

A Literature Review on the Impact of the K-Pop Phenomenon on Media Consumption Patterns and Cultural Identity among Students

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ABSTRACT

K-Pop, as a rapidly growing global phenomenon, has become a dominant cultural force influencing media consumption and youth identity worldwide. The objective of this study is to analyse the impact of K-Pop on students' media consumption patterns and cultural identity, with a particular focus on how global popular culture shapes local identity construction. Employing a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review, this study examines journal articles, research reports, official documents, and other scholarly sources to identify recurring themes and perspectives. The findings reveal that K-Pop significantly affects students' media consumption by shaping their preferences for digital platforms and content, while also contributing to the adoption of Korean cultural elements in their daily lives. The novelty of this study lies in its synthesis of diverse literature to highlight the dual role of K-Pop in reshaping both media behaviour and cultural identity within the context of globalisation. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that K-Pop not only transforms students' exposure to global media but also fosters hybrid cultural identities, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural globalisation in the digital era..

INTRODUCTION

Media plays an important role in shaping the identity of young people, particularly through the influence of social media, mass media representations, and the participatory nature of digital platforms. As young people navigate their formative years, they are increasingly exposed to diverse narratives and representations that inform their self-perceptions and social positioning. Social media platforms have emerged as significant spaces for the exploration and expression of identity among youth. According to LeBlanc and Brittian, social media offers young people opportunities to engage with their identities in creative and reflective ways, allowing them to construct and negotiate their sense of self in response to various influences, including peer interactions and cultural narratives (LeBlanc & Brittian, 2022).

Media has also played a significant role in the dissemination and impact of K-Pop among students, particularly through social media platforms, digital content distribution, and the development of fandom communities. These multifaceted interactions not only shape the consumption of K-Pop but also influence the cultural identity and affiliations of young fans. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become crucial tools for the spread of K-Pop culture, facilitating the emergence of virtual communities where fans can express their identities and connect with others who share similar interests (Lee, Tak, Kwak, & Lim, 2020). In addition, social media serves as a space where young people create their identities and shape their daily relationships and interactions. This affects how young people perceive themselves and others, ultimately shaping their cultural identity (Tao & Scott, 2022). This underscores the role of media not only as a reflection of identity but also as a tool for its construction and affirmation.

The influence of mass media representations cannot be overlooked. Grishina, Dyakova, and Morozova (2021) highlight how media plays a critical role in shaping students' ethnic identity, showing that media narratives can reinforce or challenge existing stereotypes, thereby affecting how young people view themselves and their cultural backgrounds. The internet and social media also play an important role in the dissemination of popular culture, as information and entertainment are made available to everyone, anytime and anywhere. Cultural products such as music, films, fashion, and food have become global commodities that can be consumed by communities across the world. This intercultural exchange contributes to the creation of hybrid cultural identities, where individuals adopt elements from different cultures to construct their own sense of identity.

One of the most prominent examples of this trend is K-Pop, short for Korean pop, which has developed into a global phenomenon since the early 2000s. K-Pop extends beyond music to include various aspects of popular culture such as fashion, dance, and lifestyle. Several factors contribute to K-Pop's significance within global culture. Its influence on world culture is highly significant, serving as a vehicle for promoting Korean culture by introducing elements such as language, cuisine, and traditions to international audiences. Fans across the globe often incorporate aspects of K-Pop into their own cultural practices, thereby creating unique hybrid identities. Moreover, the global success of K-Pop has compelled the international music industry to adopt and study its innovative and effective marketing and production strategies. Thus, K-Pop is not merely a musical activity but also a crucial component of global culture that influences multiple aspects of life worldwide. Through social media, sophisticated marketing strategies, and a loyal fan base, K-Pop has established itself as a major global cultural force that explores the intersections of popular culture, media integration, and identity formation among younger generations of students.

By examining the influence of K-Pop on media consumption habits and cultural identity formation among students, this study provides a unique perspective on the dynamics of fandom, social influence, and cultural relations

within the Indonesian context. The aim of this research is to offer an in-depth explanation of the distinctive and diverse media consumption patterns among students in relation to the K-Pop phenomenon, to identify the cultural identity changes associated with K-Pop, and to analyse the underlying processes behind these transformations.

