

Parasocial Relationships and Risk-Taking Behaviors Among Emerging Adults of Laguna University: A Comparative Correlational Study

Angeles, Bernadette L.; Endo, Kyla Marie P.; Pabericio, Garce Vilcint Orion D.
bernadetteangeles13@gmail.com; endomarie08@gmail.com; orionpabericio12@gmail.com

Co-Author, Thesis Adviser: Mr. James Christian Espayos, Rpm, MSP
christianespayos@gmail.com

Laguna University, College of Arts and Sciences, Santa Cruz, Laguna

Abstract

This study examined the levels, gender differences, and relationship between parasocial relationships (PSRs) and risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults. Guided by Parasocial Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Emerging Adulthood Theory, a comparative-correlational design was employed using the PRISM survey and DOSPERT scale with 212 respondents, gathered through purposive sampling at Laguna University. Findings revealed high levels of parasocial relationships, particularly in the Interest in subvariable ($M = 3.47$). Other PSR dimensions were moderately high, reflecting consistent perceived connections. In contrast, negative risk-taking behaviors were low across domains, with the recreational domain being the highest ($M = 2.05$), suggesting general avoidance of unsafe actions. Furthermore, Inferential analysis revealed minimal gender differences in PSRs, with significance only in knowledge ($U = 4646$, $p = .037$). However, males scored significantly higher in most domains, with the largest difference in recreational risk-taking ($U = 3921$, $p < .001$), measured through the Mann-Whitney U Test. Spearman's rho indicated a weak but significant positive relationship between PSRs and risk-taking behaviors. Identification showed the strongest association, particularly with financial risk-taking ($r = .28$, $p < .001$). Overall, findings suggest high PSRs but generally low engagement in negative risk-taking behaviors among the respondents. Thus, a webinar is proposed by the researchers for CAS students to promote PSR awareness, critical media engagement, and responsible financial decision-making.

Key Words: Emerging Adults; Negative Risk-Taking; Parasocial Relationship; Social Media Figure

1.1 Introduction

In the digital age, media personalities have become influential to emerging adults. Through exposure to online media, parasocial relationships are formed. These one-sided bonds where one person devotes their time and attention while the other party is oblivious to the other's existence. The developmental stage of emerging adulthood, between the ages of 18-25, studies consistently found emerging adults to be prone to engage in risky and dangerous behaviors.

In a study by Degen et al. (2025), they noted that emerging adults appear much less likely to engage in serious, long-lasting relationships. PSRs may explain development and forming of attachments and social connections are increasingly avoided. Moreover, according to Xie et al. (2025), cases of PSRs depending on its intensity and duration, such relationships may contribute to acts of identity distortion, isolation and ideological rupturing. In addition, such as the research study conducted by Salvatore et al. (2020), as they have noted that

emerging adults to be prone in engaging in risky and dangerous behaviors such as binge drinking, substance abuse and unsafe sex.

In a study, conducted by Ascue et al. (2023), they sought to identify the effects of parasocial relationships on Filipino K-pop fans. Their findings stated that their participants have perceived K-pop positively, finding inspiration and motivation. However, they have also noted that their participants also exhibited negative behaviors such as sacrificing sleep and academic focus. In addition, their instances of splurging on merchandise and the toxic environment of Stan Twitter are identified as negative aspects.

The necessity for conducting this study lies in understanding how parasocial attachments can extend into behavioral influences. Previous studies that explored PSRs have focused on its correlation to or impacts in self-esteem and identity formation. Moreover, Xie et al. (2025) recommended that future researchers should further examine PSRs, from offering psychological support to reinforcing maladaptive emotional or cognitive patterns. Conducting this research bridges the gaps on the limited data on how one-sided emotional attachments towards public figures may affect behavioral decisions. As well as further contributing into the subject of observed behaviors of emerging adults in the Philippines.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the level, differences of male and female, and the relationship of parasocial relationships with media figures and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults in Laguna University.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of parasocial relationships among the emerging adults as measured using the PRISM survey, in terms of:
 - 1.1. Interest in the Social Media Figure;
 - 1.2. Identification with Social Media Figure;
 - 1.3. Interaction with Social Media Figure; and
 - 1.4. Knowledge of Social Media Figure?
2. What is the level of negative risk-taking behavior among the emerging adults as measured using the DOSPRT scale, in terms of:
 - 2.1. Ethical;
 - 2.2. Financial;
 - 2.3. Health/Safety;
 - 2.4. Recreational; and
 - 2.5. Social?
3. Is there a significant difference in the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors between male and female emerging adults?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what program or action plan may be proposed?

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

In line with the purpose of this research, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

H₀₁– There is no significant difference between the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors between two genders of emerging adults.

H₀₂ - There is no significant relationship between the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Within this section reviews the theories relevant to the present study. The Parasocial Theory being utilized in order to explain what the parasocial phenomena is and its implications. The Social Learning Theory aimed to explain why emerging adults learn risk taking behaviors by social factors. While the Emerging Adulthood Theory posits that their experiences are normative for young people within the age range.

