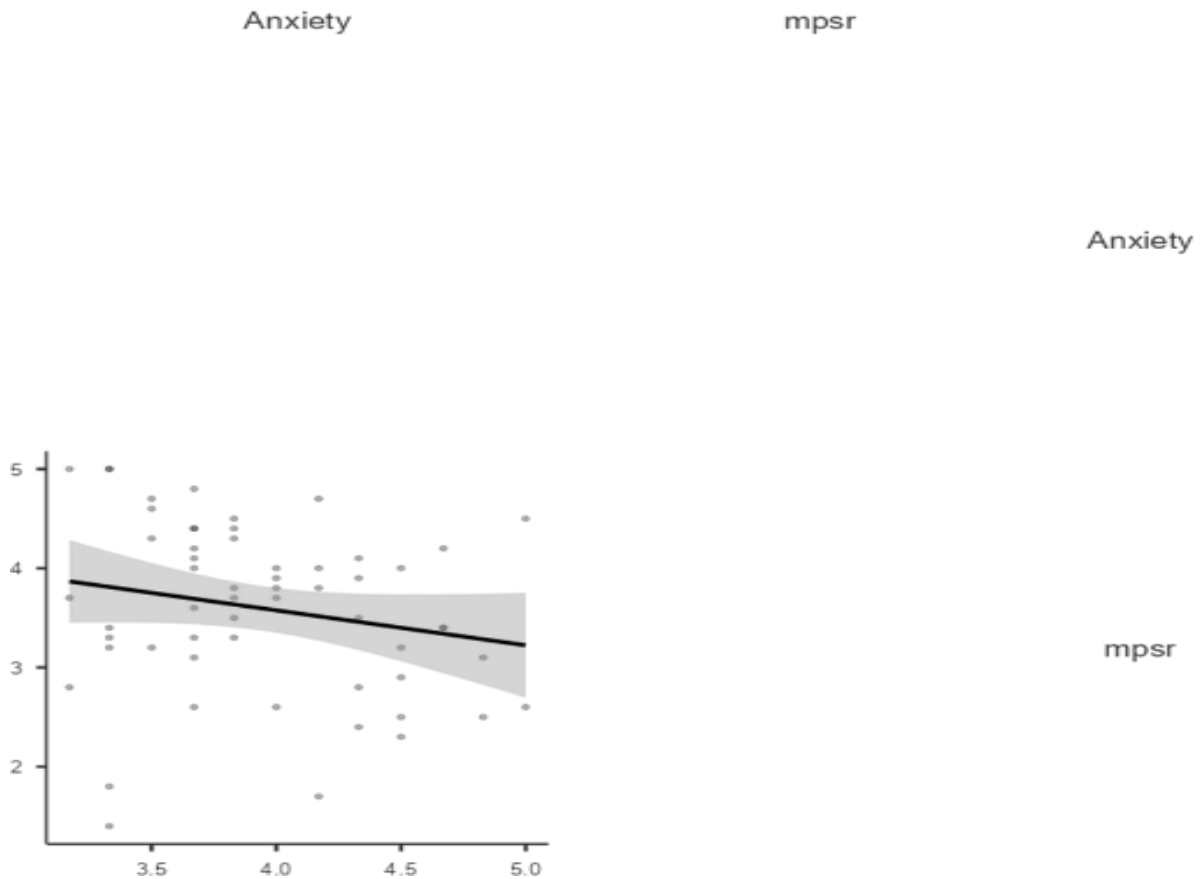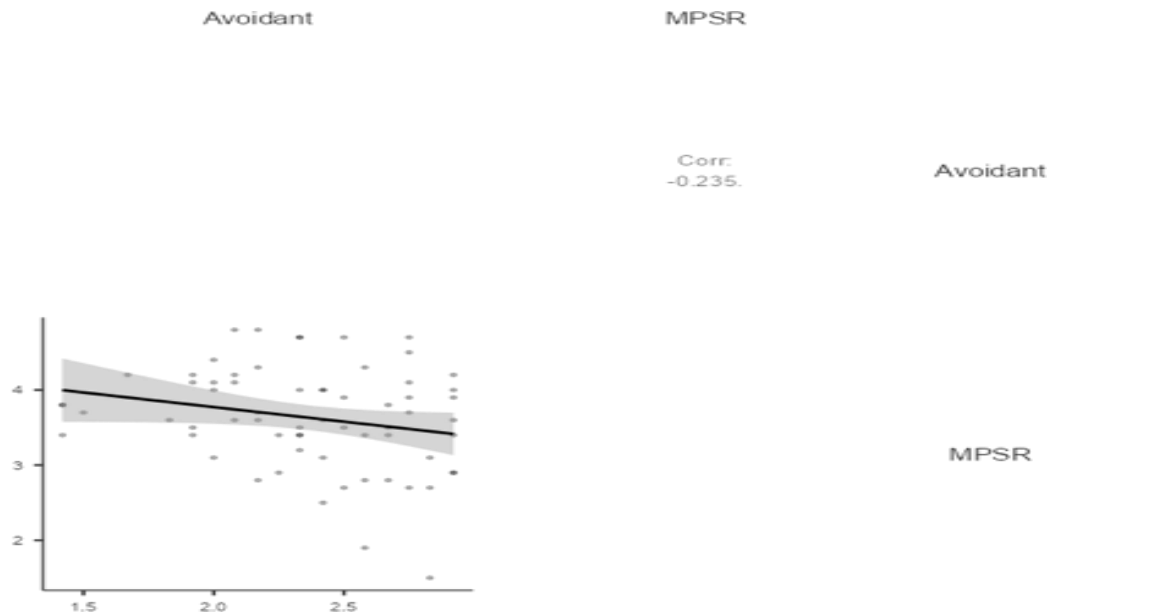

Table 5, and figures 13 and 14 show the correlation between dismissive romantic attachment style and parasocial relationship was analyzed. Under the avoidant dimension under this romantic attachment style, it was found that there exists a weak negative correlation between the avoidant dimension, and parasocial relationship r(168)= -0.291, p=0.178. The p-value is greater than 0.05, the level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant correlation between the avoidant dimension and the parasocial relationship. As for the other dimension, anxiety, and its correlation with the parasocial relationship, there is a mild negative correlation between the latter dimension, and the parasocial relationship r(168)= -0.051, p=0.817. The p-value is greater than the level of significance i.e.,0.05 indicating that there is no significant correlation. Figure 13 is the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale and the Avoidant dimension under Dismissive Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping downwards, which