

## **Idol worship, religiosity, and self-esteem among university and secondary students in Hong Kong**

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### *Abstract*

**Objectives:** this study aims to provide psychometric validation of the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ), and investigate the relationship between idol worship, religiosity, and self-esteem. It was hypothesised that idol worship was negatively correlated with religiosity and with lower self-esteem, religiosity would boost self-esteem, females would have more intensive idol worship attitudes than males and idol worship across participants' age would show an inverted V-shape pattern.

**Method:** the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ), the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS), the Age-Universal I-E Scale-12 (AUIE), and the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; 1962) were given to 800 participants for completion.

**Results:** Five factors were identified in the IWQ: Romantic Fantasy, Physical Attractiveness, Psychological Identification, Worship Decision, and Worship Expenditure. It also showed positive correlations between idol worship and religiosity. Two regression analyses also showed that idol worship or religiosity does not predict self-esteem significantly. Sex acts as a more reliable construct in idol worship attitudes, whereby females have higher idol worship attitudes and males have higher self-esteem. It also moderates the effect of worship conformity attitude in predicting self-esteem. A delayed transition from adolescence to adulthood is also observed in the pattern of idol worship attitudes.

**Conclusions:** this study serves to validate the IWQ and AUIE with regard to their applicability and factor components in Hong Kong. It also shows evidence for the concurrent validity of the IWQ with another measurement on idol worship, the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS). Participants with various religious beliefs and backgrounds should be sampled. Further validations for the AUIE should also be conducted in the future. Last but not least, the types of idols people worship should also be measured and assessed to see if there is any difference.

### **Introduction and Literature Review**

#### ***Definitions of Idol Worship and Celebrity Worship***

According to Cheung and Yue (2000), an idol is a person whose talents, achievements, status, or physical appearances are recognised and appreciated by his/her fans. Fromm (1967) defines idol worship as the excessive admiration of and attachment to a given idol figure, whose personal attributes are overly enhanced or idealised. It can also be treated as

a process by which false perceptions are created and worshipped. In addition, idol worship in adolescence is regarded as a kind of secondary or unreciprocated attachment towards a favourite idol.

Celebrity worship is defined as a particular kind of idol worship of a widely recognised person who commands a high degree of public and media attention. Whereas idol worship covers a wider range of people, including famous figures in history, peers and family members, celebrity worship covers a relatively narrower range as it only includes stars and luminaries (Yue & Cheung, 2000). Stars consist of singers, actors, and athletes, whereas luminaries consist of scientists, politicians, artists, and businessmen. These figures are mainly worshipped for their charisma, physical appearance, wealth, personal achievements, and social influence.

### ***Types of Celebrity Worship***

According to past studies, celebrity worship can be categorised into three types: entertainment-social, intense-personal, and borderline-pathological. As regards the entertainment-social type, people worship their favourite celebrities solely for entertainment purposes and they have a normal level of interest in their favourite celebrities' lives. The behaviours of worshippers of this type include reading news about the celebrities and gossiping about the celebrities. Intense-personal attitudes tend to indicate some neurotic traits. A person might believe that he/she has a strong personal connection with the celebrities, and treat the celebrities as his/her faultless soulmates. Behaviours of this type of celebrity worship include frequent intrusive thoughts about the celebrities. The most radical type of celebrity worship is borderline-pathological behaviours and traits displayed by those who believe in the benevolent omnipotence of the celebrities. They also have an obsession with the details of celebrities' lives, over-identify with the celebrities, and believe that they can communicate with their favourite celebrities through a shared secret code. These beliefs and behaviours may even cause harm to their psychological development (Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Houran, & Ashe, 2006; North, Sheridan, Maltby, & Gillett, 2007).

### ***Theories and Studies of Idol Worship***

There are three major theories which elaborate on the importance of adolescent idol worship: social learning, identification, and attachment theory. According to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), through imitating someone's behaviour, a person can obtain certain appropriate social skills that enable him/her to enhance the regulation of his/her behaviours by watching others being punished or reinforced for engaging in certain behaviours. Yue (2010) suggests that idol worship and role modelling are inseparable. Worshippers imitate their idols' behaviours when they regard their idols as successful people. Second, Erikson (1968) claims that during the stage of identity crisis, an adolescent suffers from uncertainty and confusion about his/her present and future

roles, and identification with an adult or peer idols helps him/her seek information of value and prepares him/her for the adult role. Identification can also prevent them from being able to engage in delinquent activities. Rowe and Marcia (1980) also believe that adolescents need to explore more in order to establish their identities and adopt a doctrine.

Third, Greene and Adams-Price (1990) described two major types of secondary attachment: romantic attachment and identification attachment. People with strong romantic attachment, dream of being their idol's romantic partner being like them or even becoming them. On the other hand, identification attachment refers to people who recognise their idols in terms of instrumentality. It is believed that idol worship serves as a compensation for the vacuum after separating from one's parents. It also leads to a sense of remote intimacy and unrealistic fantasies. This phenomenon is known as compensational individuation (Cheung & Yue, 2012).

In terms of the relationship between idol worship and other constructs, it has been found that idol worship is related to the acceptance of cosmetic surgery (Swami, Taylor, & Carvalho, 2009), body image (Maltby, Giles, Barber, & McCutcheon, 2005; Swami et al., 2009), coping styles, (Maltby et al., 2004), fantasy proneness and dissociation (Maltby et al., 2006), aspects of religiosity (Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe, & McCutcheon, 2002), and self-esteem (North et al., 2007).

In particular, according to Jenson (1992), idol worship impairs adolescents' school achievement. Indulgence in celebrity worship also enhances adolescents' alienation, violence, suicide, sex, use of drugs and objectionable language (Lynxwiler & Gay, 2000). In addition, intense personal celebrity worship is associated with poorer mental health (Maltby et al., 2004). Numerous studies have reflected associations between low self-esteem and mental illness, since idol worship is related to anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction symptoms (North et al., 2007).

### ***Studies of Idol Worship in Chinese Societies***

Recent studies have revealed that adolescents generally worship stars and luminaries, these movie stars, music stars, and athletes have dominated the world of idol worship, which is known as 'tri-star worship' culture (Boyd, 1998; Cheung & Yue, 2003; Greene & Adams-Price, 1990; Yue, Wong & Cheung, 2010). In comparison with adolescents in Mainland China, Hong Kong adolescents tend to adopt the 'tri-star worship' culture, which is idealism-romanticism-absolutism (I-R-A) oriented. People view their idols in an irrational way. Adolescents in China adopt the 'model worship' culture, which is rationalism-realism-relativism (R-R-R) oriented. People learn from the desirable attributes of their idols and appreciate them in a rational manner. It is further agreed that Hong Kong adolescents care about their idols' sexual and romantic features whereas Mainland Chinese adolescents focus on their idols' ideological and dispositional features (Yue, Cheung, & Wong, 2010).

In research with a sample of 2000 Hong Kong secondary students, Chan and Zhang (2007) found that almost 70% of the participants regarded ‘tri-stars’ as their idols. It was also found that pop singers and movie stars were at the top of the preferred list. At the same time, adolescents in Taiwan share a similar pattern of idol selection with that of Hong Kong (Lin & Tong, 2007). In a study by Chan and Zhang (2007), idol worship was seen to have a negative impact on adolescents in the Chinese context. Adolescents in Hong Kong are more likely to lack problem-solving confidence, commit delinquent behaviours, and favour less positive moral values. If one becomes a member of certain fan clubs, one has lower self-esteem (Cheng, 1997).