Parasocial Theory

The study is theoretically grounded in the Parasocial Theory, developed by Horton and Wohl, which explains how individuals form one-sided relationships with media personas and personalities. Parasocial relationships are defined as a psychological phenomenon associated with mass media consumption, through which individuals may satisfy emotional and attachment needs and contribute to the construction of personal identity (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). Although these relationships are inherently one-sided, they are capable of influencing individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in ways that closely resemble reciprocal relationships, such as those formed with friends or family members. Khairi et al, (2024) stated that with the widespread use of social media platforms, cases of parasocial relationships led to be more interactive and intimate.

Traditionally, parasocial relationships are characterized by the audience member's investment of emotional energy, interest, time and identification toward a media figure who remains unaware of the audience member's existence (Kowert et al., 2021; Author, 2024). According to the works of Boyd et al, (2022) research on parasocial phenomena has progressed, increasing empirical studies suggested that parasocial relationships, particularly those formed with social media figures are not unidimensional constructs, but rather consist of multiple psychological components that vary in intensity and expression.

Within the context of this study, parasocial relationships with social media figures serves as a mechanism through which emerging adults may internalize attitudes and behaviors exhibited by media personalities, which may foster risk-taking behaviors. The said mechanism, further supported by principles of Social Learning Theory, wherein the media figure serves as an influential model. A strong parasocial bond ensures that the emerging adult is not only exposed to but is also attuned and motivated to emulate the behavior.

Social Learning Theory

The present study also applies the Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by Alfred Bandura in 1977, which posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling within a social context. Social Learning Theory highlights the interaction of environmental influences and cognitive processes in shaping behavior. According to Egbert (2025), learning through observation involves four core processes: Attention, where the individual must notice the model, Retention, which refers to the ability to remember the observed behavior, Reproduction, the capacity to perform the behavior and Motivation, which determines whether the behavior will be enacted or not based on reward or punishment.

In the context of the present study, with regards to its connection to the risk-taking behavior variable,

RTBs can be learned through two of the three basic models of observational learning that Bandura theorized. The symbolic model that involves real media figures displaying behaviors in online media. The verbal instructional model, on which the media figure can give verbal instructions, describing or explaining behavior. Only excluding the live model involving an actual individual demonstrating a behavior (Cherry, 2024). This aspect of SLT is particularly relevant to the present study, as it explains how media figures can influence the psychosocial functioning and behavioral choices of emerging adults.

In support of this theoretical foundation, previous research such as the study by Namuwonge et al. (2024) has applied Social Learning Theory to explain risk taking behaviors derived from social means. In the present study, SLT provides a framework for understanding how emerging adults may develop or reinforce behaviors by observing media figures with whom they form parasocial relationships. Through repeated exposure and identification, individuals may assimilate observed behaviors, which may subsequently influence their decision-making and risk-taking behavior.

Emerging Adulthood Theory

The theory of emerging adulthood developed by Arnett describes a distinct life-stage, from late teens through mid-to-late twenties, where age ranges to those within 18-25/29 years are estimated to have entered stable adulthood (Arnett, 2024). Moreover, Nankani et al. (2024) also quoted Arnett, suggesting that this period between the ages of 18 and 25 be classified as a “distinct phase” called emerging adulthood, on which the age range of the present study’s respondents are grouped upon. With the specific age of the beginning and end of this life stage is variable and other researchers have noted that the concept of emerging adulthood is influenced by cultural, socioeconomic, and educational factors. By which these factors play a significant role in variation in the length and content of emerging adulthood (Kirwan, 2024). According to Cordingley (2024), emerging adulthood is also defined as a time of delayed responsibility in favor of exploration. Several researchers reasoned that this time in college, they are relatively free from limitations that allow individuals to actively engage in their development, explore more options and further help determine identity commitments.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The present study was a quantitative research in nature that utilized a comparative correlational design. The researchers aimed to examine the association between parasocial relationships (PSR) with media figures and risk-taking behaviors in emerging adults. On which the data were collected on a single point in time from a sample of respondents from Laguna University.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted within Laguna University. The researchers chose this locale as there had been a recent study that also utilized young adults for the respondents of their study, selecting a single institution in particular. With Laguna University, being an institution with a majority of its population composed of individuals who were within the age of 18-25. The researchers therefore opted to conduct their study in the aforementioned locale.

2.3 Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study consisted of 212 emerging adults aged 18-25 who identified themselves as an active fan or follower of non-fictional social media figures such as influencers, streamers, and content creators. The researchers utilized purposive sampling to ensure that only individuals who met the specific criteria relevant to the study were included. Prior to the final data collection, a pilot testing was conducted among 30 qualified respondents to assess the clarity and functionality of the survey instruments. Additionally, a post-hoc power analysis using G*Power confirmed that the final sample size was sufficient and reliable for determining the relationships between the variables examined in the study.

2.4 Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the actual data gathering, the researchers first secured permission from Laguna University and conducted pilot testing to assess the clarity and reliability of the research instruments. After validation, the questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms via social media platforms. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the process by providing informed consent forms, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents. The data collection was conducted from March 2026 to the second week of April 2026.

2.5 Research Instruments

The researchers utilized adapted survey questionnaires as the primary research instruments for the study. To measure parasocial relationships, the “Parasocial Relationship in Social Media (PRISM) Survey” developed by Boyd et al. (2022) was employed. This instrument is a 22-item Likert scale designed to assess respondents’ level of connection with the social media figures across dimensions such as interest, interaction, knowledge, and identification. Meanwhile, negative risk-taking behaviors were measured using the revised version of “Domain-Specific Risk-Taking (DOSPERT) Scale” developed by Weber, Blais, and Betz (2002), which evaluates the respondents’ likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors across ethical, financial, health/safety, recreational, and social domains.

