

# Impacts of Characterization of Idols' Images and Performances on Adolescent Fans' Appearances Anxiety

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## Abstract:

As a product of new media development, idols have become increasingly influential with the evolution of the contemporary era. Their unnaturally groomed and flawless appearance has resulted in a multitude of adverse effects on their fans, particularly teenage fans, such as the negative effect of appearance anxiety. This essay examines the influence of idols' image and performance on the prevalence of appearance anxiety among teenage fans. This paper presents the findings of an in-depth study on the relationship between idol images, body image dissatisfaction, and social media engagement. The study's conclusions indicate that teenage fans may experience appearance anxiety due to three key factors: the unattainability of idol images, the excessive appeal of idol appearances, and the profound impact of idols on teenagers. Given the above, this paper puts forward a series of suggestions that could be implemented in different areas. For teenagers, they should focus more on their own rather than their idols. For idols, it would be beneficial for them to disseminate more positive messages on the subject of appearance anxiety. For social media, they could play a role in promoting and sharing more positive content with teenagers.

**Keywords:** Social media; appearance anxiety; idols; adolescent fans

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, the gradual development of the Internet and social media has facilitated aesthetic concepts, both beneficial and detrimental. These ideas and concepts have reached a diverse array of individuals, encompassing a multitude of ethnicities, skin colors, and nationalities. At the same time, the advent of idols as a novel media phenomenon has led to influence among fan groups, particularly among teenagers, who are more susceptible to the influence of various media due to their nascent self-consciousness. In recent years, the images and appearances of idols have also become a popular tide that many people go with this tide. The idols' overly perfect figures, such as lean physiques, fair skin, and head-to-toe sophistication, have been widely admired by many individuals [1]. A considerable number of individuals engage in excessive efforts to maintain their appearance, which can result in a range of physical injuries, including food disorders [2]. This has resulted in the development of appearance anxiety among a significant proportion of the population. A questionnaire survey on appearance anxiety conducted by the China Youth Daily among 2,063 college

and university students nationwide revealed that 59.03% of college students exhibited some degree of appearance anxiety [3]. This phenomenon is also observed among teenage fans, who often lack self-control. Consequently, the impact of idols' images on teenage fans' appearance anxiety should be paid greater attention.

However, a certain degree of research gap persists about the influence of idols on teenage fans' appearance anxiety. According to that situation, this essay will provide a comprehensive examination of this subject matter from three perspectives: manifestations, causes, and recommendations. This essay is intended to address the existing research gap in this area. This essay will examine the image of idols, the dissemination of appearance anxiety, and its impact on adolescents. It will describe the factors contributing to the idealized image of idols and the tendency of individuals to prioritize appearance. Additionally, it will investigate the reasons behind adolescents' excessive admiration of idols and the influence they exert on this demographic. To address the issue of adolescents' appearance anxiety, this essay will put forth several advices.

## 2. Manifestations

### 2.1 The Images of Idols

The image of idols in K-pop and other countries' cultures has become deeply entrenched in the popular consciousness and exerts a significant influence on a global scale, particularly in the context of the rapid development and extensive reach of modern media. In recent times, K-pop girl groups have emerged as a significant source of inspiration for the aesthetic standards embraced by a considerable proportion of teenagers, particularly young women, who view them as embodying these standards. The image of K-pop girl groups is primarily characterized by several physical attributes, including tall and narrow noses, light skin, large eyes, thin bodies, and long eyelashes [1]. In contrast to traditional notions of masculinity, K-pop male idols embody a form of soft masculinity. They can present an approachable image without wholly adopting femininity, thereby appealing to female audiences. This alternative form of masculinity has challenged traditional norms, but most fans still perceive soft masculinity as a performed persona for the media [4]. Additionally, the aesthetic standards of teenagers are influenced by the seemingly flawless skin and physiques of idols. The hyper-flawless image of idols exerts a profound effect on people, particularly teenagers.

### 2.2 Extreme Body Dissatisfaction

The diffusion of media information has facilitated the dissemination of aesthetic standards that are conducive to poor health outcomes. These include the idealization of overly fair and flawless skin and thin bodies. This phenomenon is observed among a diverse population, particularly the younger generation, who are profoundly influenced by the Internet.

In a recent study, some researchers found that a significant proportion of high school and college women reported engaging in a range of severe weight control behaviors [2]. The evidence presented here makes it clear that this extreme weight loss behavior reflects the unhealthy pursuit of extreme thinness by young women.