METHOD

This study employs a literature study approach using qualitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of how the K-Pop phenomenon influences media consumption patterns and cultural identity among students. Within literature-based research, qualitative methods often involve a systematic literature review (SLR) that synthesises existing studies to identify patterns, themes, and gaps in knowledge (Alwi & Khotijah, 2022). The literature study approach was selected as it enables a comprehensive analysis of published information on the phenomenon, with an emphasis on synthesising findings from diverse and relevant sources. The aim of this review is to uncover emerging characteristics and patterns from prior studies and to provide deeper insights into the topic based on available evidence.

The qualitative literature study method constitutes one of the analytical approaches used to examine data derived from written sources. The techniques applied in this study involve the collection, review, and critical analysis of information from a wide range of references, including journal articles, research reports, official documents, and other scholarly sources. By systematically synthesising these materials, the study ensures that the analysis is grounded in a breadth of perspectives and academic evidence.

The primary focus of this study is the analysis and integration of published information to develop a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the K-Pop phenomenon on students' media consumption patterns and cultural identity. Specifically, the literature review synthesises findings that explore how K-Pop shapes media use, such as engagement with social media, streaming platforms, and music video consumption. In addition, it examines how these media practices are reflected in students' cultural identities, drawing on insights from previous research and relevant publications. This integrative approach allows for the identification of recurring themes and offers a structured framework to understand the cultural and media-related implications of K-Pop among young audiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The interest in K-Pop among students is rooted in multiple factors that successfully capture their attention, reflecting the ways in which this genre of popular music appeals to global audiences through its unique and creative elements. A majority of respondents stated that their initial attraction to K-Pop stemmed from the highly colourful and artistic music videos that distinguish it

from other mainstream productions. One fan, for instance, recalled being fascinated for the first time after watching the video clip of BTS's IDOL on YouTube, which impressed them with its energetic choreography, visually striking imagery, and exceptionally high production values. Such experiences were noted as significantly different from what they were accustomed to in conventional Indonesian music videos. Moreover, the fusion of multiple genres such as pop, rap, and EDM provided a refreshing experience for these young audiences, creating a sense of curiosity and inspiring them to explore K-Pop further.

Beyond visual spectacle, students also reported that their engagement with K-Pop often emerged from social interactions with peers and exposure to other Korean cultural products, such as Korean dramas. Peer recommendations and shared viewing experiences increased their motivation to engage with K-Pop and develop deeper interest. This process aligns with findings by Saraswati and Nurbaiti (2021), who argue that participatory culture within fandom plays a significant role in sustaining students' engagement. K-Pop does not merely provide a fresh variation in music but also offers rich aesthetic experiences through intricate choreography, stylised visuals, and well-crafted narrative concepts embedded in albums and music videos. Students further indicated that their appreciation of K-Pop was enhanced by the diversity of genres and messages carried within the songs. Consequently, their interest in K-Pop evolved from casual listening into a sustained cultural engagement that influenced their preferences for media and entertainment.

Among the wide range of K-Pop acts, BTS emerged as the most favoured group among respondents, admired not only for their musical variety and production quality but also for the empowering messages embedded in their lyrics. The themes of resilience, self-love, and courage resonated strongly with students, who felt that the music provided encouragement during personal struggles. Other groups, including NCT, Stray Kids, BLACKPINK, EXO, TWICE, ENHYPEN, TXT, AESPA, and SEVENTEEN, were also highly popular, with fans appreciating their distinctive concepts, intricate choreography, and dynamic live performances. The active involvement of group members in songwriting and creative processes further enhanced the authenticity of their appeal. Solo artists such as IU were particularly valued for their vocal ability and songwriting talent, with her music often described as emotionally relatable. These varied preferences demonstrate that students' attraction to K-Pop is multidimensional, shaped by aesthetic quality, lyrical resonance, and cultural creativity.