In the past, idol worship affected people's behaviour, motivation, and emotions (Jeong et al., 2012). According to Yue and Cheung (2000), idol worship is a special psycho-social phenomenon which starts when humans idolise the power of Mother Nature. Therefore, the appreciation and admiration of Mother Nature in Chinese culture may be associated with religious orientation. In a more recent study, Yue and Leung (2008) found that religious idol worship, which is the expression of emotion and admiration towards religious figures through ceremonies and rituals, had a negative relationship with religiosity. Literature regarding the relationship between the two constructs is discussed in Section 1.1.5 but it is interesting to note that there has not been much research done on the relationship between idol worship and religiosity in Chinese contexts. The present study serves to fill the gap and explores the relationship between idol worship, religiosity, and self-esteem.

### ***Theories and Studies of Idol Worship and Religiosity***

Recent studies have revealed that idol worship is negatively correlated with religiosity (Giles, 2000; Maltby et al., 2002). In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and according to the first of the Ten Commandments, ‘thou shalt worship no other gods’, apart from God Himself; worship of anyone else is forbidden. The word ‘gods’ mean religious deities. But it is also generalised to non-religious figures and concepts, certainly including celebrities. Jews and Christians thus know that it is sinful to worship other idols, including tri-stars and any other famous persons. It has been shown that many Christians, for example, practise their faith sincerely (DiBlasio & Benda, 1991; Troiden & Jendrek, 1987). Consistently negative correlations are found between idol worship and religiosity for both sexes, even though the mean correlation coefficient is weak, implying that practising Christians refuse to worship any figures or persons, but the rest of them may ignore the aforementioned teaching or simply fail to see idol worship as a violation of the teaching (Maltby et al., 2002).

### ***Theories and Studies of Idol Worship and Self-Esteem***

A lot of studies suggest that different levels of idol worship can lead to different kinds of psychological problems (Maltby, McCutcheon, Ashe, & Houran, 2001; North et al.,

2007). According to some scholars (Caughey, 1988; Giles, 2000), fans with a high level of idol worship may engage in different pathological behaviours such as attempting to harm celebrities, sending threatening letters to celebrities (Dietz, Matthews, Van Duyne, & Martell, 1991), and even confusing celebrities' fictional characters and their real lives (Caughey, 1978; Giles, 2000). The Absorption-Addiction Model (McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002) suggests that people are attracted by celebrities in order to establish a sense of identity and fulfilment (which leads to illusions of having actual relationships with their idols) which is later reinforced by *addiction* (strengthening the desire for intimacy with the idols to feel connected with them). People with this condition find it difficult to escape, cope with, or enrich their everyday life. The theory has evidenced that different levels of idol worship predict social dysfunction, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. They also believe that celebrity worship is a behavioural expression of poor global psychological well-being.

### ***Demographic Characteristics Affect Idol Worship and Self-Esteem***

Even though it is clear that idol worship is negatively related to self-esteem, this effect may be influenced by other demographics such as gender and age. According to Yue and Yan (2007), females generally have a more intense feeling toward their idols, thanks to a greater drive to escape from social and traditional pressure. Furthermore, a lot of studies have reported that females generally have lower self-esteem than males (Derdikman-Eiron et al., 2012; Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; Major, Barr, Zubek, & Babey, 1999; Pipher, 1994; Twenge & Campbell, 2001).

It has also been found that age contributes to the degree of idol worship. Shi (2004) calculated that the mean age of people when they begin to worship idols is 11.98 years. Li and Han (2004) collected a sample of secondary school students. They discovered that the older the students get, the more they tend to worship famous people and athletes. Scholars have found that participants in secondary school (aged 12 to 18) begin to display idol worship behaviours at 14 and reach the peak between 14 and 16 (Shi, 2005; Teng & Yi, 2001). Yue and Yan (2007) discovered that participants in secondary school display the most intensive idol worship behaviours, and the trend gradually declines after they go to university. It is also claimed that as people age from adolescence to young adulthood, their idol worship attitude is less romance-oriented and more logic-oriented.

### ***Studies of Religiosity and Self-Esteem***

Krause (1995) indicated that greater religious involvement enhances self-worth. Sherkat and Reed (1992) also indicate that there is a positive relation between self-esteem and degree of religious orientation. Studies in Canada and Iran have also found a significant positive correlation between religious belief practice or degree of religious participation and self-esteem. A more recent study found that there is a positive correlation between religiosity and self-esteem, and it exhibits positive mental health outcomes (Colbert,

Jefferson, Gallo, & Davis, 2009). Therefore, since religiosity is negatively correlated with idol worship and positively correlated with self-esteem, it is hypothesised that religiosity will yield opposite results from idol worship in predicting self-esteem.

### **Objectives and Formulation of Hypotheses**

It is important to understand the pattern of the idol worship phenomenon in Asian contexts. In addition, the effect of religiosity on idol worship is not examined in the Chinese context, where Chinese Christians may display different religious expressions (Hui & Fung, 2009). It is therefore worth exploring the relationship between idol worship, self-esteem, and religiosity among adolescents in Hong Kong. Based on the above reviews, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Members of fan clubs score significantly higher on measures of idol worship than non-club members.

H<sub>2</sub>: Christians score significantly lower on measure of idol worship than non-Christians.

H<sub>3</sub>: Females score significantly higher on measures of idol worship than males.

H<sub>4</sub>: Males score significantly higher on measures of self-esteem than females.

H<sub>5</sub>: Senior secondary students score significantly higher on measures of idol worship than junior secondary students and university students. There is no significant difference between measures of idol worship between junior secondary students and university students.

H<sub>6</sub>: Idol worship is significantly and negatively correlated with religiosity.

H<sub>7</sub>: High idol worship significantly predicts lower self-Esteem.

H<sub>8</sub>: High religiosity significantly predicts higher self-esteem.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Participants and Procedure***

Eight hundred secondary school and university students (456 males, 332 females, 14 missing data) were sampled to participate in this study. Of these eight hundred participants, 217 (composed of 55 males, 142 females, and 20 unknown) participants did not complete the questionnaire properly, so they were deleted from the analysis. Five hundred and ninety-four students, aged between 11 to 28 years, with a mean of 16.12, were therefore included. Of the junior secondary school students (103 males, 79 females), 57 of them were Christians, and 94 were not (31 missing data), and they were aged from 11 to 14, with a mean of 13.09 ( $SD = 0.89$ ). Of the senior secondary school participants (141 males, 114 females), 86 of them were Christians and 141 were not (28 missing data). They were aged from 15 to 18, with a mean of 16.22 ( $SD = 1.03$ ). Of the university students (64 males, 82 females), 55 of them were Christians and 74 were not (17 missing data). They were aged from 19 to 28, with a mean of 20.68 ( $SD = 1.64$ ). It should be noted that the secondary school participants were mainly recruited from three local

Christian schools in Hong Kong Island district. University participants were recruited mainly from the City University of Hong Kong, but also included other colleges and universities in Hong Kong.