A questionnaire survey on "appearance anxiety" conducted by China Youth Daily among 2,063 college students nationwide revealed that 59.03% of college students exhibited a certain degree of "appearance anxiety." The prevalence of severe "appearance anxiety" among boys (9.09%) is higher than that among girls (3.94%), while the prevalence of moderate anxiety among girls (59.67%) is higher than that among boys (37.14%). The data demonstrate that irrespective of gender, individuals ex-

hibit heightened levels of appearance-related anxiety that exceed expectations. This extreme pursuit of appearance may precipitate the emergence of psychological and physiological ailments. The influences of intense appearance anxiety on young males and females are profound.

### 2.3 Teenagers Receive Negative Impacts on Social Media

Young students as a vulnerable group compared to adults because their increased use of social media is occurring during a time of identity formation, where they are free to explore various life possibilities and develop new values [5]. Adolescents are a particularly susceptible age group, prone to external influences. Consequently, they are also affected by social media. These influences can be beneficial or detrimental, and the detrimental effects of social media on adolescents have been demonstrated. When they lack self-control, adolescents may be inclined to imitate celebrities or popular trends on social media. For instance, social media has been linked to body image dissatisfaction, particularly among users who engage in appearance comparison behaviors, which can exacerbate this issue, which means an association between problematic social media and negative mental health outcomes of depression, anxiety, and stress among adolescents and young adults have been concluded [5,6].

## 3. Reasons

### 3.1 Over-Perfect Appearances of Idols Impact Teenagers

Research indicates that adolescents' admiration for idols may result in dissatisfaction with one's appearance, thereby increasing the risk of anxiety and depression [7]. The immaculate portrayal of these idols frequently establishes an unattainable standard, consequently exerting a detrimental influence on adolescents' self-evaluation of their appearance [1]. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to influence and possess high self-esteem, they are unconscious to follow the trend in social media, such as the perfect appearances of idols. Because of adolescents' self-abasement, which comes from their unconscious comparative with others, they may have body dissatisfaction in this way. Also, at the age when self-control is still weak, adolescents are impressionable about other actions, such as their idols'. Adolescent fans may have not enough ability to distinguish right from wrong, so they may just follow other steps without thinking. They may therefore be inclined to emulate the idols to an extreme degree, which may include extreme dieting and weight loss be-

haviors.

In light of these considerations, the overly-perfect appearance of idols has a complex impact on adolescents, including negative effects such as dissatisfaction with appearance and decreased self-worth.

### 3.2 The Increasing Pursuing of Appearances

The prevalence of social media has led to an increased display of aesthetically pleasing and idealized facial features on these platforms. As a result, there has been an observable increase in the prevalence of appearance anxiety, particularly among adolescents. Since adolescents are particularly susceptible to influence and possess high self-esteem, particularly those who are already fans of these idols, they may suffer from appearance anxiety more seriously.

For females, media exposure appears to be related to women's body image negatively regardless of assessment technique, individual difference variables, media type, age, or other idiosyncratic study characteristics [8]. In the traditional binary gender system, while girls are more likely to exhibit a negative body image than boys, the relationship between overall body image and adolescent self-esteem is strikingly similar in both sexes. A study suggests that despite the higher relevance of the relationship between body shame and problematic SNS use among female adolescents, similar findings among male adolescents might suggest that they are increasingly becoming engaged in self-objectification experiences [9]. This depicts a robust correlation between negative body image and low self-esteem in both boys and girls [10]. Given that adolescents are in a phase of elevated self-esteem, they are more likely to prioritize appearance and engage in appearance pursuits.

### 3.3 Teenagers Impacts

During the developmental stage of identity formation, adolescents require a model that they perceive as an accurate representation of their identity. This model is referred to as the "Idol." A significant proportion of adolescents tend to imitate the behaviors of their idols, thereby developing idolatry tendencies. The influence of idols on adolescents is significant. However, rather than facilitating the process of self-discovery, it can result in adolescents becoming trapped in the identity of the idol. However, it is not uncommon for adolescents to draw inspiration from their idols [11].

The influence of idols on teenagers is significant, with younger adolescents exhibiting a greater level of susceptibility to such influences. The phenomenon of idol worship

is more prevalent among young adolescents, with the highest rates of idolatry observed in this age group. The "show star" is the most prevalent type of idol admired by young people between the ages of 12 and 14. The distinction between the younger (12-14 years old) and older (19 years old) age groups is readily apparent. This reflects the comparatively advanced developmental trajectory of adolescents in the initial stages of cultural value formation, as well as the impact of celebrities and idols on teenagers during this period. Saliency [12].

