

Research Article

## The Show Must Go On: A Study on Celebrity Worship during COVID19

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### ABSTRACT

The world has irrevocably changed due to the global pandemic. As cases kept rising, countries started closing their boundaries and put their citizens in lockdown, enforcing the message 'stay at home, stay safe.' It was the first time perhaps since the world war that the entire world was going through the same crisis at the same time. Every industry went through setbacks including the multibillion dollars' worth entertainment industry. Film production stopped, theatres were shut, and film stars were confined to their homes. Film stars and pop singers who constitute the majority of the genre of celebrities as we know them today were now caught in a new situation. Confined to their homes, with no prospect of work for some time and perhaps to stay relevant and in tune with their fan base, started churning out videos and engaging with fans on social media platforms. This paper studies the already existing psychological phenomenon of celebrity worship and places it in the backdrop of COVID19 to study if the pandemic has had any impact, causing change in the perception of celebrities and celebrity culture. The chief findings of the study are that the pandemic has exposed the realness and vulnerability of celebs and this has allowed fans to relate to the stars better. This study shows that though fans are aware of possible superficiality and hypocrisy of the privileged lives of their favourite stars it doesn't stop them from viewing the posts as entertaining and welcome it as a distraction, even during such a period of acute crisis. Celebrity culture has not waned. As long as there are fans, it is here to stay.

### Introduction

Celebrity culture is not new to the world. Fandom and celebration of popular entertainment and sporting icons has always been part of human society. Celebrity worship particularly took a new dimension with the *Beatlemania* of the 1960's. Sights of die-hard fans of the pop group throwing their bras on the Beatles were common. Young women in India supposedly slit their wrists when actor and heartthrob Amitabh Bachan met with an accident on the sets of the popular Hindi Movie Coolie and was hospitalised. Sometimes, distraught fans took it a notch higher by committing suicide when their beloved celebrity died. When the 'King of Pop' Michael Jackson died, and more recently Basketball legend Kobe Bryant passed away in a helicopter accident, thousands of fans thronged their memorials, paying tribute. For many, the loss felt personal. Cashing on people's love for following the minute details of the lives of their favourite celebrities, a new brand of journalists called paparazzi cropped up to feed this desire. Paparazzi are journalists whose job description entails pursuing celebrities and providing intimate photos and stories about their private lives. In countries like India, the tradition of cult following is strong-celebrities, often famous film actors and cricketers are viewed as gods and placed on a pedestal. Their inaccessibility adds to their charm.

Social scientists believe that celebrity worship or the need to worship anyone is part of our DNA. Humans have an innate tendency to follow the 'alpha male or female' or the most dominating/assertive person in the group. The public's fascination with celebrities "may seem new because we are such a media-immersed society, but it's really not," said Stuart Fisch off,

senior editor at the Journal of Media Psychology and emeritus professor of media psychology at California State University, Los Angeles. "Celebrities tap into the public's primal fantasies and basic emotions, lifting people from their everyday lives and making them believe anything is possible", said Dr. John Lucas, a clinical assistant professor of psychology at Weill Cornell Medical College and an assistant attending psychiatrist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City. Humans at the core are social beings, and research has shown that the less connected people feel, the more they turn to celebrities, said Adam Galinsky, an expert in ethics and social psychology and a professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. "It's a very adaptive and functional behavior." Dr Lucas adds that while worshipping the rich and famous is harmless in itself, it could be perceived as symptomatic of a rootless culture in which many people feel a sense of isolation.

What we know of them [celebrities] through People magazine and other media sources fills a gaping and painful void in our lives," Lucas said. The dwindling influence of religion adds to that sense of yearning in people, he added, making the stars' exploits and eccentricities, their loves and losses, more than a form of entertainment. "Religion is faltering, and in the process people are grappling with infantile wishes, with magical thinking," he said.