Ethical approval from the research board of the City University of Hong Kong was sought before commencement of the study. Subsequently, 800 participants were recruited. The purpose and procedures of the study and participants' rights of confidentiality were stated at the top of the front page of the questionnaire. When they agreed to participate in the study, questionnaires were distributed. They were asked to complete every item on the questionnaire and return it upon completion.

### **Measures**

A six-page self-reported questionnaire was used for this study. It was divided into four parts. The first part contained two scales about idol worship: the 23-item Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) and the 26-item Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ). The CAS was developed by McCutcheon et al. (2002), and revised by Maltby and Day (2003), and it assesses the favourableness of behaviours and attitudes toward participants' favourite idols. It consists of three factors of idol worship behaviour, i.e. Entertainment-Social, Intense-Personal, and Borderline-Pathological, on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The three factors are composed of ten, nine, and four items respectively. The psychometric integrity of the scale was demonstrated with a US and a British sample. A good reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.89$ ; McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2003) has been found. The scale has also been used in several recent studies (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Maltby et al., 2002; Maltby & McCutcheon, 2001, 2003; McCutcheon et al., 2002). Since the scale used for assessing celebrity worship does not include items measuring the process of idol selection or which characteristics attract fans to their favourite idols, another scale, the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ), which is employed for measuring idol worship behaviours and attitudes, was also used. The IWQ was developed by Yue (2000), and is measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never feel this way, 5 = Always feel this way). All 26 items are grouped and summed up to form 12 scores. No analysis validating the factor loadings of the scale has been performed, so it was necessary to conduct a factor analysis in order to see how the items were grouped statistically.

In part 2, to measure religiosity in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation, participants were asked to complete a modified 12-item Age Universal I-E Scale (AUIE; Maltby, 1999). Six items were used to measure intrinsic religious orientation; another six items were used to measure both extrinsic-personal and extrinsic-social religious orientations, with three items for each factor respectively. AUIE's reliability and validity have also been proven in US, UK, and Irish samples (Francis & Stubbs, 1987; Lewis & Maltby, 1994; Maltby, 1994). AUIE can be used for both religious and non-religious samples across age (Maltby & Lewis, 1996). The items are

scored on a three-point scale from (3 = Yes, 2 = Not Certain, and 1= No). To maintain equivalence in meaning across languages, the translated version was further validated by a panel of bilingual experts in China and in Canada, using the method of backward translation.

In the third part, the 10-item Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was given to the participants to complete to indicate their global self-esteem, also known as the overall evaluative aspect of their self-concept (Gray-Little, Williams, & Hancock, 1997). The scale is scored on a four-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). It has been widely used across the globe and has obtained a high level of reliability and validity (Gray-Little et al., 1997; Kong & You, in press; Zhao et al., 2012).

Last but not least, participants were asked to provide some demographic information, namely their gender, education level, age, membership of fan clubs, their religious beliefs, and the time they spend socialising with people from church and on religious activities, and the time they spend on private religious observance.

## **Results**

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

The demographic characteristics of the participants, including their gender, age, fan club membership, religious beliefs, time spent at church, and time spent in private religious practices are shown on Table 1. Of the total, 314 were males and 277 were females. The distribution of age was even: 31.2% were junior secondary school students, 43.8% were senior secondary school students, and 25% were university students. The majority of the sample was not members of any fan clubs (93.5%). Around half of them did not have any religious beliefs (52%); approximately 30% of them were Protestant and Catholic Christians.

Table 1  
*Demographic Information of the Participants (n = 591)*

		<i>n</i>	Percentage
Gender	Male	314	46.6
	Female	277	52.9
Age	14 or below	182	31.2
	15 - 18	255	43.8
	19 or above	146	25.0
Fan club membership	Yes	38	6.5
	No	549	93.5
Religious belief	None	316	54.0
	Protestant	175	29.9
	Catholic	23	3.9
	Buddhist	24	4.1
	Other	47	8
Time spent in church or with church friends per month	5 hours or below	339	78.3
	6 - 10 hours	37	8.5
	11 - 15 hours	17	3.9
	16 - 20 hours	19	4.4
	21 hours or above	21	4.8
Time spent in private religious activities per month	5 hours or below	371	86.1
	6 - 10 hours	26	6.0
	11 - 15 hours	14	3.2
	16 - 20 hours	7	1.6
	21 hours or above	13	3.0

### ***Factor Analysis for Idol Worship Questionnaire***

As factor analysis of the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) had not been conducted before (Yue, 2000), a factor analysis was employed to investigate the possible factors involved in the IWQ. The items of the IWQ were analysed with the principal components factor analysis (PCA) method. Before the procedure, the data were checked to see if they were suitable for factor analysis. The correlation matrix showed that many coefficients were above 0.3. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1953) reached statistical significance, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.89, meaning that it supported the

suitability of the data for factor extractions. The PCA showed that there were five components in the data with eigenvalues larger than one which explained a total of 56.52% of the variance, respectively 30.25%, 9.00%, 6.95%, 5.42%, and 4.90%. Oblimin rotation was conducted and it revealed that there was a simple structure (Thurstone, 1947), with five components obtaining a number of strong loadings, with most variable loadings lying on one of the components. The loadings and communalities of each item are shown in Table 2.

The loadings of the first factor suggested a component of '*Romantic Fantasy*' in the IWQ; items such as 'I wish I could be my idol's lover' (item 2) loaded highly on this factor. People scoring high in the items of this factor tend to display idealisation and romantic fantasies toward their favourite idols. The second factor included items such as 'I believe that as a male idol, he has to be tall and handsome' (item 9), so it represented the '*Physical Attractiveness*' element in IWQ. People who scored high in the items of this factor worship idols because of their physical appearance. Items in the third factor mainly revealed participants' admiration of their idols as role models: 'I wish I could be someone like my idol' (item 1). It showed that the participants who scored high in these items internalised the accomplishments and achievements of their idols as their own motivations to excel, so this factor was labelled '*Psychological identification*'.

For the fourth factor, loadings of the corresponding items represented the '*Worship Decision*', stating how much a person chose his/her idol to conform to the expectations of their friends and families. The higher a participant scored in the items, the more he/she chose to worship his/her idol under peer, teacher, or parental influence. Items in this factor included statements like 'I choose my idol mainly because my friends also like him/her' (item 8). Last but not least, a '*Worship Expenditure*' factor was found. Items with high loadings of this subset reflected pathological purchasing behaviours regarding idols' products. Items included in this factor were 'I always spend money on buying things that are related to my idol (e.g. CDs, video tapes, books, clothes, film or concert tickets' (item 4).

