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Breaking Up with Idols On Social Media: Para-Loveshock Experienced by Fans in The Idol's Love Collapse Incident

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Abstract

In the highly emotional fan-idol relationships within East Asian idol industries, idol romantic scandals often trigger emotional imbalance and identity crises among fans. This study examines unfollowing narratives of fans on Weibo platforms using text analysis method to explore emotional expressions, coping strategies, and identity reconstruction processes during the idol's love collapse incident. Employing the para-loveshock theory framework, it reveals how fans transform personal emotions into visible, shareable public narratives through three mechanisms In the midst of an emotional collapse: legitimizing grief, self-flagellation, and moral outrage, thereby gaining emotional legitimacy and subjectivity on social media. The findings demonstrate that fans are not merely passive recipients of emotional shocks but active agents negotiating their identities within cultural contexts. Social media serves not only as an outlet for emotional release but also as a crucial space for identity negotiation through affective discourse. By revealing the social trajectories and self-reconstruction logic of emotional expression from fans' subjective perspectives in digital spaces, this research provides new insights into understanding the dynamic processes of emotional expression and identity reconstruction in East Asian fan culture.

Keywords: Fan culture; Idol love collapse; Para-loveshock; Identity reconstruction; Emotional politics