



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**Internalizing personality traits of fictional characters into one's own
personality:**

**The relationship between the Big 5 Personality Traits and assuming of
personality traits of fictional characters as a self-guide among young adults**

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

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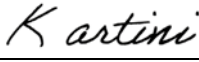
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**Internalizing personality traits of fictional characters into one's own
personality:**

**The relationship between the Big 5 Personality Traits and assuming of
personality traits of fictional characters as a self-guide among young adults**

KELLY ALLISON DALY

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2022)

The project entitled '**Internalizing personality traits of fictional characters into one's own personality: The relationship between the Big 5 Personality Traits and assuming of personality traits of fictional characters as a self-guide among young adults**' was prepared by **Kelly Allison Daly (72294)** and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

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ABSTRACT

External factors such as games and movies were found to have an impact on personality. In this study, the external factor used was a short video with a narrative that had no dialogues. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the type of personality traits that come into play while individuals are brought into the narrative, create a one-sided connection with characters and while individuals reflect on how they perceive themselves to be. The rationale for this was to recognize how external influences have an impact on psychological and social factors which then influence personality, in terms of cognition, behaviour and emotion. A total of 30 undergraduate Psychology students from the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development took part in this research. Each participant was required to answer the Big 5 Personality Inventory before watching the 'Little Darling' video. After that, participants had to fill in a form consisting of the Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept tests. The results of the study have shown that there was a significant correlation between Openness with Individual Self-Concept, Agreeableness with Transportation into Narrative, and Transportation into Narrative with Parasocial Relationship respectively. To conclude, the study illustrates the potential to promote personality development through interesting and engaging narratives.

Keywords: Fictional Characters, Big 5 Personality, Transportation into Narrative, Individual Self-Concept, Parasocial Relationship

ABSTRAK

Faktor persekitaran atau luaran seperti permainan video dan filem didapati memberi pengaruh kepada personaliti. Dalam kajian ini, faktor persekitaran yang digunakan adalah video pendek yang tidak mempunyai dialog naratif. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan jenis ciri-ciri personaliti yang terlibat semasa individu dibawa ke dalam naratif, mewujudkan hubungan separa dengan watak dan sementara individu mempersepsikan bagaimana mereka menganggap diri mereka. Rasional kajian ini adalah untuk mengiktiraf bagaimana pengaruh luaran memberi kesan kepada faktor psikologi dan sosial individu yang kemudiannya akan mempengaruhi personaliti, dari segi kognisi, tingkah laku dan emosi. Seramai 30 pelajar sarjana Psikologi dari Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia telah mengambil bahagian dalam penyelidikan ini. Setiap peserta dikehendaki menjawab Inventori Personaliti *Big 5* sebelum menonton video '*Little Darling*'. Selepas itu, peserta dikehendaki mengisi borang yang terdiri daripada ujian Transportasi ke dalam Naratif, Hubungan Parasosial dan Ujian Konsep Kendiri Individu. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara tret Keterbukaan dengan Konsep Kendiri Individu, tret Kepersetujuan dengan Transportasi ke dalam Naratif, serta Transportasi ke dalam Naratif dengan Hubungan Parasosial masing-masing. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menggambarkan potensi untuk menggalakkan pembangunan personaliti melalui naratif yang menarik.

Kata kunci: Watak Fiksyen, Personaliti *Big 5*, Transportasi ke dalam Naratif, Konsep Kendiri Individu, Hubungan Parasosial

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

With the Covid-19 situation affecting countries worldwide, there has been an increasing trend where many have resorted to all sorts of mass media to stay connected, updated and even for leisure purposes. A statistical report has found that there is a significant increase in TV watching after the Covid-19 restriction was implemented in Malaysia in 2020 as compared to before the restriction order (Hirschmann, 2021).

The concern here is the impact of the media on personality. A study by Pandya & Lodha (2021), has shown that there is a negative impact on mental health due to the excessive amount of screentime during the pandemic. To add, multiple studies have researched the influences of external factors on personality. There has been evidence that contents of media such as narrative and movie characters have an impact on individuals' cognition, behaviour and emotions. Thus, this study aims to research fictional characters from media and its impact on individuals' personality. The individuals stated here are 30 undergraduate Psychology students from the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development, UNIMAS. More specifically, this study will explore the relationships between the Big 5 Personality traits of the 30 psychology students on Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Self-Concept. This study shows importance for young adults in choosing media with personas that represent their ideal values and traits which, in turn, can aid in personality development.

1.1 Background of Study

In this era of growing media, it has created opportunities for a wide range of research studying topics on the type of personality traits of an individual and its effects on the openness to perceive and assume the identity traits of fictional characters.

Personality, Identity & Relationship

According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), personality involves cognition, behaviour and emotion. It can be influenced by biological factors, social factors and psychological factors. However, this research's focus would be towards social factors and psychological factors.