Table 2  
 Pattern Matrix of PCA with Oblimin Rotation of Five-Factor Solution of IWQ (n = 591)

	1	2	3	4	5	Communality
<b>Romantic Fantasy</b>						
Item 2	<b>.856</b>	.067	-.129	.044	-.040	.694
Item 3	<b>.562</b>	-.035	.282	.061	.147	.583
Item 5	<b>.363</b>	.156	.350	-.334	.034	.544
Item 12	<b>.818</b>	.022	-.064	.145	.054	.705
Item 13	<b>.507</b>	-.128	.257	-.012	.276	.585
Item 14	<b>.401</b>	-.026	.359	.190	.256	.584
Item 16	<b>.432</b>	.108	.287	-.299	.098	.546
Item 21	<b>.698</b>	.231	-.016	.000	-.031	.608
Item 22	<b>.610</b>	.148	.069	-.059	.061	.519
<b>Physical Attractiveness</b>						
Item 7	.160	<b>.461</b>	.409	-.276	-.027	.632
Item 9	.200	<b>.632</b>	-.110	.166	.057	.544
Item 18	.035	<b>.636</b>	.076	-.083	.171	.523
Item 20	.113	<b>.733</b>	-.193	.001	.112	.585
Item 23	.204	<b>.435</b>	.380	-.203	-.081	.558
Item 24	.014	<b>.528</b>	.201	.412	-.001	.589
<b>Psychological Identification</b>						
Item 1	.090	.016	<b>.675</b>	-.216	-.029	.553
Item 6	.069	.272	<b>.567</b>	.085	-.144	.485
Item 10	.011	-.244	<b>.815</b>	.059	.102	.668
Item 11	.304	-.257	<b>.570</b>	-.008	.247	.635
Item 17	-.214	.234	<b>.414</b>	.236	.004	.298
<b>Worship Decision</b>						
Item 8	.149	.297	.108	<b>.603</b>	.036	.582
Item 19	-.069	.050	.062	<b>.391</b>	.301	.263
Item 25	-.225	.172	.147	<b>-.614</b>	.415	.590
<b>Worship Expenditure</b>						
Item 4	-.013	.060	-.130	-.044	<b>.726</b>	.506
Item 15	.356	.015	.017	.143	<b>.456</b>	.482
Item 26	.160	.098	.051	-.030	<b>.698</b>	.659

Note. Major loadings of each item are in **bold type**.

**Reliability Coefficients of the Measures Used**

Reliability analyses using the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  were computed in order to test the internal consistencies of the scales. Table 3 presents the Mean, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for each of the factors in each scale. The Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) obtained coefficients from 0.52 to 0.86. The Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) had coefficients from 0.74 to 0.90. The Age Universal I-E Scale (AUIE) had coefficients from 0.56 to 0.79. The Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) had a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.83. The results showed that the scales used in the current study were all reliable measures.

Table 3

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability of the Variables (n = 591)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
<b>Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ)</b>			
Romantic Fantasy (9 items)	23.56	8.46	.86
Physical Attractiveness (6 items)	16.32	5.06	.75
Psychological Identification (5 items)	15.84	4.37	.64
Worship Decision (3 items)	5.25	3.00	.52
Worship Expenditure (3 items)	7.07	3.44	.60
<b>Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS)</b>			
Entertainment-Social (10 items)	26.83	8.92	.85
Intense-Personal (9 items)	22.30	8.30	.90
Borderline-Pathological (4 items)	9.90	3.58	.74
<b>Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale (AUIE)</b>			
Intrinsic (6 items)	11.75	3.81	.79
Extrinsic-Personal (3 items)	6.39	2.17	.68
Extrinsic-Social (3 items)	5.48	1.90	.56
Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (10 items)	26.65	4.74	.83

**Prevalence of Idol Worship, Religiosity, and Self-Esteem**

The next table (Table 4) shows the differences between members of fan clubs and non-club members in terms of idol worship, the three subscales of religiosity, and self-esteem. It shows that fan club members had a more intensive attitude towards their idols than those who were not members of any fan club. Among the eight factors measuring idol

worship attitudes, fan members scored significantly higher than non-club members in six factors, from Romantic Fantasy (for members,  $M = 28.47$ ,  $SD = 9.61$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 23.26$ ,  $SD = 8.29$ ,  $t(568) = 3.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Psychological Identification (for members,  $M = 17.37$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 15.76$ ,  $SD = 4.45$ ,  $t(568) = 2.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Worship Expenditure (for members,  $M = 9.76$ ,  $SD = 3.06$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 6.90$ ,  $SD = 3.40$ ,  $t(568) = 5.05$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Entertainment-Social (for members,  $M = 33.03$ ,  $SD = 8.51$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 26.46$ ,  $SD = 8.80$ ,  $t(568) = 4.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Intense-Personal (for members,  $M = 28.08$ ,  $SD = 8.34$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 21.94$ ,  $SD = 8.15$ ,  $t(568) = 4.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), to Borderline-Pathology (for members,  $M = 12.08$ ,  $SD = 3.39$ ; for non-club members,  $M = 9.76$ ,  $SD = 3.54$ ,  $t(568) = 3.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Fan club members had greater idealistic fantasies toward their idols, and at the same time engaged in more pathological behaviours such as buying everything related to their idols. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partly supported.

Table 4

*Fan Club Membership Differences in the Variables (n = 591)*

	Club Member (n = 38)		Non-Club Member (n = 531)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>IWQ</b>					
Romantic Fantasy	28.47	9.61	23.26	8.29	3.70***
Physical Attractiveness	17.16	4.30	16.24	5.10	1.07
Psychological Identification	17.37	2.76	15.76	4.45	2.20*
Worship Decision	5.84	8.37	5.21	2.19	1.25
Worship Expenditure	9.76	3.06	6.90	3.40	5.05***
<b>CAS</b>					
Entertainment-Social	33.03	8.51	26.46	8.80	4.40***
Intense-Personal	28.08	8.34	21.94	8.15	4.37***
Borderline-Pathological	12.08	3.39	9.76	3.54	3.87***
<b>AUIE</b>					
Intrinsic	11.73	4.15	11.76	3.79	-.05
Extrinsic-Personal	6.08	2.20	6.42	2.17	-.92
Extrinsic-Social	5.79	1.96	5.46	1.89	1.05
<b>RSES</b>	26.84	4.77	26.66	4.72	.22

Note. IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 5 shows the differences between Christians (Protestants and Catholics) and non-Christians. There were only differences on the subscales of religiosity, which were Intrinsic (for Christians,  $M = 14.58$ ,  $SD = 2.91$ ; for non-Christians,  $M = 10.07$ ,  $SD = 3.45$ ,  $t(496) = 15.26$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Extrinsic-Personal (for Christians,  $M = 7.67$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ; for non-Christians,  $M = 5.55$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ,  $t(496) = 13.77$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and Extrinsic-Social (for Christians,  $M = 6.04$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ; for non-Christians,  $M = 5.19$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ,  $t(496) = 4.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For the other variables, even though all the subscales on idol worship showed higher mean scores for non-Christians, no significant difference was found between the two groups; therefore Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Table 5  
*Religious Belief Differences in the Variables (n = 591)*

	Christian (n = 192)		Non- Christian (n = 305)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>IWQ</b>					
Romantic Fantasy	23.16	8.21	23.37	8.29	-.27
Physical Attractiveness	16.01	4.69	16.55	5.00	-1.20
Psychological Identification	15.55	4.03	15.82	4.03	-.73
Worship Decision	5.14	2.20	5.29	3.49	-.52
Worship Expenditure	6.75	2.99	7.21	3.76	-1.46
<b>CAS</b>					
Entertainment-Social	26.35	8.79	26.74	8.94	-.48
Intense-Personal	21.62	8.12	22.29	8.33	-.89
Borderline-Pathological	9.83	3.57	9.90	3.49	-.24
<b>AUIE</b>					
Intrinsic	14.58	2.91	10.07	3.45	15.26***
Extrinsic-Personal	7.67	1.55	5.55	1.88	13.77***
Extrinsic-Social	6.04	1.64	5.19	2.04	4.90***
<b>RSES</b>					
	27.06	4.60	26.65	4.81	.94

