

# Parasocial Relationships and Materialism in the Media: The Moderating Role of Motivation

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This study's focus is the relationship between an individual's propensity to hold materialistic attitudes and the intensity of the one-sided relationships that develop between consumers and online celebrities, defined as a parasocial relationship. The literature has shown a relationship between social media intensity and materialism, as well as celebrity worship and materialism, but the reason for this effect is relatively unstudied (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Green et al., 2014). The level of materialism between social and process-oriented users was recently found to be the same (Gentina and Rowe, 2020). Consequently, the aim of this study is to focus upon a sub-component of materialism: envy. We plan to study whether the orientation of media usage moderates the engagement in social comparison, the intensity of parasocial relationships (PSI), and the emotional responses elicited regarding the fortunes of influencers (FOI).

## Hypotheses

**H1:** A social orientation will be related to more engagement in social comparison.

**H2:** A process orientation will be related to less engagement in social comparison.

**H3:** A social orientation will be related to a greater intensity of parasocial relationships, more envy, and more schadenfreude than process orientation.

**H4:** A process orientation will be related to a lower intensity of parasocial relationships, and a greater incidence of sympathy and happy-for-ness than social-orientation.

## Methods

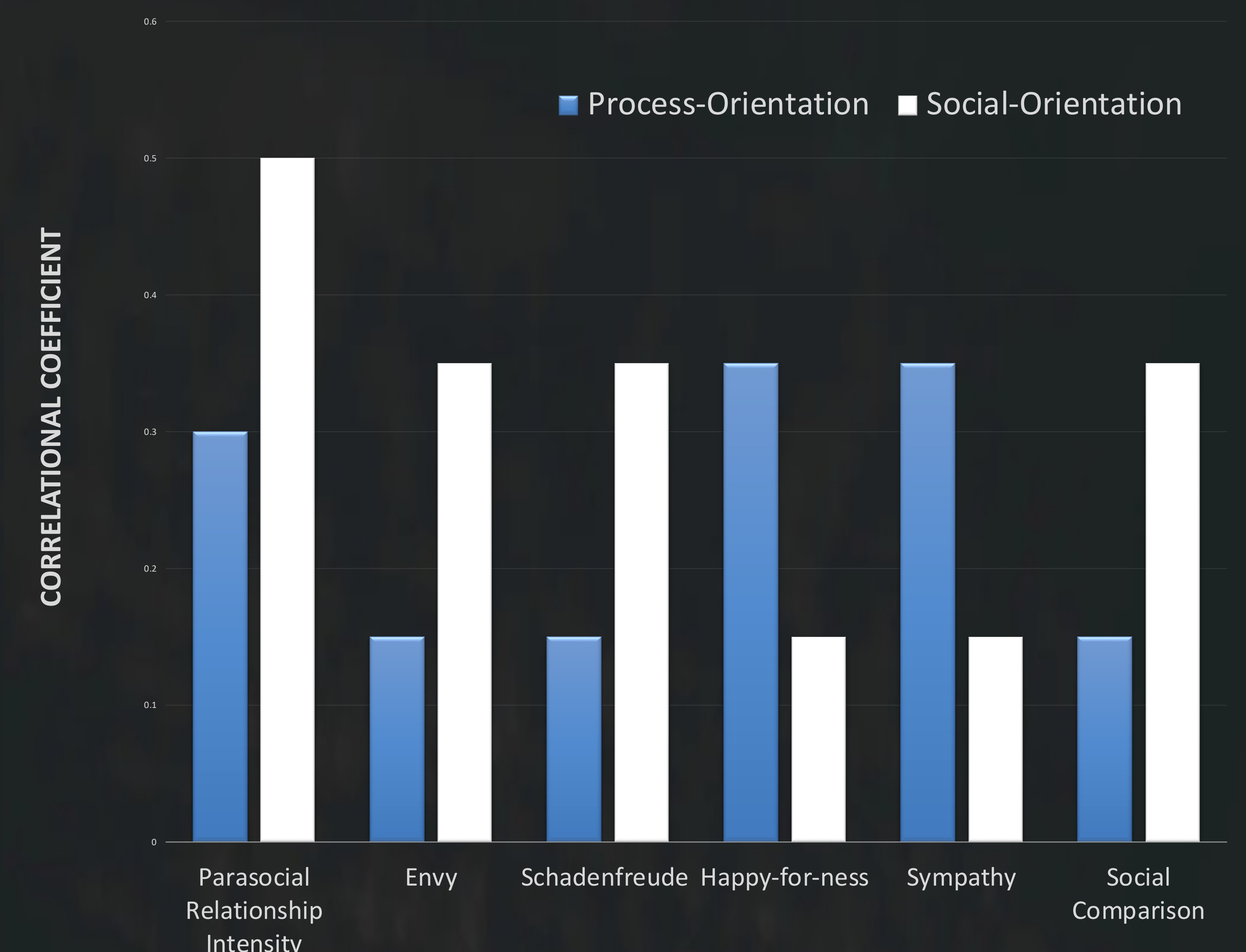
Participants will be asked to report on whether they engage in at least 100 minutes of social media a day to control for media intensity and to cite at least two online celebrities they know. Only these participants will be included in the data.

Participants will then complete measures of social media motivation, materialism, parasocial relationship intensity, envy, happy-for-ness, sympathy, and schadenfreude.

Items from the Measure of Parasocial Relationships (Garcia et al., 2022):

- 1) I experience a feeling of connectedness with the media figure through his/her posts on social media.
- 2) I experience that I get emotionally engaged when the media figure shares more private information about himself/herself (e.g., bigger life events).

Expected Impact of Media Orientation on PSI and FOI in Heavy Media Users



The closer a correlational coefficient is to 1, the stronger the correlation is.

## Discussion

The motivation behind social media use will be a determining factor in the extent that individuals engage in social comparisons and experience parasocial relationships with online celebrities. As a result, motivation will also moderate the extent that individuals experience negative and positive emotions in response to influencers fortunes and misfortunes. However, since this study is correlational, causation will not be able to be inferred.