In terms of content consumption, students overwhelmingly relied on digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Weverse, and Spotify to access K-Pop music and related materials. These platforms functioned as the primary spaces for daily interaction with K-Pop culture, particularly during leisure hours in the evening. Although none of the respondents reported attending a live concert, they nonetheless described experiencing deep emotional impacts from certain songs and artists. For instance, BTS's *Stay Gold* was frequently cited as an anthem of encouragement during periods of challenge,

while IU's songs were said to mirror personal experiences and feelings, offering comfort and inspiration. This pattern supports the notion that digital platforms have replaced traditional concert attendance as the primary medium for emotional engagement. Students further emphasised the importance of being able to interact with other fans online, reinforcing their sense of belonging and enhancing the intensity of their media experiences.

Engagement with K-Pop extended beyond music into broader explorations of Korean culture, reflecting the integrative role of fandom in shaping intercultural understanding. Students expressed growing interest in learning aspects of Korean language, cuisine, and customs after becoming familiar with K-Pop. Several noted that their perception of Korean culture shifted positively, particularly in relation to its unique aesthetics and traditions. At the same time, they recognised limitations in applying certain cultural practices—such as alcohol consumption customs like *soju* drinking—within their own context. This process illustrates the selective adoption of cultural elements, whereby students embraced values they found meaningful while maintaining critical distance from those they viewed as incompatible. Particularly notable was their admiration for discipline, hard work, and dedication consistently displayed by K-Pop idols, values which they reported adopting into their own daily routines. Thus, K-Pop functioned not only as entertainment but also as a cultural bridge fostering selective adaptation.

K-Pop was frequently cited as a significant coping mechanism for managing stress and navigating everyday challenges among students. Respondents described K-Pop music and variety shows as enjoyable distractions that provided moments of relief from academic or social pressures. This finding echoes Mysyk's (2024) observations that fandom often provides fans with emotionally resonant content that deepens their investment and offers psychological comfort. Students also articulated how their engagement with K-Pop encouraged them to adopt more open attitudes toward cultural difference, recognising both similarities and distinctions between their own context and Korean society. Exposure to diverse representations and narratives helped them broaden their understanding of global diversity and appreciate shared human experiences. For many, this process led to personal growth in intercultural awareness and empathy. Overall, K-Pop not only served as entertainment but also functioned as a supportive resource that contributed positively to students' mental well-being and cross-cultural understanding.

The study further revealed that K-Pop fandom significantly influenced students' media consumption needs, highlighting their desire to engage, interact, and access diverse content related to idols and groups. These needs were largely fulfilled through digital platforms and social media, which facilitated dynamic and participatory cultural practices. As Saraswati and Nurbaity (2021) note, participatory fandom thrives in spaces like Twitter, where fans actively contribute to community-building activities. Students emphasised how these platforms allowed them to connect, share content, and take part in discussions, thereby satisfying social interaction and belongingness needs. Direct

communication opportunities with idols through social media heightened this sense of intimacy, deepening their emotional engagement (P. Kim & Hutt, 2021). In addition, the diversity of media available was essential, as students actively sought out new content ranging from interviews and documentaries to fan-generated materials (J. Kim et al., 2022). These practices illustrate a complex ecosystem of digital media consumption.

Fan-produced content, often described as “fan labour,” emerged as another defining aspect of students’ engagement with K-Pop. Many respondents reported being involved in creating or curating fan-related projects, from managing social media accounts to designing promotional content and organising online events. These activities were not only aimed at supporting idols but also provided opportunities to develop personal skills and expand social networks. Nadhifah (2022) argues that such practices highlight the agency of fans within the K-Pop ecosystem, as they actively contribute to the visibility and success of their idols. Students explained that these forms of participation helped them feel more integrated within the community, providing a sense of purpose and shared responsibility. Importantly, this type of engagement also blurred the boundaries between consumers and producers, reflecting the participatory nature of fandom culture. Through fan labour, students developed greater confidence in digital literacy and collaborative practices that extended beyond fandom contexts.