Note. IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Table 6 shows the differences between the sexes. Females generally scored higher on idol worship. There is a significant difference in Romantic Fantasy (for females,  $M = 24.71$ ,  $SD = 8.58$ ; for males,  $M = 22.58$ ,  $SD = 8.26$ ,  $t(590) = -2.99$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Females also scored higher on Intense-Personal attitude than males (for females,  $M = 22.83$ ,  $SD = 8.23$ ; for males,  $M = 21.83$ ,  $SD = 8.34$ ,  $t(590) = -2.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). They were also more

intrinsically (for females,  $M = 12.12$ ,  $SD = 4.14$ ; for males,  $M = 11.42$ ,  $SD = 3.45$ ,  $t(590) = -2.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Extrinsic-Personally (for females,  $M = 6.61$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ; for males,  $M = 6.19$ ,  $SD = 2.26$ ,  $t(590) = -2.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) Religious than males. Lastly, males had higher self-esteem than females (for females,  $M = 26.11$ ,  $SD = 4.61$ ; for males,  $M = 27.14$ ,  $SD = 4.77$ ,  $t(590) = 2.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, Hypotheses 3 and 4 are partly supported.

Table 6  
*Gender Differences in the Variables (n = 590)*

	Male (n = 314)		Female (n = 277)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
IWQ					
Romantic Fantasy	22.58	8.26	24.71	8.58	-2.99**
Physical Attractiveness	16.09	5.43	16.54	4.64	-1.08
Psychological Identification	15.59	4.24	16.15	4.52	-1.55
Worship Decision	5.29	2.28	5.20	3.65	1.53
Worship Expenditure	6.95	3.63	7.22	3.23	-.367
CAS					
Entertainment-Social	25.96	9.04	27.80	8.73	-.946
Intense-Personal	21.83	8.34	22.83	8.23	-2.47*
Borderline-Pathological	9.83	3.74	9.96	3.39	-1.43
AUIE					
Intrinsic	11.42	3.45	12.12	4.14	-2.23*
Extrinsic-Personal	6.19	2.26	6.61	2.06	-2.32*
Extrinsic-Social	5.51	2.02	5.43	1.74	.51
RSES	27.14	4.77	26.11	4.61	2.62**

Note. IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

A one-way ANOVA and numerous post-hoc tests were conducted to test the differences in education levels in various variables. The sample was divided into three groups, junior secondary students (aged 11 to 14), senior secondary students (aged 15 to 18), and university students (aged 19 or above). The results are shown in Table 7, and are represented by graphs in Figures 1 to 4. Interestingly, there is a difference in Romantic Fantasy across the three groups,  $F(2, 551) = 4.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (with junior secondary school students having less fantasy than the other two groups, but there is no significant difference between senior secondary students and university students); Physical Attractiveness,  $F(2, 560) = 11.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (with junior secondary students having a lower score than the other two groups, but there is no significant difference between

senior secondary students and university students); Psychological Identification,  $F(2, 563) = 3.61, p < 0.05$  (with only junior secondary students having less psychological identification than senior secondary students, but there is no significant difference between university students and junior secondary students or between university students and senior secondary students); as well as Self-Esteem,  $F(2, 569) = 7.61, p < 0.01$  (with junior and senior secondary students having lower self-esteem than university students, but there is no significant difference between junior and senior secondary students). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Table 7  
*Educational Level Differences in the Variables (n = 563)*

	Junior Secondary Students (age 11-14) (n = 182)		Senior Secondary Students (age 15-18) (n = 255)		University Students (age 19 or above) (n = 146)		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
IWQ							
Romantic Fantasy	22.12	8.99	23.83	8.11	25.04	8.19	4.76**
Physical Attractiveness	14.92	5.29	16.67	5.13	17.44	4.25	11.28***
Psychological Identification	15.15	5.30	16.30	4.04	15.96	3.58	3.61*
Worship Decision	5.16	4.33	5.20	2.14	5.50	2.22	.60
Worship Expenditure	7.01	3.18	6.87	3.02	7.58	4.36	2.00
CAS							
Entertainment-Social	25.96	10.37	26.76	8.41	28.08	7.87	2.24
Intense-Personal	21.61	8.79	22.18	8.26	23.40	7.80	1.87
Borderline-Pathological	9.43	3.82	10.06	3.57	10.16	2.24	2.18
AUIE							
Intrinsic	12.02	3.98	11.59	3.55	11.84	4.01	.68
Extrinsic-Personal	6.55	1.89	6.33	2.01	6.33	2.70	.64
Extrinsic-Social	5.40	1.57	5.41	2.08	5.68	1.90	1.12
RSES	26.56	4.89	25.94	4.67	27.84	4.33	7.61**

Note. IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

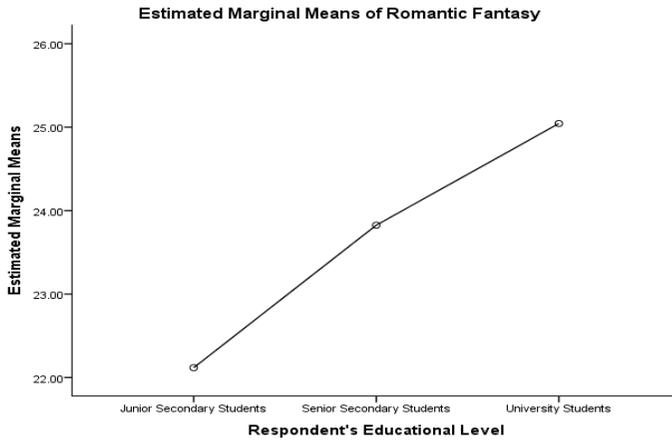


Figure 1. Plots of the mean differences across education levels for Romantic Fantasy

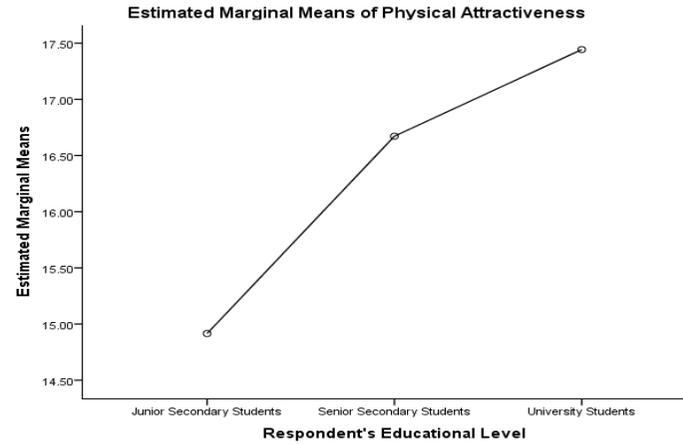


Figure 2. Plots of the mean differences across education levels for Physical Attractiveness