Prior to the final data collection, both instruments underwent pilot testing to assess their reliability and validity, yielding acceptable Cronbach’s Alpha values and a good model fit to be used in the study.

2.6 Treatment of Data

The collected data were organized and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Cronbach’s Alpha was first utilized during the pilot testing to determine the reliability and internal consistency of the research instruments. Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults. Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to identify significant differences between male and female emerging adults. Lastly, Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient (Spearman’s rho) was utilized to examine the significant relationship between parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors.

Initial tests such as the Shapiro-Wilk Test and Levene’s Test were also conducted to ensure the suitability of the statistical treatments used in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

SOP 1. What is the level of parasocial relationships among the emerging adults as measured using the PRISM survey, in terms of:

Table 1. Level of Parasocial Relationships as Measured using the PRISM Survey in terms of Interest in the Social Media Figure

Indicator	M	SD	V.I.
1. I would follow them on another account if they create one on the same platform.	3.56	0.72	SA
2. I look forward to seeing their content.	3.69	0.59	SA
3. I enjoy seeing content that features them, even if they did not create it.	3.53	0.70	SA
4. I regularly check their posts and updates.	3.25	0.82	A
5. I am genuinely interested in these media figures' activities.	3.46	0.68	SA
6. I care about what happens to them.	3.33	0.78	SA
Overall Level	3.47	0.71	Strongly Agree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree 1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree 3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree			

Based on the results of the survey, the subvariable's overall mean score was 3.47 (SD = 0.71), which falls within the Strongly Agree interpretation, indicating that emerging adults who have PSRs do exhibit a high level of interest towards social media figures.

The respondents most strongly agreed with the indicator pertaining to looking forward to seeing the social media figure's content, with the highest mean of (M = 3.69, SD = 0.59). This may imply that the figure has become a consistent source of entertainment or emotional connection for the respondents, which reflects a notable level of parasocial attachment. The lowest mean observed for respondents reported regularly checking the figure's posts and updates (M = 3.25, SD = 0.82), which also corresponds to an Agree rating. This may suggest that while the respondents maintain positive feelings and interest toward the social media figure, they may not necessarily engage in constant monitoring.

With regards to the results within the subvariable, according to the study of Su et al. (2021), they have reported that influencer-generated content contributes to the formation and development of parasocial relationships. Highlighting that sustained interest increases perceived familiarity and leads to stronger PSRs. The study's findings align with the theoretical means of parasocial relationships, where repeated exposure and perceived intimacy with media figures foster high interests. A high level of interest may serve as a foundation for developing stronger one-sided bonds, as individuals are more likely to follow

Table 2. Level of Parasocial Relationships as Measured using the PRISM Survey in terms of Identification with the Social Media Figure

Indicator	M	SD	V.I.
7. I usually make similar lifestyle or personal choices as them.	2.67	0.83	A
8. I share many of the same opinions as them.	2.64	0.80	A
9. I can relate to their attitudes	3.24	0.78	A
10. I try to handle problems similarly to the way they do.	2.93	0.94	A
11. I sometimes imitate their actions or habits.	2.77	1.00	A
12. I can relate to the experience shared by them.	3.07	0.84	A
Overall Level	2.89	0.86	Agree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree 1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree 3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree			

The results revealed that the overall mean score of the second subvariable was 2.89 (SD = 0.86), which corresponds to an Agree interpretation. Indicating that a significant number of the respondents exhibit a notably high level of identification to those who they have parasocial bonds with.

The respondents agreed most strongly with the statement such as being able to relate to the attitudes of the figure, with this indicator obtaining the highest mean ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.78$) with the Agree interpretation. The results with regards to the highest mean may suggest that the respondents saw aspects of themselves reflected in the behaviors or mannerisms of the online personalities. As for the lowest mean ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.80$), indicating that the emerging adults shared many of the same opinions as the social media figure they followed and also fell within the Agree range. Despite well within the “agree” interpretation, it may suggest that while respondents may connect with the figure’s attitudes or personality traits, they do not necessarily fully align with all of the figure’s beliefs or viewpoints.

Similarly, within the study of Reynolds (2022), as they explored PSRs with online influencers, they have reported that identification and wishful identification are positively associated with stronger PSRs. The study emphasized that repeated interaction and perceived closeness enhance both identification and emotional attachment. The present study's findings suggest that identification plays a meaningful role in the development of parasocial bonds among emerging adults. As this sense of identification is a key component of parasocial relationships, it deepens the perceived connection between the individual and the media figure. Linking the study’s findings to the theory, the results also indicate that individuals are more likely to develop stronger parasocial bonds with media figures they perceive as similar to themselves.

Table 3. Level of Parasocial Relationships as Measured using the PRISM Survey in terms of Interaction with the Social Media Figure

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	V.I.
13. Their content aligns with my interests.	3.50	0.68	SA
14. I feel less alone when I watch or view their content.	3.52	0.72	SA
15. I frequently comment on their posts or content.	2.35	1.11	D
16. I often share their content with others.	2.84	0.99	A
17. I participate in polls, Q&A's, or challenges.	2.40	1.00	D
Overall Level	2.92	0.90	Agree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree			
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree 3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree			

Results indicated that the overall mean score of the third subvariable was 2.92 (SD = 0.90), which corresponds to an Agree interpretation. Indicating that a significant number of the respondents’ responses resulted in a moderate level of Interaction towards the social media figure they have PSRs with.