## 4. Suggestions

### 4.1 Focusing More on Self

While idols may have some negative effects, the emergence of idol worship has facilitated the growth of popular culture. Furthermore, it has provided fans with the technical support necessary to shape their personalities and has offered guidance on how to do so in an appropriate manner. The advancement of star culture has the effect of facilitating the growth of the fan economy and the mobile economy. Thus, for adolescents, a rational and healthy approach to idol worship is essential for addressing low self-esteem. Primarily, this entails a focus on self-development. They must embark on a path of continuous self-exploration and self-improvement. While accepting mainstream cultural education, adolescents must undergo psychological growth, cultivate positive qualities, and develop values and behaviors that will enable them to become socially adept individuals with sound values, autonomy, self-awareness, and positive social behaviors. Teenagers must engage in critical thinking and reflection before accepting the role of star idols. Imitation, regardless of its merits, and unconditional support, regardless of its ethical implications, is not advisable. Instead, adolescents should strive to maintain a state of sobriety and rationality, by their educational pursuits. They should endeavor to discern the positive and negative implications of idolization and prioritize their well-being, focusing on the cultivation of happiness and health [12].

### 4.2 Idols Take Some of the Responsibility

The role of idols in adolescent appearance anxiety is significant, as they possess considerable influence and serve as role models for their teenage fans. Indeed, idols are mass-produced by entertainment companies, which results in a lack of authenticity [13]. The appearance of idols is significantly improved and modified to be perfect, then they are distributed through social media and thus contribute to adolescents' dissatisfaction with their appearance

[14].

Secondly, the image of idols is frequently regarded as a symbol of attractiveness, which may result in adolescents feeling compelled to align themselves with this standard to gain social recognition. This social comparison pressure serves to exacerbate their appearance anxiety, as they come to recognize the difficulty, they face in meeting the exacting standards set by idols [7].

To reduce the adverse effects of appearance anxiety, idols can assume a degree of responsibility. They can disseminate aesthetically healthier standards by exhibiting a more natural image. Moreover, idols can facilitate the acceptance and appreciation of diverse forms of beauty among adolescents. The words and actions of these celebrities have a direct impact on the values and self-identity of their teenage fans, as they serve as role models for these young people. Consequently, their words and actions can help to alleviate some of the appearance anxiety experienced by their fans.

### 4.3 Spreading No Body Dissatisfaction on Media

Despite the abundance of evidence indicating the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, there are still recommendations for mitigating these adverse effects and utilizing social media in a manner that does not impair users' mental well-being [5].

As a platform with substantial information storage and robust communication capabilities, social media has the potential to enhance its big data methods and generate more beneficial outcomes, alongside the existing negative effects. The use of big data allows for the accurate targeting of individuals and the promotion of related interest videos, which demonstrates the full potential of social media in this regard. For instance, social media can be utilized to promote a greater number of anti-appearance anxiety videos to a larger demographic of teenagers. This could potentially foster greater self-confidence, self-acceptance, and tolerance, as well as the cultivation of more diverse aesthetic standards.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examines the influence of idol images and performances on the appearance anxiety of adolescent fans, with a particular focus on the impact of idols' overly perfect images on adolescents' perception of their appearance and self-worth. The analysis of idol images reveals that the idols' idealized appearance is frequently enhanced through the use of media and social platforms. Such beautification not only establishes an unattainable standard of

appearance but also serves to exacerbate adolescents' anxiety about their appearance.

First, the images of the idols are frequently subjected to careful modification and editing, which contributes to the creation of an unattainable standard of beauty for adolescents. Secondly, social media not only serves to disseminate these images of perfection more widely but also serves to exacerbate adolescents' dissatisfaction with their appearance, causing them to constantly pursue these unrealistic standards, which hurts their mental health.

In examining the influence of idols on adolescents' appearance anxiety, it is essential to acknowledge the responsibilities that idols themselves bear in this process. For instance, they can mitigate adolescents' appearance anxiety by promoting a natural and authentic self-presentation and advocating for societal recognition of diverse forms of beauty.

In general, the overly perfect image of idols has a significant impact on teenagers' appearance anxiety, which is further exacerbated by the influence of social media and media communication. When adolescents encounter the appearance of idols, they are susceptible to self-doubt. It is therefore significant for the media to assume responsibility, to reduce the excessive presentation of the idealized appearance, and to promote a more authentic and diverse representation. Furthermore, idols should be conscious of their influence and facilitate the formation of accurate aesthetic concepts in teenagers by presenting a more genuine self, which would consequently diminish their appearance anxiety. It is only through the collaborative efforts of the media, idols, and society at large that a healthier and more positive growth environment can be created for teenagers.

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