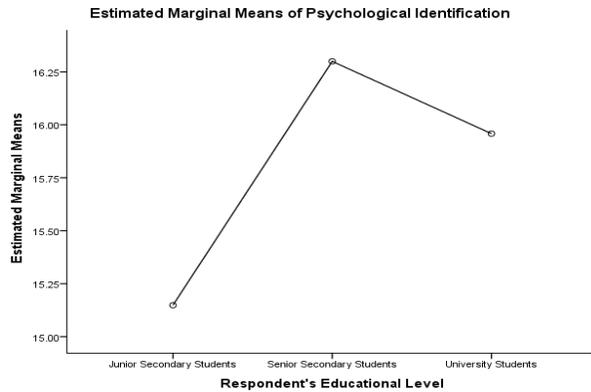


Figure 3. Plots of the mean differences across education levels for Psychological Identification

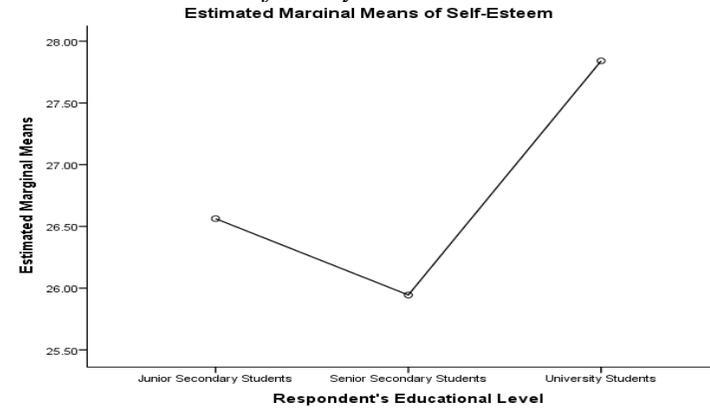


Figure 4. Plots of the mean differences across education levels for Self-Esteem

Table 8 shows correlations among the variables. In general, measures of idol worship in the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) and Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) were significantly and positively inter-correlated. There were only two significant positive correlations between the factors of idol worship and religiosity, however, which were Worship Decision with other religiosity factors having positive correlations, and Extrinsic-Social with other idol worship factors having positive correlations (except for non-significant correlation with Psychological Identification).

Therefore, surprisingly, religiosity was somehow positively correlated with idol worship, and thus Hypothesis 6 was not supported. Furthermore, no significant correlation was found either between self-esteem and constructs of idol worship, or between self-esteem and religiosity in general. In order to investigate Hypotheses 7 and 8, two multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict self-esteem from measures of idol worship and religiosity respectively. None of the subscales could significantly predict self-esteem. For the subscales of idol worship,  $R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $F(8, 473) = 0.96$ , n.s. For the subscales of religiosity,  $R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(8, 564) = 1.36$ , n.s. Therefore, Hypotheses 7 and 8 were not supported.

Table 8  
 Correlations between the Variables (n = 591)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
IWQ												
1.Romantic Fantasy	-											
2.Physical Attractiveness	.55***	-										
3.Psychological Identification	.50***	.40***	-									
4.Worship Decision	.17***	.21***	.10**	-								
5.Worship Expenditure	.54***	.35***	.31***	.13**	-							
CAS												
6.Entertainment-Social	.71***	.45***	.48***	.19***	.57***	-						
7.Intense-Personal	.77***	.47***	.50***	.25***	.61***	.84***	-					
8.Borderline-Pathological	.66***	.48***	.46***	.23***	.52***	.80***	.76***	-				
AUIE												
9.Intrinsic	.08	.01	.03	.10**	.04	.11**	.13**	.12**	-			
10.Extrinsic-Personal	.06	.03	.03	.09**	.02	.07	.05	.10*	.63***	-		
11.Extrinsic-Social	.13**	.15**	.03	.11**	.11**	.14**	.18***	.15***	.41***	.35***	-	
RSES												
12.Self-Esteem	-.05	-.02	-.02	.04	-.03	-.09*	-.08	-.07	.01	.03	-.02	-

Note. IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale,  
 \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

### ***Relationship between Idol Worship, Sex and Self-Esteem***

Another correlation table after splitting the sexes was performed in Table 9. There seemed to be some differences in the correlations between religiosity and idol worship attitude, whereby males had 14 significantly positive correlations and females had only a significantly negative correlation. Moreover, as regards correlations with self-esteem, males had significant negative ones with all of the factors in CAS and Worship Decision in IWQ, and there was no correlation with self-esteem in the factors of CAS but a significantly positive correlation in Worship Decision in IWQ for females.

As regards the relationship between Worship Decision and Self-Esteem across sexes, it was believed that sex served as a moderator between the two constructs. As suggested by Todman and Dugard (2007), a regression analysis was done to investigate the moderating effect of sex on the relationship between Worship Decision and Self-Esteem. As represented by Table 10, sex and Worship Decision were centred, and an interaction variable was created by multiplying the two centred scores together. Gender and Worship Decision were entered into a hierarchical regression analysis as the groups, followed by the entry of the interaction variable. The value  $R^2$  changed when the interaction variable was added to the predictor and the moderator variable was 0.03, that change was significant,  $F$  change(1, 563) = 14.95,  $p < 0.001$ . The significant interaction told us that sex moderated the effects of the predictor (Worship Decision) on the outcome variable (Self-Esteem).

To further interpret the interaction effect, a plot of the interaction effect was noted, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). It showed a moderation effect, which can be seen clearly in Figure 5. The figure indicates that the relationship pattern between Self-Esteem and Worship Decision for male and female participants were opposite to one another. The moderation effect was a negative influence on the relationship between Worship Decision and Self-Esteem for males, but a positive influence on the relationship for females. It reflected that the more a male participant conformed to others' expectations to choose his idol, the lower self-esteem he would have, but in the same situation a female would have an increase in self-esteem if she conformed to others' expectations in selecting her favourite celebrity.

Table 9  
 Correlations between the Variables across Sexes (n = 591)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
IWQ												
1.Romantic Fantasy	-	.47***	.43***	.09	.61**	.73***	.77***	.68***	-.02	.02	.10	-.04
2.Physical Attractiveness	.62***	-	.27***	.15*	.37**	.38***	.39***	.44***	-.07	-.04	.10	.04
3.Psychological Identification	.56***	.51***	-	.04	.34**	.43***	.43***	.41***	-.10	-.06	-.05	-.09
4.Worship Decision	.32***	.31***	.20**	-	.08	.10	.08	.12*	.04	.09	.08	.17**
5.Worship Expenditure	.48***	.33***	.29***	.21***	-	.67***	.70***	.60***	-.03	-.05	.11	-.02
CAS												
6.Entertainment-Social	.69***	.50***	.53***	.32***	.48**	-	.84***	.82***	-.00	.01	.11	.04
7.Intense-Personal	.77***	.53***	.56***	.38***	.53**	.84***	-	.73***	-.01	-.06	-.16**	.00
8.Borderline-Pathological	.65***	.51***	.50***	.38***	.47**	.79***	.79***	-	-.02	.01	.09	-.01
AUIE												
9.Intrinsic	.17**	.07	.17**	.19**	.09	.20**	.26***	.24***	-	.64***	.47***	.01
10.Extrinsic-Personal	.08	.07	.09	.10	.06	.10	.12*	.16**	.64***	-	.43***	.02
11.Extrinsic-Social	.15**	.18**	.09	.15**	.11	.16**	.19**	.18**	.36***	.30***	-	-.09
RSES												
12.Self-Esteem	-.04	-.06	.06	-.16**	-.04	-.19**	-.16**	-.13*	.01	.04	-.07	-