According to the results, the indicator had scored the highest mean ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.72$) stating that the respondents feel less alone when they view their content, which were interpreted as Strongly Agree. From Zheng et al. (2022) in the context of livestreaming, they have found that interactions with streamers such as chatting and receiving responses strengthens PSRs and influences their engagement. Further stating that communicative behaviors and direct communication acts from media performers could induce responses from viewers as if they would in real-life interactions.

The results also indicated that the respondents do not frequently comment on the posts or content of the social media figure they follow, which yielded the lowest mean ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.11$) with the Disagree interpretation. According to Tyrväinen et al. (2025) despite individuals perceiving parasocial interactions as similar to normal social interactions, with behavioral outcomes such as likes, shares, and comments, their

findings indicated that while users may feel connected, actual behaviors like interaction depend on various contexts or simply choose not to do so.

The researchers conclude in their study's findings that interaction serves as a reinforcing mechanism in the development and maintenance of parasocial relationships. Moreover, the findings do reflect the study's theory, suggesting that while interactions do usually lead to higher PSRs, the lower results on some of the items do reflect the moderate level of the overall result. The moderate level of interaction suggests that emerging adults are more inclined toward passive consumption (e.g., viewing and liking content) rather than active engagement. While emerging adults may create connections, these do not necessarily manifest in communicative actions, suggesting that parasocial engagement can remain largely internalized.

Table 4. Level of Parasocial Relationships as Measured using the PRISM Survey in terms of Knowledge about the Social Media Figure

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>V.I.</i>
18. Learning something about them is important to me.	3.07	0.79	A
19. Their content makes me feel connected while I view it.	3.38	0.69	SA
20. I research about them when I encounter new information.	3.11	0.92	A
21. I am aware of the personal details of their life.	2.83	0.93	A
22. I understand their opinions or values.	3.43	0.71	SA
23. I know more about this person now than when I first followed them.	3.16	0.90	A
24. I would like to meet them in person if given the chance.	3.64	0.69	SA
Overall Level	3.23	0.81	Agree

Legends: 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree 3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree

The fourth subvariable's overall mean score was 3.23 ($SD = 0.81$), which corresponds to an Agree interpretation. Indicating that a significant number of respondents' level of knowledge towards the social media figure they have parasocial bonds with are generally high.

The results showed that the indicator pertaining to the respondent's desire to meet the figure in person obtained the highest mean ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.93$), corresponding to the Strongly Agree interpretation. Such high responses may reflect that the respondents express their curiosity about the possibility of interacting with the figure beyond the online environment, reflecting a stronger parasocial bond. Moreover, the respondents exhibited a lower level of awareness towards the personal details of the social media figure's life, with this indicator having the lowest mean ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.93$) corresponding to the Agree interpretation. Implying that the respondents can still feel emotionally connected to social media personalities even without possessing deep knowledge of the figure.

From the research study conducted by Omeish et al. (2025), they concluded that an individual's knowledge of their preferred content creators gained through continuous exposure significantly contributes to the development of their parasocial relationships and social engagement. On which their study emphasized that knowledgeable audiences are more likely to maintain long-term connections with media figures. The researchers conclude in their findings that knowledge plays an important role in strengthening parasocial relationships, as greater familiarity can enhance the perceived closeness and connection individuals feel toward digital personalities. In line with the study's theory, as individuals continuously consume content, they accumulate information that strengthens their perceived connection, even if that knowledge is largely based on publicly shared content rather than personal interaction.

SOP 2. What is the level of negative risk-taking behavior among the emerging adults as measured using

the DOSPERT scale, in terms of:

Table 5. Level of Negative Risk-Taking Behavior in terms of Ethical

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	V.I.
1. I would share a friend's secret to someone else.	1.45	0.75	SD
2. I would lie to avoid responsibility for my mistake.	1.67	0.77	SD
3. I would take advantage of a situation that is unfair to others but benefits me.	1.70	0.83	SD
4. I would break school rules when I believe the consequences will be minimal.	1.83	0.95	D
Overall Level	1.66	0.83	Strongly Disagree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree			
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree 3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree			

Results indicated that respondents demonstrated a very low level of negative risk-taking behavior in the ethical domain. With the overall mean score of 1.66 ($SD = 0.83$), which corresponds to Strongly Disagree.

Among the indicators, the highest mean of ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.95$) was observed for breaking school rules when consequences are minimal, which were interpreted as Disagree. Such results may suggest that the respondents may occasionally consider minor rule violations acceptable under circumstances, however, most of the respondents remain hesitant to engage in such behaviors. Moreover, the lowest mean of ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.75$), was evident for sharing a friend's secret as it was highly disagreed upon by the respondents, interpreted as Strongly Disagree. Suggesting that the respondents place considerable importance on confidentiality and maintaining positive social relationships.