For the most part, star status conveys a sense of immortality and invincibility -- and "we are shocked when they die," Lucas added. In extreme cases, when one's love for a celebrity translates into having a para-social relationship with them, the condition becomes an issue of mental health that may require medical help. This extreme obsession is called Celebrity Worship Syndrome in psychology, and often connotes poor mental health and is associated with other symptoms such as elevated anxiety, depression, loneliness, disassociation etc.

**Celebrity Worship Syndrome** is an obsessive addictive disorder in which a person becomes overly involved with the details of a celebrity's personal and professional life. Psychologists have indicated that though many people obsess over film, television, sport and pop stars, the only common factor between them is that they are all figures in the public eye. This is commonly found on sites such as Twitter and Instagram.

Evidence indicates that poor mental health is correlated with celebrity worship. Researchers have examined the relationship between celebrity worship and mental health in United Kingdom adult samples. One study found evidence to suggest that the intense-personal celebrity worship dimension was related to higher levels of depression and anxiety. Similarly, another study in 2004, found that the intense-personal celebrity worship dimension was not only related to higher levels of depression and anxiety, but also higher levels of stress, negative affect, and reports of illness. Both these studies showed no evidence for a significant relationship between either the entertainment-social or the borderline-pathological dimensions of celebrity worship and mental health.

With the advent of social media, the dynamic between celebrities and their fans assumed a new dimension. More than social networking sites, media sharing platforms such as Instagram, Snap chat and YouTube started gaining popularity among the young. Like the young, celebrities were quick to adapt to it by forming their official and personal pages denoted by a little blue tick. (Indicating authenticity). These pages were often manned by the celebs themselves and not by their PR person or agency and hence were personal. These platforms were two-way street- Celebs were able to reach their audience faster and more effectively and fans could get a fleeting taste of the private lives of their favourite star. Stars started feeling more real.

Instagram pages of celebrities are now used to interact with fans, promote their films, give opinion on issues- It became the new and all-encompassing effort to build their brand. Some of the biggest celebs on Instagram of 2020 according to fashion magazine *Mare Claire* include football icon Cristiano Ronaldo, teen pop star Ariana Grande and actor Dwayne The Rock.

In March 2020, COVID19 struck. Most countries closed their borders and announced lockdown. While the economies of almost every country plunged, one of the biggest industries to be affected was the Film and entertainment industry. Films that had just been released faced gigantic losses. Theatre owners were distraught with the closure and the daily wage labourers of the industry suffered the most as shootings were indefinitely cancelled. Unable to shoot and with theatres shut, celebs were forced to isolate themselves in the houses. Having nothing else to do and perhaps in the quest to stay relevant, many celebs took to social media with greater vigour. Some adopted their mantle of being opinion leaders or influencers seriously and put out posts sermonising people on the need to stay at home and safely. Many used the time to interact with fans over live chat. Others chose to give viewers a glimpse of their everyday lives by putting up videos of them performing common house chores such as sweeping, swapping, washing vessels and cooking.

Celebrities got a huge traumatised and captive audience, glued to their screens, and watching any and all content thrown at them. However, the responses from the fans were mixed. While some welcomed the distraction, others were peeved.

Singing icon Madonna particularly drew a lot of flak for his video post on Instagram and Twitter, where the singer offered a short speech about coronavirus and its impact, referring to the disease as “the great equalizer.” “It doesn’t care about how rich you are, how famous you are, how funny you are, how smart you are, where you live, how old you are, what amazing stories you can tell,” she said, sitting naked in a bathtub filled with rose petals. “It’s the great equalizer, and what’s terrible about it is what’s great about it. What’s terrible about it is it’s made us all equal in many ways — and what’s wonderful about it is it’s made us all equal in many ways.” Fans were aghast and through public tweets and comments called out the star for her insensitivity and hypocrisy, given that she was speaking from her ‘palatial bathroom’, let alone mansion. One person wrote “Sorry my queen, love u so much, but we’re not equal. We can die from the same diseases, but the poor will suffer the most. Do not romanticise nothing.” Former governor and terminator star Arnold Schwarzenegger tweeted a short video, in what appeared to be his mansion, replete with his pet horse and donkey, urging people not to venture out.