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are for male participants (n = 314), those above the diagonal are for female participants (n = 277). IWQ = Idol Worship Questionnaire, CAS = Celebrity Attitude Scale, AUIE = Age Universal Intrinsic-Extrinsic Scale, RSES = Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

Table 10  
 Multiple Regression Analysis for Sex Moderating Worship Decision in Predicting Self-Esteem ( $n = 591$ )

	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$
Step 1	.02*			
Gender		1.09**	.40	.12
Worship Decision		.05	.07	.03
Step 2	.03***			
Gender		-3.04**	1.14	-.32
Worship Decision		.22**	.08	.14
Worship Decision x Gender		-.55***	.14	-.48

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

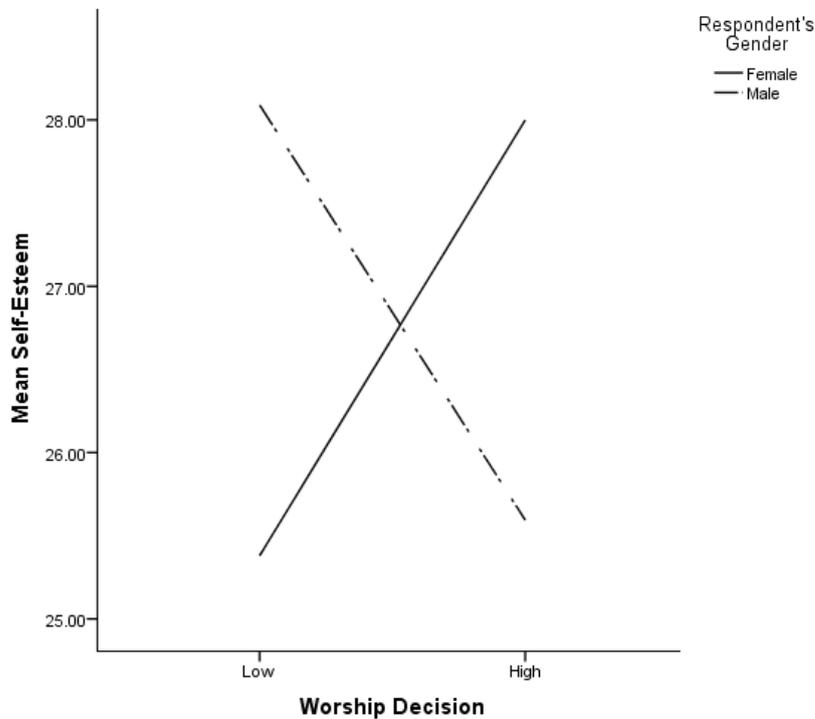


Figure 5. Plots of the Interactions between Sex and Worship Decision in Predicting Self-Esteem

## Discussion

### *Major Findings*

Five factors were found through factor analysis in the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ: *Romantic Fantasy, Physical Attractiveness, Psychological Identification, Worship Decision, and Worship Expenditure*). Among all the demographic characteristics, sex shows the most consistent results with the previous finding that females have more intensive attitudes toward their Idols than males. Males also have higher self-esteem, as hypothesised. Fan club members have significantly higher idol worship than non-fan club members.

The present study obtained some inconsistent findings. There was no significant group difference in idol worship between Christians and non-Christians, and there were positive correlations between religiosity and idol worship which rejected Hypotheses 2 and 6. There were some underlying explanations for that. According to Freud (1907/1961, 1912-13/1961, 1927/1961), religion may serve as an illusion that protects individuals' psychological health from unwanted feelings and desires, and their inner unconscious. Similarly, there are some similarities between religious ritual practices and obsessive actions in idol worship. It is possible that idol worship serves certain similar functions to religious worship.

Michael Jindra (1994), an anthropologist, regards fandom as a 'civil' religion. It includes an organisation (the fan club), dogma (the need to maintain consistency in fan literature relating to the media), and a form of recruitment system. Some rituals and ceremonies may also be held in these organisations: for example, a boy was 'baptised' into a 'Temple of Trek' in a fan club of the film *Star Trek*. According to Giles (2000), religious practices and idol worship behaviours share certain similarities. For example, fans extend exclusivity to their idols, only listening to that person's music, similarly to Christians who only worship their God. Therefore, some of the attitudes and belief characteristics of religiosity may share attitudes and behaviours with idol worship. Both activities serve the same function for psychological needs, thus leading to positive correlations between constructs of idol worship and those of religiosity.

As regards Hypothesis 5, the result of this study is also inconsistent with the past observations of an inverted V-shape pattern of idol worship across age, where idol worship reaches its peak during adolescence and declines during university. In this study, senior secondary students have higher romantic fantasy and psychological identification with their idols, and they are more physically attracted by the idols than the participants in junior secondary level. The differences between senior secondary school and university students are diminishing. It seems that university students experience delayed growth in terms of their maturity. This can be explained by previous findings. According to Yue and Yan (2007), there is an extension of adolescence in society. Even though the beginning of adolescence is defined by puberty, the transition of adolescents to young

adults is not biological but culturally defined (Arnett & Taber, 1994). The sociologist Michael Kimmel (2008) also claims that there is an extension in adolescence, whereby 16-26-year-old men refuse to grow up, choose a career, or establish a long-term relationship. O'Farrell (2011) believes that people can delay their psychological maturity up to a decade, and will only transform into adulthood at the age of 30. This supports the present finding that the differences between senior secondary students and university students are diminishing. This may be a new trend of idol worship.

The results show that the effect of idol worship on self-esteem is not significant. It was initially hypothesised that higher idol worship would predict a decrease in self-esteem owing to the harm caused by idol worship. This can be explained by the fact that there are a number of benefits conferred by idol worship which counterbalance the drop in self-esteem. Maltby et al. (2001) stated that individuals can benefit from participating in a fan club, or any sort of social network of fans, where they are able to respect and share information with each other. Thus, idol worship enhances productive social relationships and serves as a psychological buffer against daily hassles. When they integrate with the social world, gaining support and social skills from interacting with the fans of the same idol, these experiences boost fans' psychological well-being. Besides, according to the social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel, 1978), participants gain self-esteem through favourable comparisons of the in-group (namely the fan clubs) with the out-group (Houston & Andreopolou, 2003; Hunter, 2003; Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001), North et al. (2007) also claim that when fans agree with the positive statements about people's favourite idols this will also elevate their self-esteem. Therefore, these factors may have confounded the negative relationship between idol worship and self-esteem.