Since this research aims to gather data from young adults ranging from age 19 to 30 only, young adulthood can be related to the stages according to Erik Erikson's development stage of Identity versus Confusion and Intimacy Versus Isolation (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021). Identity vs. Confusion is the difficulty that the individual faces which is the need to fulfil the understanding of their role and goals for life. Although the stage for Identity Versus Confusion usually occurs around adolescence ages, this issue can be brought to the next stage of age group if it has not been fulfilled successfully. Hence, this situation of identity vs confusion is added to the related difficulties that the research participants might face since the age group is closer to that stage compared to the stage of generativity vs stagnation. With this, the research will take a look at the individual's self-concept and its relationship with the assuming of personality traits of fictional characters.

As for the stage of Intimacy vs Isolation, it is commonly occurring in the young adult ages ranging from 19 to 39 years old. Here, individuals must fulfil the virtue of creating meaningful relationships to overcome the feeling of loneliness and isolation. This research

will take a look at the parasocial relationship the participants will have with fictional characters. According to Rain and Mar (2021), a parasocial relationship is a one-sided relationship whereby the individual is aware of bonding with the characters while the characters are not aware at all.

How personality changes

Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning theory suggests that individuals can learn by evaluating and modelling from external factors or situations (Bandura, 2001). Based on the reciprocal determinism by Bandura (1989), cognition, behaviour and external factors are interrelated to each other. Such as in relation to this research idea whereby when an individual perceives a character to be a good influence (cognition), and they are in a similar situation as the narrative that the characters have faced (external factor), then they will apply the learnt behaviour from the fictional into their own actions to solve the situation (behaviour). Hence, this research aims to explore the relationship between individual personality and the assuming of personality traits of fictional characters.

Influence of Fictional Characters on Personality

Few examples of past research which studied the influence of fictional characters on personality are as follows. These are examples of how the psychological and social aspects of personality are influenced by fictional characters.

To start off, the infamous topic of games and aggressive traits, it was found that there was an association between exposure to violent games and aggressive traits in individuals (Williams, 2009). Exposure to violent games would be the social factors influencing emotions (psychological factor). This in turn promotes aggression in behaviour as well as

hostility in cognition and emotion. The research involved changing the modes of the games to fit the treatment condition of the study to violent but non-frustrating mode, violent and frustrating mode, non-violent and non-frustrating mode as well as non-violent but frustrating mode. Not only that but the hostility variable was measured as a pre and post-test using the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI).

One study showed that when an individual has high self-awareness, it lowers the chances of them to be brought into the narrative. Thus, the expectations of assuming the personality traits of fictional characters will be made slim (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). The method used started with measuring the participants' self-concept/self-awareness using the Private Self-Consciousness Scale. Next, the participants had to read a short story on an introverted character. Then they are required to fill in the Experience Taking Measure which measures the extent to which they adopted the psychological perspective, emotions and thoughts of the character as well as two measures of self-ascribed introversion.

Another study showed that when an individual has high anxiety, they are more likely to create parasocial bonds (Rain, & Mar, 2021). However, higher anxiety would mean lower character identification (the ability to put oneself into the fictional character's perspective). On the other hand, individuals with high avoidance are attracted to characters with similar traits as them. This in turn, promotes the ability for individuals with high avoidance to be able to look through the character's perspective. This study relates to the influence of psychological factors (anxiety or avoidance) on personality.

A study by Pimentel and Kalyanaraman (2020) was carried out by adjusting the anxiety levels of fictional avatars according to each participants' perceived anxiety. The result showed a significant decrease from the pre-test to post-test measure for anxiety in

participants who witnessed their avatars, which was adjusted according to their perceived anxiety, being destroyed in an animated situation. Thus, providing some evidence that fictional characters do have influences on the psychological aspect of personality.

To conclude, what was highlighted in this section was current trends in personality relating to topics such as how media or narrative portrayal influences personality in terms of cognition, emotion and behaviour.

1.2 Problem Statement

Due to rapid growth of mass media, the younger generation has more exposure to personas in the entertainment media. Therefore, this study is motivated to determine the relationship between personality and the ability for fictional characters to influence it by investigating the correlation between the Big 5 Personality traits on transportation into narrative, Individual self-concept and parasocial relationships.

1.3 General Research Objective

The main purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the Big 5 Personality Traits of young adults and the representation of personality traits of fictional characters that the young adults identified to act as a self-guide.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between traits of the Big 5 Personality with Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept.
2. To investigate the association between Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between traits of the Big 5 Personality with Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept?
2. Is there association between Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between traits of the Big 5 Personality with Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept.
2. There is an association between Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept.

From the hypotheses above, there would be sub hypotheses for each main hypothesis. For example, Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between traits of the Big 5 Personality with Transportation into Narrative, Parasocial Relationship and Individual Self-Concept. An example of a sub hypothesis for this hypothesis will be “There is a relationship between Openness trait with Transportation into Narrative”. Therefore, this will be repeated for the rest of the traits of the Big 5 Personality for Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism together with each of the 3 factors of the Assuming the personality traits of fictional characters. As for the second hypothesis, an example of a sub hypothesis would be “There is an association between Transportation into Narrative and Parasocial relationship”. Altogether, the first hypothesis consists of 15 sub hypotheses while the second hypothesis consists of 3 sub hypotheses.