Popular talk show host Ellen De Generes was called out for video where the star says “ One thing that I've learned from being in quarantine is that people -- this is like being in jail, is what it is, "It's mostly because I've been wearing the same clothes for 10 days and everyone in here is gay. The jokes that I have.” The video has since been taken down from her YouTube channel, and was reuploaded without the comments after they drew backlash from viewers online who described her as “insensitive”. “What a great look for Ellen as thousands of people sit in actual jail cells just hoping for the best without soap and basic protections,” Variety television critic Caroline Framke tweeted.

Back in India, pictures of popular stars performing house chores, such as Katrina Kaif washing vessels, famous cricketers sweeping their house and actors such as Vicky Kaushal cleaning were gaining traction. A barrage of home work and home cooking videos by popular celebs such as Deepika and Ranveer drew maximum views and likes. Fans were abreast with all the news – where their stars were and what they were upto. Salman Khan was holed up in his farm, Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor were spending lockdown together. All the Bollywood celebs were also seen keenly participating in vessel banging and clapping for medical staff, on the day of Janata Curfew or March. The Bachhan family in full attendance were seen clapping vociferously from their terrace, all dressed in white.

Bollywood super star Amitabh Bacchan collaborated with Kalyan Jewellers, a brand that he endorses and Sony pictures Network to bring out a short film titled ‘We are One’ to pledging support to more than a lakh daily wage earners of the film and entertainment industry who had were losing out their livelihood due to the lockdown India. The film starring several celebrities from India, was shot individually in their homes and collated together and promoted the messages of ‘stay at home’ and ‘social distancing’. It was well received by fans and clocked more than 2000 views on YouTube.

In South India, popular Telugu actor and son of yesteryear star Chiranjeevi, Ram Charan started the BeTheRaIMan hashtag, tagging his fellow actors and Baahubali fame director S.S Rajamouli, posting pictures of performing house chores in the absence of domestic helps due to the covid situation. Other challenges such as pillow challenges were soon to follow, which involved posting a picture of wearing a pillow as an attire.

For some the fatigue set in soon, popular Dance choreographer and director Farah Khan unleashed her anger on the plethora of ‘work out’ videos put out by several Bollywood stars and her own colleagues. “It’s my humble request from all the ‘celebrities’ and ‘stars’ that please stop making your workout videos and bombarding us with it. I can understand that you all are privileged and you don’t have any other worries in this global pandemic except for looking after your figures. But some of us, most of us have bigger concerns during this crisis,” Farah said.

Australian comedian Greta Lee Jackson shared a video on twitter where she and a bunch of others mocked celebrities for putting up what they probably saw as tone-deaf posts about their privileged lifestyles. The video raised the thought that the real stars are healthcare workers and not film celebrities. Bollywood’s extremely popular director and producer Karan Johar more privileged than most, immediately put out an apology: “This hit me hard and I have realised many of my posts may have been insensitive to many...I apologise profusely and wish to add none of it was intentional and came from a place of sharing but clearly may have lacked emotional foresight.”

Celebrity culture is a huge industry of its own. Stars are required to remain in their pedestals to drive the sales of films, the products they endorse and move several industries forward, including the film and advertising industry. In this scenario, it’s vital to know the impact that COVID has had on the stars and their relationship with their fans, perhaps the most important ingredient for making the star the star he or she is. The response of the world seems two pronged. Are the celebrities in

lockdown providing the necessary distraction for fans? Are the fans lapping up the entertainment or is celebrity culture waning? Has the realness of the celebs in the backdrop of COVID diluted their importance and made them lose their sheen? This research paper attempts to find answers to these questions and more.