In a study by Aprill (2024), they have stated that morality impacts relationships in complex and highly contextual ways. These violations can lead to a variety of reactions in social and parasocial relationships. Their results indicated that a moral violation can result in a decrease in enjoyment of the influencer's content and a parasocial breakoff. The researchers conclude that despite exposure to various social media figures, the respondents tend to maintain ethical standards and are less likely to participate in actions that may be considered morally questionable. With the respondents exhibiting a generally responsible for behavioral pattern within the ethical domain. Relating to the study's theoretical grounds, through the Social Learning Theory, it posits that individuals learn behaviors by observing others and internalizing societal standards.

Table 6. Level of Negative Risk-Taking Behavior in terms of Financial

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	V.I.
5. I would bet a day's income or savings at gambling/online gambling.	1.36	0.70	SD
6. I would spend money intended for school or essential needs for personal satisfaction such as social outings or online entertainment.	1.73	0.90	SD
7. I would overspend my allowance or savings on online purchases.	1.95	0.91	D
8. I would borrow money for non-essential purposes even if unsure how or when to repay it.	1.47	0.74	SD
9. I would be likely to buy trendy items with money meant for school.	1.57	0.75	SD
10. I would usually agree to share a payment or expense even if I'm not sure I can cover my part.	1.71	0.91	SD
11. I feel that I would be influenced by my peers when it comes to money-related decisions.	2.15	1.01	D

Overall Level	1.71	0.85	Strongly Disagree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree	2.51 – 3.25 = Agree		
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree	3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree		

As shown in Table 6, the overall level of negative risk-taking behaviors in terms of financial domain was very low ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.85$), interpreted as Strongly Disagree, indicating that respondents were unlikely to engage in financial risky activities. Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed for being influenced by peers when it comes to money-related decisions ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.01$), interpreted as Disagree. This followed by overspending of allowance or savings on online purchases ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.91$), interpreted also as Disagree. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was observed for betting a day's income or savings at gambling/online gambling ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.70$), indicating strong disagreement with this behavior.

The findings of this table which indicates a generally low level of financial risk-taking among respondents are supported by the study of Togan et al. (2025) which explains that individuals with greater awareness of financial risks are more likely to adopt more cautious financial behaviors, including avoidance of risky and uncertain financial activities. This is consistently evident in this table, where the respondents strongly disagreed in such behaviors like gambling, overspending, and borrowing money for non-essential purposes. This aligns with social learning theory, which suggests that while peers may influence financial decisions, individuals have adopted cautious financial behaviors by observing the responsible practices of their social environment. Overall, this suggests that respondents tend to be financially responsible, with low involvement in risky behaviors and a clear tendency to resist potential harmful financial decisions.

Table 7. Level of Negative Risk-Taking Behavior in terms of Health/Safety

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>V.I.</i>
12. I would ride a motorcycle without a helmet.	2.09	1.00	D
13. I would regularly skip sleep or rest as a habit despite knowing it may affect me.	2.47	1.03	D
14. I would engage in sports or physical activities without prior preparation or safety equipment.	2.07	1.00	D
15. I would participate in physical activities despite the potential for injury	2.03	1.02	D
16. I would ignore safety reminders in public places.	1.56	0.74	SD
Overall Level	2.04	0.96	Disagree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree	2.51 – 3.25 = Agree		
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree	3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree		

The results indicated that respondents showed a low level of negative risk-taking behavior in the health/safety domain. The overall mean score was 2.04 ($SD = 0.96$), which corresponds to Disagree. Among the indicators, regularly skipping sleep or rest as a habit garnered the highest mean ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.03$), interpreted as Disagree. This reflects that across the behaviors listed, neglecting adequate sleep or rest is the most relatively practiced, although it still remains low level. It may imply minimal disregard for proper rest despite the awareness of its potential effects. On the other hand, the lowest mean was evident in ignoring safety reminders in public places ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.74$), interpreted as Strongly Disagree, indicating that respondents adhere to safety guidelines and are unlikely to disregard public safety reminders.

The low level of negative risk-taking behavior in the health/safety domain suggests that respondents avoid engaging in behaviors that may compromise their physical well-being. This finding is supported by the study of Savadori & Lauriola (2021), where they found that individuals who perceive health and safety situations as high level risks are more likely to be cautious and protect themselves, while those with lower

engagement in risky health and safety situations tend to avoid potential danger. Thus, this suggests that this domain mostly depends on how individuals evaluate and respond to perceived risks.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a strong tendency among respondents to prioritize their health and safety by generally avoiding risk-related behaviors. This reflects their awareness of the potential consequences of unsafe actions and a preference for behaviors that support overall well-being, which also reinforces that study's theoretical foundation, showing how environmental patterns shape personal risk-taking.

Table 8. Level of Negative Risk-Taking Behavior in terms of Recreational

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	V.I.
17. I would drive without a license.	1.68	0.93	SD
18. I would attempt challenging activities that carry risks due to lack of experience.	1.92	1.00	D
19. I would join dares or fun challenges with friends that involve risks.	1.95	0.99	D
20. I would go on outings without prior planning.	2.59	1.09	A
21. I would try carnival rides despite feeling unsure about the level of safety.	2.19	1.14	D
22. I would still agree to ride in an overloaded vehicle.	1.97	1.00	D
Overall Level	2.05	1.03	Disagree

Legends: 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree

1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree

2.51 – 3.25 = Agree

3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree

Findings showed that respondents demonstrated a low level of negative risk-taking behavior in the recreational domain. The overall mean score was 2.05 (SD = 1.03), corresponding to Disagree. Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed for driving without a license (M = 2.59, SD = 1.09), interpreted as Agree. This suggests that participating in unplanned recreational activities is the most relatively common behavior among respondents, showing that they tend to be flexible in their leisure decisions despite overall low risk-taking. This followed by participating in carnival rides despite safety concerns (M = 2.19, SD = 1.14), interpreting as Disagree. While, driving without a license was considered as the lowest mean (M = 1.68, SD = 0.93), interpreted as Strongly Disagree, indicating avoidance of unsafe behaviors, particularly those involving violations of rules or safety regulations.