As regards the hypothesis on religiosity which predicted an increase in self-esteem, no significant prediction was found. There are reasons for this. To begin with, some results show a negative correlation between religiosity and self-esteem, particularly on the extrinsic orientation (Abbotts, Williams, Sweeting, & West, 2004; Maltby et al., 1999; Ventis, 1995), more exposure of religious media is also correlated with trait anxiety (Koenig, George, Blazer, & Pritchett, 1993). If the Christian community is a minority and a less powerful group in society, the members will also suffer from a drop in self-esteem (Muldoon, 2000). The positive association between religiosity and self-esteem is also confounded by other factors such as age and gender (Maltby et al., 1999). This study also supports it as females are more religious than males, whereas males enjoy higher self-esteem than females, which is also consistent with previous observations (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1977). Another confounder is the peer-group norm of the person. If the norm regards religiousness as 'uncool', it could result in embarrassment, rejection, and stigmatisation for Christians. Thus, this impairs their self-esteem (Abbotts et al., 2004). Lastly, different denominations also affect one's self-esteem. In the study by Abbotts et al. (2004), weekly church attendance is positively associated with self-esteem for Catholics,

but negatively for Christians affiliated to the Church of Scotland. They reason that more attendance at that church is associated with excessive teasing or bullying. Members of that church may be victimised. A recent study by Colbert et al. (2009) also shows no significant prediction for religiosity towards self-esteem. Therefore, the relationship between religiosity and self-esteem is still under discussion, and may be affected by many other sociological and cultural factors.

Apart for the rejected hypotheses, it is found in the results that there is a moderation effect of sex on Worship Decision in predicting Self-Esteem. As shown in Figure 5, males suffer from a drop in self-esteem when they increase their conformity regarding idol selection, whereas females enjoy a rise in self-esteem when they conform to the expectations of their peers, parents, or teachers in terms of their idol selection. This is because if females do not conform in worshipping the same idols to their significant others, they may be abandoned by their friends. Males, however, have less pressure to conform and prefer idols which they have chosen themselves (Han, 2000; Shi, 2004, 2005; Yue & Yan, 2007).

It is supported by previous findings that females conform more to group pressure to form impressions of each other's likeability or expertise (Eagly, 1978; Eagly, Wood, & Fishbaugh, 1981; Eagly & Chryala, 1986; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Good and Sanchez (2010) also reveal that pressured motivation to conform is negatively correlated with self-esteem, and autonomous motivation to conform is positively associated with self-esteem. At the same time, males are viewed as less competent when they behave communally, whereas females are viewed less favourably when they are assertive and dominant (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). To conclude, if females are autonomously motivated to worship a particular idol to get into a social group, they enjoy a rise in self-esteem as it is gender-appropriate. On the other hand, if males are pressured to conform to others' expectations in picking their favourite idols, it will make them view themselves as less competent and will thus lead to a decrease in self-esteem.

### ***Significance and Implications of the Present Study***

First, this study serves to validate the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ). Factor analysis explained the different elements in pathological idol worship behaviours, such as conforming blindly, focusing on idealisation and romantic fantasies, emphasising one's physical attractiveness, and spending extravagantly on idols' products. This study helps us understand which specific aspects of pathological behaviours in idol worship apply to people in Hong Kong across different demographic characteristics. This also supplements the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS) where the Borderline-Pathological factor is shallowly defined (Maltby et al., 2002). They Maltby and his colleagues believe that currently there is no other assessment on idol worship containing any factor similar to the Borderline-Pathological factor. IWQ serves to provide insights into what particular pathological behaviours or attitude may be involved in idol worship. Second, the strong, significant,

and positive correlations between the factors in IWQ and those in CAS also provide evidence for the concurrent validity of the two scales measuring similar constructs. Third, the study shows a new trend of idol worship across age in Hong Kong, which supports Yue and Yan's (2007) belief in the possibility of an extension of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This delayed adulthood may be a new trend in Hong Kong, as supported by the results.

In addition, this study also encourages us to explore religiosity in Chinese contexts. Since there have not been many publications on the relationship between religiosity and other constructs in Chinese culture, it is worth investigating further the difference between people's attitudes toward Eastern and Western religions across cultures. People in the East may be more prone to extrinsic-social religious orientation because of their collectivist culture. The positive correlation between idol worship and religiosity may also imply a cultural difference. Besides, since religiosity is positively correlated with idol worship, it is possible that there are pathological behaviour patterns in religiosity that are worth studying. People may also engage in maladaptive behaviours in worshipping their god, thus impairing different perspectives of their lives cognitively, socially, and psychologically.

#### **Limitations of the Present Study and Further Study**

Despite its significance the study also has a number of limitations. First, the types of idols people worship were ignored. It is believed that idol type affects one's idol worship behaviours (Yue & Yan, 2007), whereby different forms or presentations of idol worship toward different kinds of idols obtain. For instance, people of different ages tend to worship different types of idols to serve their developmental functions. People also hold different attitudes toward different idols. They have more psychological identifications with relatives or peers, and more fantasies regarding tri-stars.

Second, the study mainly focuses on the religiosity of Christians and non-Christians, but neglects participants of other religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam, owing to the small sample size. Therefore, it may not be applicable to use the Age-Universal I-E Scale (AUIE) for Buddhists, Taoists, and Muslims. This study also largely gathered secondary students from Christian schools in Hong Kong Island district, which may affect the external validity of the study as the sample may not represent the whole Hong Kong population appropriately.

The following recommendations are offered for further investigations. To begin with, the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) and Age-Universal I-E Scale (AUIE) should be further validated in terms of the factors and their applicability in Hong Kong. Second, measures of religiosity apart from AUIE should also be used, such as the Quest Religious Questionnaire (QRQ) (Maltby & Day, 1998), and more participants from religions such as Taoism and Buddhism should be included in the analyses to check if the relationship

between idol worship and religiosity can also be generalised to these people. Third, different types of idols worshipped across age should also be investigated and analysed.

### **Conclusion**

It was hypothesised that idol worship is negatively correlated with religiosity, whereas idol worship would reduce self-esteem and religiosity would boost self-esteem. In addition, it was believed that females would have more intensive idol worship attitudes than males, whereas males would have higher self-esteem than females. Idol worship across participants' age would also show an inverted V-shape pattern.

Five components were found in the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) as a result of factor analysis: *Romantic Fantasy*, *Physical Attractiveness*, *Psychological Identification*, *Worship Decision*, and *Worship Expenditure*. It was shown that there is a positive correlation between idol worship and religiosity in Hong Kong, suggesting that religious people neglect the Biblical teaching that 'Thou shalt worship no other gods'. Two regression analyses also showed that idol worship or religiosity cannot predict lower or higher self-esteem respectively. Sex acts as a more reliable construct in idol worship attitudes and self-esteem, whereby females have higher idol worship attitudes, and males have higher self-esteem. It also moderates the effect of worship conformity attitude in predicting self-esteem, meaning that the more females conform to their peers' expectations in selecting their idols, the higher their self-esteem will be, but the more males conform to their peers' expectations in selecting their idols, the lower their self-esteem will be. A delayed transition from adolescence to adulthood was also observed in the pattern of the idol worship attitudes. The inverted V-shape pattern gradually increases from junior secondary school level to senior secondary school level, and maintains the same intensity throughout the university level.

This study serves to validate the Idol Worship Questionnaire (IWQ) and Age Universal I-E Scale (AUIE) regarding their applicability and factor components in Hong Kong. It also shows evidence for concurrent validity of the Idol Worship Questionnaire with another measurement on idol worship, the Celebrity Attitude Scale (CAS). In future studies, participants with various religious beliefs and backgrounds should be sampled. Further validations for the Age-Universal I-E Scale (AUIE) should also be conducted in the future. Last but not least, the types of idols people worship should also be measured and assessed to see if there is any difference.

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