## Research Questions

This current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are fans responding to celebrities in the COVID situation?
2. What is the impact of COVID19 on celebrity culture?
3. Is celebrity culture waning post COVID 19?

## Literature Review

Is celebrity worship good or bad?

Much research has been conducted about who engages in celebrity worship and what drives the compulsion. Celebrity worship for purely entertainment purposes likely reflects an extraverted personality and is most likely a healthy past time for most people. This type of celebrity worship involves harmless behaviours such as reading and learning about a celebrity. Intense personal attitudes towards celebrities, however, reflect traits of neuroticism. The most extreme descriptions of celebrity worship exhibit borderline pathological behaviour and traits of psychoticism. This type of celebrity worship may involve empathy with a celebrity's failures and successes, obsessions with the details of a celebrity's life, and over-identification with the celebrity.

Research provides us with a mixed picture. North et al. (2007) found that there's a certain type of person that seems drawn to celebrity worship: Entertainment social celebrity worship (arguably the most normal form) appears to have no implications for attributional style or self-esteem, intense personal celebrity worship was related to positive self-esteem but also to a propensity toward stable and global attributions, and borderline pathological celebrity worship (arguably the most disordered form) was related to external, stable, and global attributional styles and was close to being associated negatively with self-esteem.

North and his colleagues (2007) also provide a nice overview of what prior research has found in this area: Several studies have addressed the correlates of celebrity worship, such as a higher incidence among young people (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Giles, 2002; Larson, 1995); employment of a game-playing love style (McCutcheon, 2002); a negative association with some forms of religiosity (Maltby, Houran, Lange, Ashe, & McCutcheon, 2002); and links with different aspects of Eysenck's (e.g. Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) personality dimensions (Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon, 2003).

Most interesting in the context of this research, Maltby et al. (2004) concluded that intense personal celebrity worship was associated with poorer mental health, and particularly with poorer general health (depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, social dysfunction) and negative affect (negative affect, stress, and low positive affect and life satisfaction). Similarly, Maltby, McCutcheon, Ashe, and Houran (2001) found that intense personal celebrity worship was associated with depression and anxiety.

Celebrity worship is especially disturbing and prevalent amongst teenage girls:

Findings suggest that in female adolescents, there is an interaction between Intense-personal celebrity worship and body image between the ages of 14 and 16 years, and some tentative evidence has been found to suggest that this relationship disappears at the onset of adulthood, 17 to 20 years (Maltby, 2005).

Research has found that when a person's life starts to go downhill, they gain some value (and perhaps a little boost to their mood and self-esteem) when they can read about the most famous and popular people in their culture who suffer from similar troubles. When popular Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone came out with her story and battle with depression, many young girls felt emboldened. Ms Padukone went on to start the Live Love Laugh foundation, dedicated to helping people with mental health issues. The fact that an unattainable and perfect star who had seemingly had everything in life, gave the courage to many girls to come out with their own battles with mental illness. The young girls were probably seeking a sign of humanity that they could relate to and felt familiar, despite how far away, unreal, and unattainable such celebrity lives really were.

The global pandemic or COVID19 struck in March 2019 it changed all equations. Celebrities became like regular people. They were isolated in their homes and had to find means to stay relevant. A barrage of social media posts started. However one is not sure if the social media posts by celebrities helped fans to relate to their stars and feel reassured or the realness removed the sheen. Though research on this topic is still nascent or close to nil given that the pandemic is still at large.

When popular Hollywood actor Tom Hanks contracted COVID19, people were disappointed, says the Guardian Story “*Celebrities, Coronavirus shows us how irrelevant you have become.*” The Guardian argues that the effect of celebrities on lives is waning. He asserts that when Elton John and many others beamed a live concert for COVID relief though many tuned in, billion others opted out. While it may be true that KPop boy bands still make one swoon and faint, the fact that nobody since Michael Jackson has made the population “to care” remains. The author feels that perhaps celebs have lost their charm post COVID because people finally realise they are ordinary just like us.