The result of this table revealed that respondents exhibited a low level of negative risk-taking behavior in the recreational domain, which suggests that respondents tend to avoid engaging in risky recreational activities, reflecting a cautious approach towards situations that may involve potential harm. These findings are supported by the study of Blankenstein et al. (2024), which found that in the recreational domain, individuals' willingness to engage in risky activities depends on their evaluation of potential outcomes. When people perceive low benefits in engaging in recreational activities, their tendency to participate decreases. Thus, the low level observed in this table reflects the respondents' low perceived benefits and their preference of safer recreational choices. In accordance with the study's theory, it shows that respondents avoid dangerous activities as they have learned to prefer the safer ones, they have observed or modeled by those around them. Overall, respondents demonstrate a low engagement in recreational risk-taking behaviors. This indicates a preference for safer and more mindful choices during leisure activities.

Table 9. Level of Negative Risk-Taking Behavior in terms of Social

Indicator	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	V.I.
23. I would post highly personal or sensitive information online.	1.35	0.66	SD
24. I would express my opinion on an unpopular issue online even if it may cause social backlash.	1.59	0.80	SD

25. I would disagree with an authority figure on an issue even if it might lead to conflict or disapproval.	1.91	1.00	D
26. I would trust strangers with personal information.	1.41	0.65	SD
27. I would disagree openly with friends even if it may cause tension.	2.27	1.03	D
28. I would remain in unhealthy relationships despite risks.	1.51	0.77	SD
29. I would engage in risky behaviors to gain peer approval.	1.55	0.77	SD
30. I would use false information to justify a late submission or absence.	1.67	0.92	SD
Overall Level	1.66	0.83	Strongly Disagree
<i>Legends:</i> 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree		2.51 – 3.25 = Agree	
1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree		3.26 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree	

The results in Table 9 show that respondents generally reported very low levels of negative risk-taking behavior in terms of social situations. The overall mean score was 1.66 (SD = 0.83), corresponding to Strongly Disagree. The highest level of engagement was observed for disagreeing openly with friends even if it may cause tension (M = 2.27, SD = 1.03), interpreted as Disagree. This suggests that respondents are relatively more willing to express different opinions with friends, while still maintaining caution to preserve positive relationships. Moreover, posting highly personal or sensitive information online obtained the lowest mean (M = 1.35, SD = 0.66), interpreted as Strongly Disagree, demonstrating a strong reluctance to share private information on social media, which reflects awareness of their privacy risks.

The present findings show very low levels of negative risk-taking in terms of social situations. This is supported by the study of Armstrong-Carter et al. (2022), who found that individuals are more aware of social risks that might lead to rejection or loss of peer approval. They also explained that individuals usually avoid actions that negatively affect their social relationships with other people, as well as how they are seen socially, as peer acceptance is very important to them. Thus, this avoidance of risk explains why respondents were hesitant to share personal information online and generally avoid engaging in risky actions just to gain peer approval. It shows that they tend to be cautious in social situations. These findings remain consistent with the frameworks of the study suggesting that people adopt the secure patterns of their environment, prioritizing relational stability over social risks. Overall, the results reflect a generally cautious approach in social interactions, where respondents prioritize maintaining relationships and protecting personal boundaries across different social situations.

SOP 3. Is there a significant difference in the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors between male and female emerging adults?

Table 10. Significant Differences in Parasocial Relationships Variables (Mann–Whitney U Test)

Parasocial Relationship	Test	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	Effect Size (<i>r_{rb}</i>)
Interest in the social media figure	Mann–Whitney <i>U</i>	5101	.290	–0.08
Identification with the social media figure	Mann–Whitney <i>U</i>	4705	.052	0.15
Interaction with the social media figure	Mann–Whitney <i>U</i>	5481	.851	–0.02
Knowledge about the social media figure	Mann–Whitney <i>U</i>	4646	.037	–0.17

Note. Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to examine differences between female and male respondents. Effect sizes are reported as rank-biserial correlations (r_{rb}). Negative values indicate higher ranks for male respondents. The null hypothesis states that population distributions are equal.

The Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether parasocial relationship variables differed between female and male emerging adults. As shown in Table 10, there were no significant gender differences in interest in the social media figure ($U = 5101$, $p = .290$) or interaction with the social media figure ($U = 5481$, $p = .851$), with both effect sizes close to zero, indicating negligible differences. Identification with the social media figure approached significance ($U = 4705$, $p = .052$), with a small positive effect size ($r_{rb} = .15$). A statistically significant difference was observed for knowledge about the social media figure ($U = 4646$, $p = .037$), although the effect size was small ($r_{rb} = -.17$). Overall, these results indicate that gender differences in parasocial relationships were minimal, with only the knowledge dimension showing a significant but weak difference.