Emotional attachment was identified as one of the strongest motivators for students’ media consumption within K-Pop fandom. Respondents expressed that their admiration for idols often drove them to seek content that deepened these connections, such as behind-the-scenes footage, personal interviews, or documentaries. Mysyk (2024) similarly observed that emotional investment leads fans to pursue content resonating with their desires and feelings, thereby reinforcing long-term commitment. Students described how this form of attachment gave them a sense of companionship and inspiration, particularly during challenging times. Moreover, their emotional bonds with idols shaped their consumption habits, influencing both the frequency and type of media they accessed. In this way, fandom provided not only entertainment but also emotional support systems, underlining the therapeutic role of media engagement. Such findings illustrate that fandom operates as both a cultural and emotional ecosystem, fostering personal growth alongside collective participation.

The role of community in shaping students’ identities was strongly emphasised. Participation in K-Pop fan clubs and online groups fostered a sense of belonging, solidarity, and shared identity. Lee (2020) notes that such membership involves adopting specific markers, including merchandise, unique fan language, and participation in collective events, all of which students reported engaging with. The use of inclusive language, such as referring to themselves as “we,” contributed to the construction of collective identity, strengthening emotional ties within the group. Husna (2023) highlights how these participatory practices enhance social bonds through collaborative

activities, including online discussions and offline fan projects. Students acknowledged that being part of a fan community not only provided emotional support but also practical opportunities to develop communication and teamwork skills. These findings demonstrate that fandom fosters meaningful socialisation processes, enabling students to expand their social networks while reinforcing their identities within a supportive peer culture.

Globalisation was found to be a critical factor in shaping students' cultural identities through K-Pop. The genre's ability to transcend national boundaries introduced students to Korean music, fashion, dance, and language, all of which became incorporated into aspects of their daily lives. Yalcin and Mutlu (2020) describe K-Pop as promoting cultural hybridity, where elements from multiple traditions merge to form new cultural expressions. Laffan (2020) similarly identifies positive psychosocial outcomes, with fans gaining a sense of community and identity through engagement. Cicchelli et al. (2022) add that K-Pop fandom reshapes symbolic boundaries by promoting inclusivity and global connectedness. These perspectives were mirrored by students in this study, who described their involvement with K-Pop as fostering both local identity negotiation and a sense of global citizenship. The genre's participatory culture enabled them to connect with diverse peers, encouraging openness, tolerance, and recognition of their role within global cultural flows.

Finally, media representations of K-Pop were found to play an influential role in shaping students' perceptions of Korean culture and their own identities. Song and Velding (2019) highlight how portrayals of masculinity and femininity in K-Pop challenge traditional Western gender norms, a process students themselves echoed in reflecting on how such representations shaped their understanding of gender roles. Lee (2020) further illustrates that the Korean Wave has influenced cultural practices in Indonesia and Malaysia, including the rise of local groups imitating K-Pop styles, thereby generating hybrid identities. Lynch (2020) points out the role of social media platforms in fostering cross-cultural interactions, which students confirmed as essential to building their sense of belonging. These representations contributed to shaping not only cultural appreciation but also critical engagement, as students recognised both the empowering and problematic aspects of K-Pop. In this sense, media acts as both a mirror and a mediator of identity formation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that the appeal of K-Pop among students is multifaceted, combining aesthetic, musical, and cultural dimensions. Students' initial attraction to colourful, creative music videos such as BTS's IDOL reflects how visual spectacle functions as a gateway to fandom engagement. This supports the argument that K-Pop distinguishes itself globally through high production values and innovative choreography (Saraswati & Nurbaity, 2021). The integration of diverse musical genres – pop, rap, and EDM – further widens its reach by offering novel experiences beyond local music. These results indicate that K-Pop's success lies not only in entertainment value but also in its ability to

generate curiosity and encourage exploration of Korean culture. As students transition from casual exposure to deeper cultural engagement, it becomes evident that K-Pop serves as a transnational cultural product, blending creativity with market strategies to attract diverse audiences and create sustained interest across cultural and national boundaries.