means that there is a negative correlation. The responses are scattered along the line, this means the correlation is weak. Figure 14 is the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationships Scale and the Anxiety dimension under Dismissive Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping downwards, which means that there is a negative correlation. Hence, the Dismissive romantic attachment style, and the parasocial relationship have no significant correlation. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H3) gets rejected.

Table 6 Correlation between Fearful Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationship

		Avoidant	Anxiety Average	Multiple Parasocial Relationship Average
Avoidant Average	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Anxiety Average	Spearman's rho	—	—	
	p-value	—	—	
Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale	Spearman's rho	-0.235	0.136	
	p-value	(0.059)	(0.279)	

Figure 15 Graph Showing Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Avoidant Dimension under Fearful Attachment Style
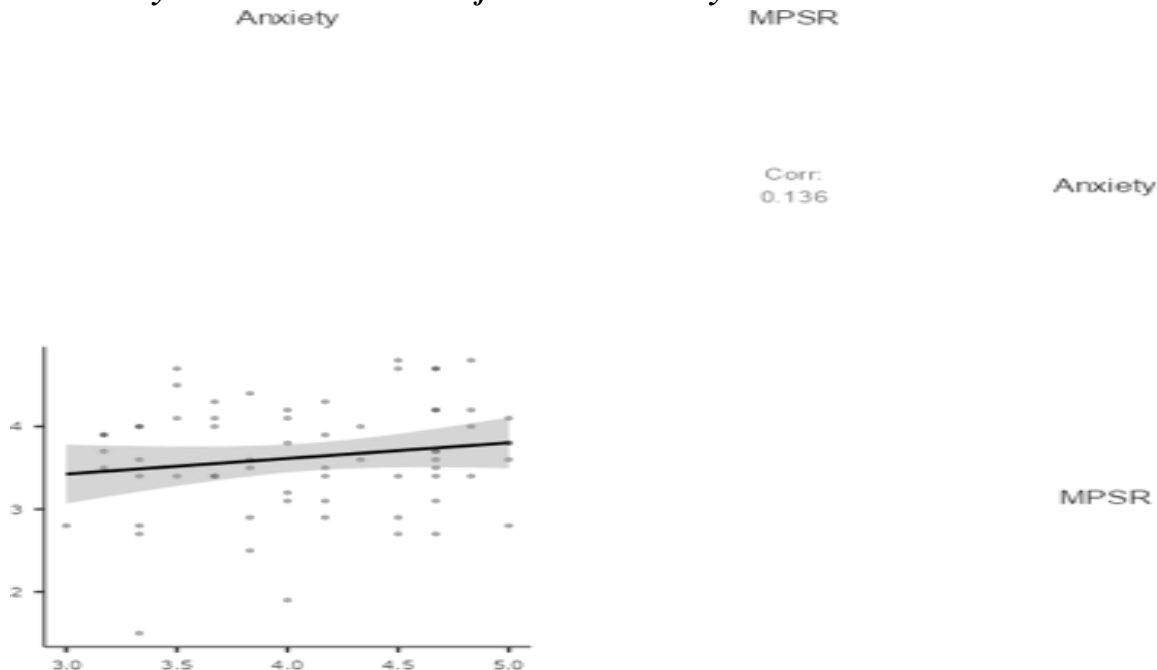