The findings of this table, which indicates minimal gender differences in parasocial relationships, aligns with the meta-analysis study conducted by Tukachinsky et al. (2020). Their synthesis suggests that parasocial relationships are primarily driven by psychological factors such as homophily, identification, and media involvement rather than demographic characteristics. This implies that parasocial relationships are experienced in a similar way across individuals regardless of gender. Thus, the minimal differences observed between male and female respondents in this study aligns with the broader literature indicating that gender is not a strong determinant in forming parasocial relationships.

Similarly, the study of Carlson & Lien (2023) explored the formation of parasocial relationships of both gender and attachment styles. Their findings have placed a greater emphasis on attachment style and a more significant predictor of parasocial relationships. This suggests that psychological factors may influence the development of parasocial relationships more than demographic factors like gender. Hence, this perspective is consistently aligned with the results of this table.

Table 11. Significant Differences in Negative Risk-Taking Behavior (Mann–Whitney U Test)

Negative Risk-Taking Behavior	Test	U	p	Effect Size (r_{rb})
Ethical	Mann–Whitney U	3715	$< .001$	0.33
Financial	Mann–Whitney U	4230	.003	0.24
Health/Safety	Mann–Whitney U	3931	$< .001$	0.29
Recreational	Mann–Whitney U	3921	$< .001$	0.30
Social	Mann–Whitney U	4083	$< .001$	0.27

Note. Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to examine differences between female and male respondents. Effect sizes are reported as rank-biserial correlations (r_{rb}), with larger absolute values indicating stronger group differences. The null hypothesis stated that population distributions were equal across groups.

The Mann–Whitney U test was used to examine gender differences in negative risk-taking behavior. As shown in Table 11, all five behavioral domains showed statistically significant differences between groups. Specifically, significant effects were found for ethical ($U = 3715$, $p < .001$), financial ($U = 4230$, $p = .003$), health/safety ($U = 3931$, $p < .001$), recreational ($U = 3921$, $p < .001$), and social behaviors ($U = 4083$, $p < .001$). Effect sizes ranged from $r_{rb} = .24$ to .33, indicating small to moderate differences across domains. Overall,

these results suggest that gender is associated with meaningful variations in negative risk-taking behavior, with moderate effects particularly evident in the ethical and recreational dimensions.

These findings are supported by the study of Hukkelberg & Bjørknes (2025) who found that gender differences are evident in risk behaviours among youths, with males generally exhibiting higher levels of engagement in such factors. Also, their findings showed that risk behaviours are domain-specific, as differences were observed across various behavioral dimensions such as peer relations, personality, and leisure or recreational activities. This supports the result of this table showing that gender differences are evident in specific domains particularly in ethical and recreational risk-taking behaviors. Furthermore, the observed differences were not extreme but rather moderate, suggesting that while gender influences risk-taking behavior, the extent of variation is not prominent across all domains.

Consistently, a systematic review and meta-analysis conducted by Vela (2023), gender is significantly associated with variations in risk-taking behaviors, especially in terms of negative risk-taking domains. The study found that males and females differ in their levels of engagement in risk-taking, with evidence of moderate effect sizes in some aspects of risk-related behavior. Thus, the findings suggest that gender is a contributing factor in influencing risk-taking behavior among individuals.

SOP 4. Is there a significant relationship between the levels of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults?

Table 12. Correlation Matrix of Parasocial Relationship and Negative Risk-Taking Behaviors among Emerging Adults

Variables	Interest in the social media figure	Identification with the social media figure	Interaction with the social media figure	Knowledge about the social media figure
Ethical	.07	.18**	.14*	.10
Financial	.18**	.28***	.21**	.19**
Health/Safety	.14*	.18**	.10	.08
Recreational	.10	.19**	.17*	.13
Social	.21**	.25***	.23***	.20**

*Note. Values represent Spearman rho correlation coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.*

The relationships between parasocial relationship variables and negative risk-taking behaviors were examined using Spearman rho correlations. As shown in Table 12, several significant positive correlations emerged. Ethical risk-taking behavior was weakly associated with identification ($r = .18$, $p < .01$) and interaction ($r = .14$, $p < .05$) with the social media figure. Financial risk-taking behavior demonstrated small but significant correlations with all parasocial dimensions, including interest ($r = .18$, $p < .05$), identification ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), interaction ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), and knowledge ($r = .19$, $p < .01$). Health and safety behaviors showed weak correlations with interest ($r = .14$, $p < .05$) and identification ($r = .18$, $p < .01$). Recreational risk-taking behavior was significantly correlated with identification ($r = .19$, $p < .01$) and interaction ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). Finally, social risk-taking behavior showed consistent significant associations across all parasocial variables, including interest ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), identification ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), interaction ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), and knowledge ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). Overall, the results indicate that higher levels of parasocial involvement are associated with higher levels of negative risk-taking behavior, although the strength of these relationships is generally weak.

The findings indicate a consistent but generally weak positive relationship between various dimensions of parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults. The presence of statistically significant correlations across these variables suggests that as an individual's level of engagement or connection with a social media figure increases and their likelihood to engage in negative risk-taking

behaviors across all domains of DOSPERT such as ethical, financial, health/safety, recreational, and social were also tends to increase.