In another Guardian story titled “*Gal Gadot and friends singing to us about self-isolation? That’s a bit rich*” sheds light on how on Instagram, Wonder Woman star Gal Gadot – along with a number of other self-isolating celebrities, including Will Ferrell, Kristen Wiig, Jamie Dornan, Sia, Zoe Kravitz, Natalie Portman, Amy Adams, Mark Ruffalo, Norah Jones, Jimmy Fallon and Cara Delevingne – uploaded a video of them all singing snippets of John Lennon’s Imagine. “There they are, in various gardens and against various blank mansion walls, and in various of those special calamitously bad outfits celebrities wear in the downtime moments when they are not being styled, and we realise how fundamentally useless they all are without help, that they can’t even get dressed properly, and that, truly, a lot of them really are lucky that they’re hot,” the article states. “We are in this together, we will get through it together,” Gadot wrote. “Let’s imagine together. Sing with us.” I have to preface this statement with: it’s very nice that they all tried. The sentiment behind it is sincere. But the video itself is the worst thing I’ve ever seen on the internet, and I’ve seen corpses on this thing.

In Vanity Fair, the story “*There is no good celebrity content*” talks about how the pandemic has caught the celebrity unaware-without their methods of mass communication and has relegated them to DIY methods on social media.

“The coronavirus outbreak has shown us both the power and the fragility of fame, its ability to unify us in distraction but also to alienate us even further.” The story says.

Initially when the virus first erupted, several celebs were issuing stay at home messages. At first the fans seemed happy, rallying behind these celebrities, thanking these public figures for a calm forthrightness. Slowly the coronavirus outbreak affirmed an aspect of relatability, in the simplest of terms. The story argues that fans eventually realised that celebrities are, of course, just like us because they too are scared and confused and struggling to find something, anything, to do that gives them a sense of agency.” In that way, all the bad-audio, grainy-picture celebrity missives sent in the time of COVID have been glumly heartening, bittersweet reminders that we are all subject to at least some of the universe’s whims, that clout cannot protect anyone from everything,” concludes the story.

In The New York times story “*Celebrity culture is burning*” the author says that among the social impacts of the coronavirus is “its swift dismantling of the cult of celebrity.” The story points out that COVID has demonstrated the glaring social inequalities in American society, and that fans can finally see the disparity between them and their idols. It calls the celebrities as ‘ambassadors of meritocracy’, that they represent the American pursuit of wealth through talent, charm and hard work. But that the dream of class mobility dissipates when society locks down, the economy stalls, the death count mounts and everyone’s future is frozen inside their own crowded apartment or palatial mansion. The difference between the two has never been more obvious. The #guillotine2020 hashtag is jumping. “As grocery aisles turn bare, some have suggested that perhaps they ought to eat the rich,” concludes the story.

The Vox story ‘Celebrity quarantine posts are inflaming tensions between the haves and have-nots,’ adds to this this debate about the relevance of celebrity culture, by openly stating that celebrity posts during this pandemic have finally opened the eyes of the average American to the realities of increasing wealth inequality between him and the average celebrity. It says that for the first time in America, income disparities have been thrown open, forcing them to confront it. Australian comedian Greta Lee Jackson shared a video on twitter where she and a bunch of others mocked celebrities for putting up what they probably saw as tone-deaf posts about their privileged lifestyles. The video raised the thought that the real stars are healthcare workers and not film celebrities. Bollywood’s extremely popular director and producer Karan Johar more privileged than most, immediately put out an apology: “This hit me hard and I have realised many of my posts may have been insensitive to many...I apologise profusely and wish to add none of it was intentional and came from a place of sharing but clearly may have lacked emotional foresight. In response to this tweet, National award winning film critic and founder member of film review web site filmcompanion.com Baradwaj Rangan wrote the story “Karan Johar, It’s Okay, Please Open