Figure 16 Graph Showing Correlation Matrix for Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and Anxiety Dimension under Fearful Attachment Style

Under the fearful romantic attachment style, the correlation between the avoidant dimension, and parasocial relationship were analyzed. It was seen that a weak negative correlation exists between them $r(168)= -0.239$, $p=0.059$. The p-value is greater than 0.05, which is the level of significance. Hence, a significant correlation does not exist between them. For the anxiety dimension, it was seen that there exists weak positive correlation $r(168)= 0.168$, $p=0.279$. The p-value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the p-value is greater than level of significance. Hence there is no significant correlation between them. Figure 15 is the graphical representation of the correlation between Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the Avoidant dimension under Fearful Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping downwards, which means that there is a negative correlation. Figure 16 is the graphical representation of the correlation between the Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale and the Anxiety dimension under Fearful Attachment Style. The graph has a line sloping upwards and the responses are scattered along the line indicating that there is a weak positive correlation. Hence, there exists no significant correlation between fearful romantic attachment style, and parasocial relationship.

Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H4) is also rejected. Since all the alternative hypotheses are rejected because a significant correlation could not be established with any of the romantic attachment styles, and parasocial relationships. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no significant correlation between romantic attachment style and the parasocial relationship is accepted.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand whether there exists a correlation between Romantic Attachment Style and Parasocial Relationships. The results of the study indicate that across all domains, there is no positive or negative correlation, which is statistically significant in nature. Therefore, the results of the present study support the null hypothesis that "There is no significant association between the romantic attachment style of an individual and the parasocial relationship with fictitious characters".

Descriptives

Analyzing demographic variables revealed that among the 170 responses, the majority of them were females residing in the South of India aged between 18-21. Since we used Convenience Sampling around 87% of our responses came from students, which may have influenced the demographic factors. 68.2% of the participants were single, while a little over 1% of the sample was married. As a result, the representativeness of our sample has reduced, which may have an impact on our study.

From the data collected it was revealed that the most common romantic attachment style of the participants was the fearful attachment marked by high levels of anxiety and low levels of avoidance. The least common attachment style was dismissive attachment indicated by low levels of anxiety and avoidance. The mean score for the anxiety dimensions across all the participants was high, with the score being 3.67.

Avoidant Attachment Style

As was stated in a study by Stavropoulos et al. (2018), people with excessive internet usage were less likely to have Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style. It is possible that due to the dominance of those with an Avoidant Romantic Attachment style in the sample, there was a lack of parasocial relationships and a consequent significant correlation.

Access to media/Internet
Parasocial Relationships are formed upon exposure to media figures. This exposure is not an isolated incident; it is after a few successive instances of exposure that an individual may begin to form the same. The current study is the first and only research study regarding Romantic Attachment Styles and Parasocial relationships in the Indian context. The study focuses on the idea of Parasocial relationships. For an individual to have formed such a relationship, they would need access to media. In the Indian context, statistics show that in terms of media penetration, only 32.80% of the entire population has access to social media. Furthermore, in terms of access to the internet, only 48.70% of the population has the same (Kemp, 2023). This could be an important factor that lends itself to the results obtained in the study. Albeit India is a collectivist society; its developing nature may be attributed to the lack of Parasocial Relationships to begin with.

The maximum responses received were from students aged 18-21. Research conducted in 2022 stated that nearly 100% of students had access to the internet and used it regularly (Amponsah et al., 2022). Further, it was said that students with internet access showed increased performance when they used the same for academic purposes. In contrast, those that did not use it for academic purposes showed no positive or negative results (Hossain & Rahman, 2017). It is possible that in the present study, the sample of students used the internet majorly for academic purposes and this would decrease their likelihood to form parasocial relationships.