In analyzing the specific correlations, the highest level of association is found between the "Identification with the social media figure" dimension and "Financial risk-taking" behavior ($r = .28, p < .001$), these supported by Sheruly and Koentary (2023), who found that PSRs significantly predict online impulsive buying tendencies ($R^2 = .059, p < .05$), implying that individuals with stronger parasocial ties are more likely to engage in financially risky behaviors such as impulse purchasing by endorsements. This aligns with parasocial theory as it reflects a "wishful identification" where individuals internalize a figure's traits. This identification likely drives "Symbolic Modeling" under Social Learning Theory (SLT), where emerging adults adopt a figure's financial or social attitudes to maintain perceived intimacy, which the association between identification and "Social risk-taking" ($r = .25, p < .001$), aligns with Jin and Le (2025), who found that stronger PSRs with Instagram influencers are linked to increased daily social media use, suggesting that strong parasocial bonds may heighten engagement and reinforce algorithm-driven exposure. This suggests that the degree to which an emerging adult identifies with a social media figure may be a particularly a factor that is linked to their likelihood of participating in certain high-risk financial and social activities.

Moreover, the lowest statistically significant associations observed in the matrix include the relationship between "Interest in the social media figure" and "Ethical risk-taking" ($r = .07, p > .05$), which is not significant due to its weak but significant association between "Health/Safety risk-taking" and "Knowledge about the social media figure" ($r = .08, p > .05$), which is also not significant. This aligns with Siegenthaler et al. (2021), who reported no significant influence of PSRs on exercise behavior or self-efficacy. This suggests that health-related impacts may be minimal or context-dependent. These lower values indicate that while some aspects of parasocial relationships have a measurable link to risk-taking, these specific dimensions of interest or knowledge have no direct connections to certain types of risks which highlights that the strength of the relationship varies significantly depending on the specific variables paired.

Despite high PSR scores being contextualized by Emerging Adulthood Theory, it suggests that in the Philippine setting, the influence of social media figures is likely tempered by strong cultural and familial interdependence, resulting in the weak correlations observed.

With regards to the results between parasocial relationships and negative risk-taking behaviors having a weak correlation, the researchers do consider looking into other variables that often have stronger predictive value. Such as personality traits like sensation-seeking or impulsivity, family environment and upbringing styles as well as other media exposures beyond parasocial relationships. Focused studies with these variables might further explain risk-taking, or incorporating said variables to the present study, may explain why strong parasocial ties do not strongly translate into risky behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the relationship between parasocial relationships with media figures and negative risk-taking behaviors among emerging adults in Laguna University. The findings revealed that respondents generally exhibited high levels of parasocial relationships, particularly in terms of interest which reached a strongly agreed level. Meanwhile, identification, interaction, and knowledge towards social media figures were observed at moderate levels. This indicates that while respondents feel connected and engaged, their behaviors remain relatively balanced and not too involved.

In contrast, the results revealed that respondents had consistently low levels of negative risk-taking behaviors across all domains such as ethical, financial, health/safety, recreational, and social, indicating that respondents tend to avoid engaging in harmful or risky behaviors which reflects their responsible decision-making among emerging adults.

Moreover, the differences between the two genders, the findings showed that parasocial relationships did not significantly differ between males and females, except for a slight difference in the knowledge

dimension. Indicating that both genders experience parasocial connections in similar ways. However, significant gender differences were found in all domains of negative risk-taking behaviors, with the males having higher results, which suggests that gender differences are associated with risk-related behaviors rather than parasocial relationships.

Furthermore, correlation analysis revealed that parasocial relationships are positively associated with negative risk-taking behaviors, although the relationships were generally weak. This implies that as individuals become more engaged or connected with social media figures, the likeliness for risk-taking behaviors to increase. However, since the correlations are weak, parasocial relationships alone may not strongly predict these behaviors.

Overall, the study concludes that while emerging adults develop relatively high parasocial connections with social media figures, most still maintain a low involvement in negative risk-taking behaviors. While there are some connections between these variables, they are weak which suggests that other factors may have a greater influence on risk-taking behavior.

Based on these findings, the researchers propose a webinar. With the discourse pertaining to the identification with parasocial bonds formed with social media personalities and its correlation with risk-taking behaviors, particularly in the financial domain. A structured action plan along its details was developed, integrating their findings into the academic discourse in order for their study to have its purpose in practical applications. The contents of the action plan include a two-session webinar over a five-week period, highlighting the major tasks and activities involved. Through this webinar, the study's findings can be effectively presented beyond the written research, to contribute to the expanding field of media and psychology while fostering digital literacy among College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) students at Laguna University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Laguna University may utilize the findings of this study to strengthen digital literacy and student wellness programs that promote responsible social media engagement and awareness of the possible influence of parasocial relationships and students' behaviors and decision-making.
- Design gender-responsive support programs that recognize the significant differences found in all five domains of negative risk-taking behavior between the male and female emerging adults.
- Students are encouraged to practice responsible social media engagement and maintain awareness of its possible influence on their real-life responsibilities.
- Future researchers are encouraged to broaden the scope of this study by conducting a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the personal perspectives of students in forming parasocial bonds with the social media figure and explore other factors that might incorporate parasocial relationships in. They may also consider conducting similar study in different institutions and locales to determine if the findings will remain consistent across various students.
- The proposed action plan should be considered for implementation by the university as a guide for strengthening the student development initiatives related to parasocial engagement and risk-taking behaviors.

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