Up Your Closet Again!” In the story. Mr Rangan argues that an artist’s role is to entertain and while it may not be as important as a health worker’s job, if it provides entertainment to a few then why should it not be welcomed. He argues that the reader must not judge celebrities for their post, as long as a celeb posts for entertainment and as long as he or she doesn’t take a preachy or a holier than thou stance. He says that after all, “the show must go on.” Analysing the stories shows the clear division of opinion or school of thought on whether celebrity culture is waning or rising and if celebrity posts at the time of COVID have accentuated that

## Methodology

### The methodology of this study was 2 pronged:

As a first step, the 1. Celebrity Attitudes Scale was administered using random sampling on 700 respondents. From the 700, the highest 100 respondents or those who ranked highest in terms of celebrity worship were culled out and administered with the 2. second survey to determine if their response towards celebrity culture changed post COVID19

**Celebrity Attitude Scale :** It appears that the Celebrity Worship Scale underwent a psychometric metamorphosis into the Celebrity Attitudes Scale. This scale identifies individuals who are overly absorbed or addicted to their interest in a celebrity.<sup>4</sup> The Celebrity Attitudes Scale is available in a 22-item, 23-item, and 34-item version, each of which explores respondents’ attitudes toward their favourite celebrity. The measure has a Likert-scale response format, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

The scale detects three domains of celebrity worship, from normative to the more pathological, which is reflected in three specific subscales. These subscales are 1) the entertainment-social subscale, 2) the intense-personal subscale, and 3) the borderline-pathological subscale. The entertainment-social subscale comprises 10 items and indicates that a celebrity is viewed as entertaining and/or captures the respondent’s attention (e.g., item 15, “Learning the life story of my favourite celebrity is a lot of fun”). The intense-personal subscale comprises nine items and indicates that the respondent has intense and obsessive attitudes toward a celebrity with compulsive elements (e.g., item 10, “I consider my favourite celebrity to be my soul mate”). The borderline-pathological subscale comprises three items and indicates that the respondent exhibits pathological attitudes and behaviours as a result of celebrity worship (e.g., “If I were lucky enough to meet my favourite celebrity, and he/she asked me to do something illegal as a favour, I would probably do it”). The Celebrity Attitudes Scale is the most common scale in the extant empirical literature.

Sample: 700 respondents for CAS 102 respondents for survey

## Findings and Discussion

The research was two pronged. 700 members of the age group were survey between the ages of 16-21, were administered the CAS (Celebrity Attitude Scale). Out of the 700, the top 102 who scored highest in terms of celebrity Worship were culled out and administered a specific questionnaire by the researcher to study if their celebrity worship had changed due to COVID19.

The chosen 102 participants were predominantly girls of the age group 20-21. They stated that they followed their favourite celebs on Instagram, followed by Twitter.

### Q1: Age ?

Table 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
16-17	1.96%	2
18-19	29.41%	30
20-21	68.63%	70
TOTAL		102

**Q2: Sex?**

**Table 2**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	6.86%	7
Female	93.14%	95
Others	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

**Q3: On which social media platform do you follow celebrities and posts by celebrities ?**

**Table 3**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Instagram	89.22%	91
Snapchat	5.88%	6
Twitter	15.69%	16
Facebook	13.73%	14
Others	7.84%	8
Total Respondents: 102		

**Q4: Following celebrity content is/ was a welcome distraction during the lockdown.**

**Table 4**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	4.90%	5
Agree	36.27%	37
Neither agree nor disagree	39.22%	40
Disagree	12.75%	13
Strongly disagree	6.86%	7
TOTAL		102

Most of the respondents were ambivalent when asked if their celebrity posts were a welcome distraction during home isolation and lockdown in India. However, many others also agreed that it was a distraction.