Gender
Gender once again plays a role in deciding how parasocial relationships would work for individuals. In the same study, by Gleason et. al., (2017) it showed that boys more than girls experienced this type of parasocial relationship towards celebrities. In the present research on young adults, the number of females (98) were more than males (60), and the other genders on whom research is seldom done, also were numerically less (13). The other genders and the LGBTQIA+ community were susceptible to parasocial relationships to escape everyday stressors (Woznicki et al., 2021). However, since the data collected was skewed, and had more female samples, than the other genders. Therefore, not much information about the attachment style and parasocial relationship between individuals and fictional characters was visible.

Relationship history
The causation for the results demonstrating no significant correlation could lie in the fact that the sample's relationship history might have led them to be less likely to form Parasocial relationships. The majority of the sample were people who described their relationship status as single. This would mean that at the time of answering the questionnaire, they would be single, but this does not account for them having been in relationships in the past. As was stated in the results of a study by Bleske-Rechek et al. (2021), people's relationship style would be influenced by their relationship history, this could lend itself to the likelihood of the sample in the present study not having much Parasocial Relationships.

The results of the study go against previous research, which demonstrated a correlation between Parasocial Relationships and factors such as attachment styles. Further research must be conducted in the Indian context to reaffirm or disprove the same. The current study will aid further researchers focusing on the Indian population. Even though the present study demonstrated no significant correlation between Romantic Attachment Styles and Parasocial

Relationships, it did, however, address a critical gap in the existing research. It was the first study done in the Indian context pertaining to the same. It has opened up room for further research on this topic.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The research was a quantitative correlational study. Data was collected via convenience sampling. The questionnaires used were the Multiple Para-social Relationship Scale (MPSR) and the Revised Adult Attachment Scales. All the descriptive data collected is not normally distributed and non-parametric in nature. Under the inferential statistics, we see that none of the correlation data, positive or negative, holds any statistical significance. To answer the Research question - Is there a significant association between the romantic attachment styles of an individual and their para-social relationship with fictional characters? Through analysing the data from all the tables and figures we can say that there is no significant association between romantic attachment styles of an individual and their para-social relationship with fictional characters. In accordance to this, we can see that all the alternative hypotheses (H1, H2, H3 and H4) are rejected and the Null Hypothesis (H0) which says "There is no significant association between the attachment style of an individual and the para-social relationship between the individual and the fictional couple" is accepted. This research study is the first in the Indian sector and has much potential for further research.

Limitations and Future Direction
The present study has certain limitations. One major limitation is the variable that was chosen to study i.e., Fictional characters. In the reviewed literature, most studies studied celebrities' influence on the parasocial relationship or interactions of individuals. However, this study used fictional characters as the variable instead of celebrities. This may have become a confounding variable, as participants may not have been able to imagine having a parasocial relationship with a fictional character, and hence may be the reason why it gave contradicting results when seen against the study by Dinkha et. al., (2017).

Another limitation is one of the scales that was used. The Multiple Parasocial Relationship Scale by Tukachinsky (2010) did not have many works which used this scale, which somewhat decreased the validity of the scale. However, this was the only scale which had two aspects of Parasocial relationship i.e., friendship and love. Since the present study only needed the love component of a Parasocial relationship, thus, the investigators had to use this scale. For further research if the future researchers are planning to research in this same area, they can use some other scale to test the parasocial relationship.

A major limitation to this study was the general nature of the variables chosen. The variance in terms of the media content consumed, and the population chosen was not considered at all. Fictional characters can be found in movies, shows, books, podcasts, and youtube videos; however, they were not considered at all. In a population of 18-25 years of age group, individuals are either students, or are doing part time, or are employed. This again was not taken into consideration, nor was the relationship between romantic attachment styles and parasocial relationships among different groups of people in the same age group was considered. This has been a major concern in media psychology in the recent years as well.

Hence, for future investigation, future researchers should try not to make their study generalized, and try to focus either on the population considered for the study, or focus on the media content of the study, instead of making the study generalized. Another thing to

consider if future researchers are trying to make a generalized study in terms of the population, they should choose a large sample population that is not skewed in terms of any one variable, and should be somewhat be distributed equally, so that the results can be generalized to the larger population (Reeves et. al., 2015).

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