Beyond aesthetic elements, peer influence and shared cultural practices also played a central role in expanding students' interest in K-Pop. Consistent with findings from Saraswati and Nurbaity (2021), fandom culture thrives on participatory engagement where peers exchange recommendations, share viewing experiences, and collectively build cultural knowledge. In this study, students often reported being introduced to K-Pop through friends or Korean dramas, demonstrating how social interaction amplifies cultural exposure. This suggests that fandom cannot be viewed as an isolated act of media consumption but rather as a socially embedded practice shaped by networks of peers. Furthermore, students highlighted how communal participation strengthened their motivation to learn more about K-Pop and Korean culture. Such results underscore the significance of socialisation processes within fandom, where peer recommendations act as cultural catalysts that influence not only entertainment preferences but also identity construction and cross-cultural awareness in adolescent communities.

The emotional dimension of fandom emerged as a particularly significant theme. Students emphasised the therapeutic role of K-Pop, with songs like BTS's *Stay Gold* providing encouragement during stressful times and IU's lyrics offering relatable comfort. These findings align with Mysyk (2024), who observed that emotional resonance deepens fan commitment by fostering personal connections with idols. The evidence from this study suggests that fandom operates as a form of affective community, offering both companionship and inspiration. Importantly, emotional bonds influence patterns of media consumption, with students actively seeking interviews, behind-the-scenes content, and documentaries to sustain their attachment. Such practices demonstrate that K-Pop is not merely an entertainment product but also a psychological support system. By engaging emotionally with idols, students find meaning and reassurance, illustrating the role of cultural products in shaping not only leisure activities but also mental well-being and strategies for coping with daily stress.

Another key discussion point concerns the role of participatory culture and fan labour in shaping students' identity and agency. This study found that many respondents engaged in activities such as creating promotional content, managing online accounts, and organising events, echoing Nadhifah's (2022) description of fan labour as an expression of agency within fandom ecosystems. Such practices blur the line between consumption and production, positioning fans as active contributors rather than passive consumers. This participatory engagement not only reinforced students' connections with idols but also enhanced their digital literacy, creativity, and collaborative skills. The results also highlighted how participation fulfilled needs for belonging, inclusion, and

agency, thereby aligning with broader frameworks of participatory media cultures (J. Kim et al., 2022). By framing fandom as a site of skill development and empowerment, this study underscores the ways in which cultural engagement intersects with personal growth and social capital formation among students.

The findings further support arguments about the importance of community and collective identity formation within fandom. Membership in fan clubs and online groups fostered a sense of solidarity and belonging, facilitated through shared symbols, language, and practices. Lee (2020) notes that such markers—merchandise, fan-specific language, and participation in events—serve to construct collective identity, a process mirrored in this study. Students' use of inclusive language such as "we" demonstrates how fandom fosters collective consciousness. Husna (2023) further highlights that collaborative activities, from online discussions to offline fan projects, deepen these social bonds. In this way, K-Pop fandom functions as a socialisation arena where students cultivate communication and teamwork skills. The strong communal aspect also reduced feelings of isolation, providing emotional and social support. These findings reinforce the idea that fandom operates as both a cultural and social institution, shaping students' identities through belonging and peer-driven participation.

Globalisation emerged as a critical lens for interpreting the impact of K-Pop on students' cultural identities. Exposure to Korean music, language, and fashion through digital platforms facilitated hybrid identity formation, where students selectively incorporated cultural practices into their daily lives. Yalcin and Mutlu (2020) describe K-Pop as promoting hybridity, while Laffan (2020) links fandom to psychosocial benefits such as belonging and identity. Cicchelli et al. (2022) argue that K-Pop reshapes symbolic boundaries by promoting inclusivity and global identity formation. These perspectives resonate with the students' experiences, as they reported adopting values such as discipline and hard work from idols while rejecting practices incompatible with their own cultural contexts, like soju consumption. Such selective appropriation demonstrates how cultural globalisation does not imply wholesale adoption but rather negotiated adaptation. This illustrates the agency of young people in integrating global cultural flows while maintaining local values, producing hybridised cultural identities.