**Q5: Following celebrity posts helped me cope with mental health issues during the lockdown.****Table 5**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	1.96%	2
Agree	7.84%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	39.22%	40
Disagree	34.31%	35
Strongly disagree	16.67%	17
TOTAL		102

This demonstrates that though celebrity worship is a strong phenomenon in India, it is not used to help mitigate mental health issues. They are perhaps mostly used for entertainment and distraction.

**Q6: I found celebrities and their posts during the lockdown very superficial/shallow.****Table 6**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	4.90%	5
Agree	37.25%	38
Neither agree nor disagree	43.14%	44
Disagree	12.75%	13
Strongly disagree	1.96%	2
TOTAL		102

Again, ambivalence here indicates that the average celebrity worshipper is not to read celebrity posts intimately. He/she enjoys them. However, a growing percentage seems to feel that the posts were shallow. This could be because fans have had more time to think, process and analyse posts during this collective lockdown.

**Q7: Looking at posts of celebrities doing household chores and cooking made me realise that they are people like me.****Table 7**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	3.92%	4
Agree	45.10%	46
Neither agree nor disagree	29.41%	30
Disagree	15.69%	16
Strongly disagree	5.88%	6
TOTAL		102

A huge majority do reckon that this lockdown has made them realise that celebrities are people like themselves. Seeing their favourite celebrities go through the same as them during the lockdown makes them more relatable and vulnerable. This is a clear indication that celebrity worship could come down post covid.



**Q8: I have lost respect for some of the celebrities post the covid situation**

**Table 8**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	7.84%	8
Agree	27.45%	28
Neither agree nor disagree	30.39%	31
Disagree	33.33%	34
Strongly disagree	0.98%	1
TOTAL		102

Celebrities have become real and vulnerable post COVID, but this graph shows that fans still adore the- they have not lost respect for their favourite stars.

**Q9: Celebrity posts are entertaining. After all they are entertainers.**

**Table 9**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	6.86%	7
Agree	48.04%	49
Neither agree nor disagree	27.45%	28
Disagree	15.69%	16
Strongly disagree	1.96%	2
TOTAL		102

A great majority, keeping their high incidence of celebrity worship in mind do feel that celebrities must not be judged for their posts. They are entertainers and hence must be viewed as thus.

**Q10: I believe COVID has exposed the hypocrisy of celebrities.**

**Table 10**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	9.80%	10
Agree	38.24%	39
Neither agree nor disagree	36.27%	37
Disagree	14.71%	15
Strongly disagree	0.98%	1
TOTAL		102

This is a conflicting graph. While the majority are on the fence and are not able to decide if celebrity posts were hypocritical during the lockdown, a highly percentage believed that COVID has exposed the hypocrisy of their favourite celebrities. However, one must note that based on previous inference this has not made the fan lose respect for their star.

**Q11: I believe COVID has exposed the realness and vulnerability of celebrities.**

**Table 11**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	4.90%	5
Agree	43.14%	44
Neither agree nor disagree	35.29%	36
Disagree	16.67%	17
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

This adds to the previous inference that celebs seem more relatable to the young now, post COVID.

**Q12: I believe celebrities are capitalising on the availability of a captive audience during the lockdown to their advantage.**

**Table 12**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	4.90%	5
Agree	43.14%	44
Neither agree nor disagree	35.29%	36
Disagree	16.67%	17
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

Most respondents also agree that celebrities are making use of the available captive audience by releasing videos and building on their brand and image.

**Q13: All posts are part of a celebrity's PR machinery to maintain their image.**

**Table 13**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	10.78%	11
Agree	42.16%	43
Neither agree nor disagree	34.31%	35
Disagree	12.75%	13
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

**Q14: I find/found celebrity posts during the lockdown annoying and irritating.**

**Table 14**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	7.84%	8
Agree	23.53%	24
Neither agree nor disagree	40.20%	41
Disagree	28.43%	29
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		102

Most participants of the survey did not find celeb posts annoying and irritating, viewing such posts did not add to their lockdown woes.

