

When Fiction Feels Real: The Impact of Parasocial Attachment on Adult Well-Being



How does attachment to fictional characters affect adult readers' well-being?

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Abstract

This review examines how parasocial attachment to fictional characters affects well-being in adult readers. Moderate attachment can support emotional comfort and empathy, while excessive attachment may lead to negative outcomes. Overall, effects depend on attachment intensity.

Method

Literature Review

Sources from EFSC library + Google Scholar

Focuses on Adult readers and fictional characters

8 peer reviewed sources analyzed

Positive Effects

Emotional Comfort

Increased Empathy

Sense of Connection

Stress Relief

Discussion

Parasocial relationships can produce both positive and negative psychological effects

Moderate attachment supports emotional comfort and empathy, while excessive attachment may lead to escapism

Readers construct mental models of characters, making them feel psychologically real

The impact of parasocial relationships depends on the intensity of emotional attachment

Negative Effects

Over-attachment

Escapism from real life

Emotional dependent

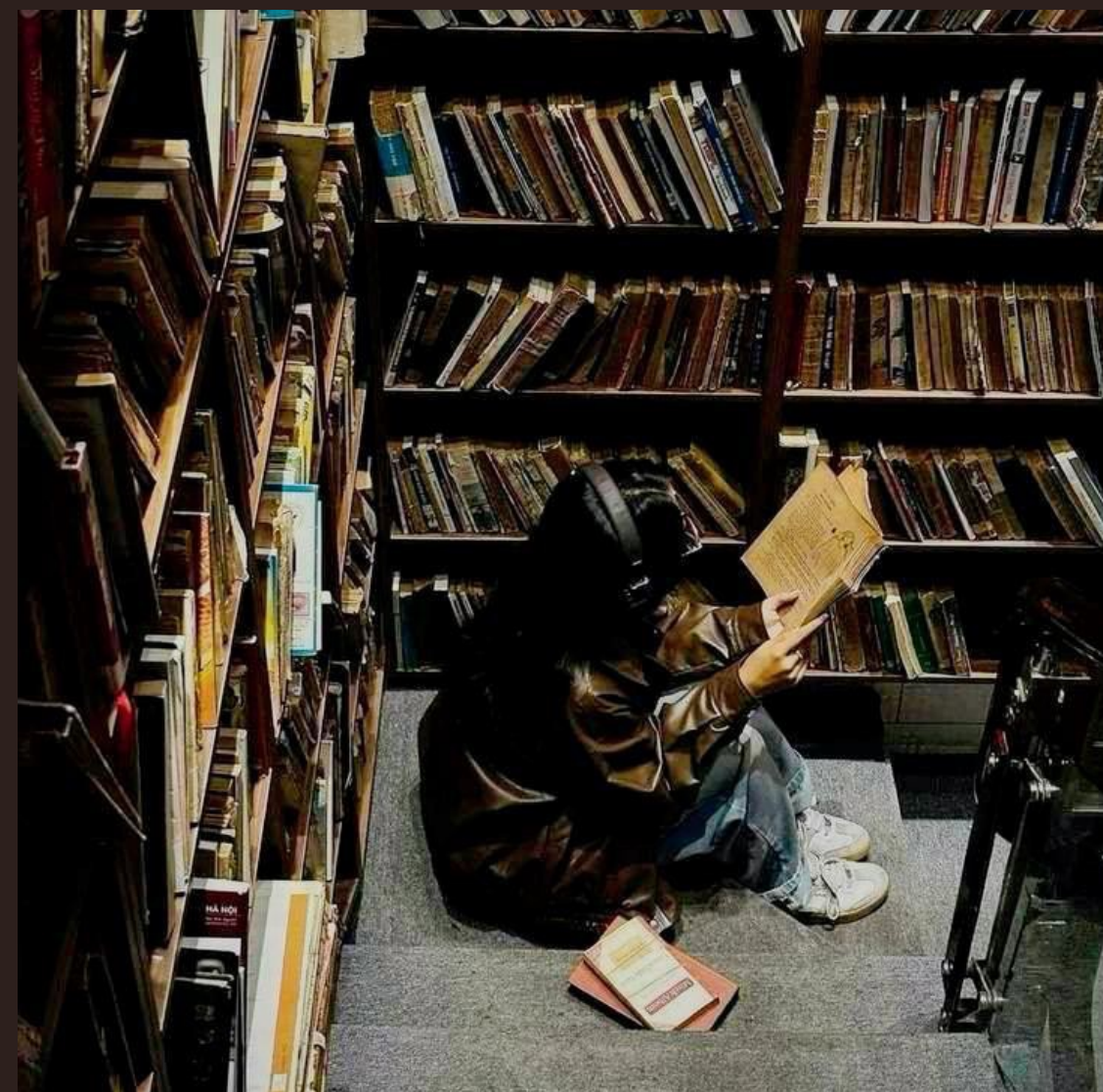
Reduced real-world interaction

Limitations

Limited research on book-specific characters

Many studies focus on TV/media

Lack of long-term data



References

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Cognitive Perspective

Readers construct "mental Models" of character

These models are updates throughout reading

Develop emotional responses

Readers combine personal experiences with text information