The role of media representations in shaping perceptions of K-Pop and identity must also be acknowledged. As Song and Velding (2019) argue, portrayals of masculinity and femininity in K-Pop challenge Western gender norms, a theme echoed by students who critically engaged with these depictions. Lee (2020) highlights how the Korean Wave has influenced cultural practices in Indonesia and Malaysia, inspiring local musical acts to replicate K-Pop aesthetics. Students in this study similarly reflected on how media exposure encouraged them to reconsider gender, beauty standards, and lifestyle practices. Lynch (2020) illustrates how social media fosters cross-cultural interaction, a finding also reflected in students' accounts of building relationships across cultural

boundaries. These insights demonstrate that K-Pop operates simultaneously as cultural representation and identity mediator, shaping both critical reflections and aspirational practices among youth. Media thus acts as both a mirror of cultural ideals and a stage for negotiating evolving identities.

Taken together, these findings emphasise that K-Pop has transcended its role as a musical genre to become a global cultural force with significant social, emotional, and identity-related implications for students. By integrating entertainment with participatory practices, emotional resonance, and global connectivity, K-Pop provides a platform where young people negotiate cultural hybridity and community belonging. The evidence presented supports the view of K-Pop as a cultural mediator that fosters intercultural awareness, social solidarity, and personal growth. Importantly, this study highlights the dual role of K-Pop: while it inspires admiration for Korean culture, it also promotes critical engagement with issues of identity, gender, and representation (Cicchelli et al., 2022; Song & Velding, 2019). The broader implication is that cultural globalisation is not a unidirectional process but a negotiated one, where students actively select, reinterpret, and integrate cultural elements. K-Pop thus exemplifies how popular culture shapes identity within digital globalisation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have significant implications for understanding the relationship between popular culture, media consumption, and identity formation among students. K-Pop fandom demonstrates how global cultural flows influence young people's everyday practices, extending beyond entertainment into the domains of socialisation, education, and cultural adaptation. This highlights the importance of recognising popular culture as a formative space where students negotiate values, identities, and intercultural awareness. Educators and policymakers should therefore acknowledge the cultural significance of K-Pop and similar global phenomena, not as trivial leisure activities, but as meaningful contexts in which students learn about diversity, social belonging, and creativity. By integrating critical media literacy into educational settings, students can be encouraged to engage with cultural products more reflectively, enabling them to navigate the benefits and challenges of globalisation. Such an approach could foster greater cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and critical thinking skills in an increasingly interconnected world.

From a social perspective, the study underscores the role of fan communities in fostering belonging and emotional resilience among students. The participatory and collaborative nature of K-Pop fandom shows that young people derive not only enjoyment but also emotional support and personal growth from these communities. This implies that fan practices should be recognised as valuable social networks that contribute to well-being, skill development, and identity formation. Community organisations and cultural institutions could build on this participatory model to design youth engagement programmes that harness the creative and collaborative potential of fandom

culture. For instance, initiatives that integrate music, digital media production, and intercultural exchange could strengthen social bonds and broaden students' cultural horizons. Recognising fandom as a legitimate cultural practice may also reduce stigma associated with popular culture, allowing young people to express their identities freely while developing positive relationships within and across cultural boundaries.

Finally, the study highlights opportunities for future research on the intersection of media, globalisation, and youth identity. While this research focused on students in the Indonesian context, comparative studies across different cultural and national settings would provide a broader understanding of how K-Pop is negotiated globally. Further exploration is also recommended into the ways gender representation, hybrid identity, and fan labour influence young people's perceptions and behaviours. Such investigations would contribute to the growing scholarship on cultural globalisation by illustrating how global media flows interact with local values and identities. In practical terms, future research should adopt mixed methods approaches, combining qualitative insights with quantitative analysis to capture the depth and scope of K-Pop's influence. By advancing knowledge in this area, scholars can provide valuable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and cultural practitioners seeking to support youth in navigating the opportunities and challenges of globalised media cultures

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