**Q15: In my eyes, celebrities have lost their charm ( post lockdown)**

**Table 15**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	0.98%	1
Agree	13.73%	14
Neither agree nor disagree	35.29%	36
Disagree	49.02%	50
Strongly disagree	0.98%	1
TOTAL		102

An over whelming majority did not believe the celebrity culture has waned or lost its charm post COVID. Though COVID may have exposed the vulnerability and the hypocrisy of the stars, the stars don't seem to have lost their sheen.

**Q16: What do you think has happened to celebrity culture due to COVID?**

**Table 16**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It has waned	7.84%	8
Its losing its charm	13.73%	14
Its the same	53.92%	55
Its has led to positive vibes	17.65%	18
It has increased its charm	6.86%	7
TOTAL		102

Adding the previous point, the largest consumers of celebrity content, the youth unanimously say that though they are seeing celebs for what they are, and are able to relate to them more, they continue to entertain, their charm still holds, and celebrity culture is far from waning.

Q17 Name any celebrity lockdown post that you most remember and state why.

people Katrina Kaif washing making put remember house s  
Katrina kaif post work lockdown Karan Johar  
videos stay home one funny celebrities

This word cloud analysis brings into light the kind of celeb posts that youngsters are talking about India- the biggest inference is the popularity of celebs – Popular Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif who gave a video tutorial on how to wash dishes and popular director Karan Johar who has been posting videos of his kids at home. The common content that the youth remember from their celebrity posts are – stay at home and funny content.

## Conclusion

Celebrity worship is a common, albeit pathological phenomenon among the young. Psychological studies have shown that it's especially prevalent and common among the young and vulnerable groups. The dearth of emotional strength and absence of role models are some of the factors attributed to its existence. Celebrities often film and entertainment stars are often looked up to as role models. A peek into their lives gives a fan immense voyeuristic pleasure and some even take messages and advice from their favourite stars literally. Cult worship is particularly strong in India, given the influence and dominance of the film industry. The Indian film industry is the largest in the world, producing thousands of films each year in different languages, catering to varied and multiple audiences. In some occasions film stars have gone on to become leading political figures

In this backdrop this research paper shows that celebrity worship is highest among young women, between the age of 20-21. They follow their favourite celebrities on Instagram. These celebs include Indian as well as people from other countries. During the lockdown they have been bombarded by a barrage of posts by celebrities, given that celebs are locked in their homes too. Though there has been a plethora of posts in the form of stay at home messages, advice, workout videos and the like, the young have not particularly viewed the posts in a negative light. Most of the youngsters felt that the posts were entraining. The biggest change in perception that COVID has brought about in terms of celebrity culture is that it has made the average celebrity seem real, relatable and vulnerable. Young fans feel a greater connection with their celebrities now seen in the cocoon of their houses, having similar lives and similar concerns. However young fans are not altogether swayed by the messages they see. They are aware of the hypocrisy of the celebs, complaining of isolation from their palatial mansions. They are also conscious of the fact that though COVID might be a shared concern, the celebs lead a more privileged life. Young fans also know these posts are perhaps the working of celebrities' PR machinery to continue building their brand identity. Yet young fans love their celebs. Despite the exposed realness and charm, celebrity culture has not lost its charm, appeal or its fan base. Celebrity culture has not waned due to COVID.

Funny celeb videos have been the pick of the lockdown season, given that everyone wanted some means to cope. What is interesting to note is the level-headedness within even the high-ranking celeb worshippers. Young fans are not swayed easily, and they certainly understand the status quo and the subtexts of celebrity appeal. But they do not take the celeb posts too seriously -It's not used as a crutch to deal with mental illness. Nor do they admonish posts as shallow and superficial, thereby adopting a nihilistic attitude. Celebrity culture is entraining and will always remain so, come pandemic or not. The show must go on and it does go on.

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