

## The pervasiveness of K-pop in 21st century Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** Pop music has hit the top of the global charts nowadays. Korean pop music (K-pop) is widespread around the world, including Indonesia. How much K-pop has pervaded the Indonesian youth of today is the research question addressed in this study. The approach used is a quantitative one using a survey design. Data was collected with questionnaires, interviews and observations. Data analysis used descriptive statistics with mean values, and inferential statistics using chi-squared tests. The results of the study show that: 1) most Indonesian teenagers are familiar with K-pop; 2) the teenagers who like K-pop are predominantly female; 3) there is no difference in knowledge about K-pop between male and female fans; 4) K-pop is not the only music favoured by Indonesian teenagers.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 *Background of the study*

In the era of globalisation, with technology that has become increasingly sophisticated, it is very easy to exchange information from one region to another and even to other countries. David et al. (1999) suggested that globalisation may be thought of, initially, as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects. Besides information, advances in technology can also spread culture from one country to another. For example, music that is a trend in one country can also be heard in other countries. Astuti (2003, p. 27) revealed that one of the consequences of globalisation is the transformation of culture, which flows more rapidly.

Korean pop music (K-pop) has hit the top of the global chart nowadays. The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be said to be the rising age of K-pop. The truth is that world music was shocked by the boom in K-pop. This phenomenon can be said to be a monumental event, considering that in previous times there had never been Asian music so loved by teenagers around the world; it was Western music that always dominated.

K-pop is not only favoured by Asian teens but also by teenagers in almost all over the world. Tuk (2012) said that K-pop YouTube videos have been watched up to almost two billion times by viewers from more than 21 countries. The number of views of K-pop videos on YouTube as of January 2, 2011 was: Germany 20,114,996; UK 22,705,547; France 26,591,412; Saudi Arabia 42,719,685; Thailand 224,813,564; Malaysia 98,693,969; Singapore 68,546,360; Vietnam 117,358,800; Indonesia 81,128,637; Australia 27,132,121; Canada 46,477,940; US 240,748,112; Japan 423,683,759. The data shows that K-pop is currently the most popular music in the world.

Around the world, pop consumers are increasingly accessing popular products such as music, film, television, and other audiovisual media content through online social media (Jung, 2010). According to Choi (2011), "The recent news of Korean boy and girl bands making headlines in Eastern and Southern Asia, Europe and the US are sending new hopes and energy through the K-pop industry following the surge of pride when the Korean Wave first hit Japan and China in the late 1990s and early 2000s". K-pop's popularity and its participatory fan culture have expanded beyond Asia and become significant in Europe in the past few years (Oh, 2013). Based on Ju and Lee (2015), in the USA, Korean TV dramas have

been provided by online streaming services such as Hulu, DramaFever and Netflix. YouTube is another source for Korean TV dramas, films and, in particular, K-pop.

The popularity of K-pop was confirmed by the achievement of awards by South Korean artists. One of them, the South Korean boy band BTS, has won prestigious awards and topped two categories on the Billboard chart, the number one album on the Billboard 200 chart, and number one artist on a 2018 Billboard 100 artist chart. This achievement is a result of the large number of fans spread all over the world. It proves that many teenagers beyond South Korea also like K-pop. The transnational fandom of K-pop indicates the increasing significance of cultural translation in global media consumption. The overseas flow of K-pop has been identified as an intra-Asian phenomenon and more recently as a global process (Yoon, 2017); one country affected is Indonesia.

Many Indonesian teenagers prove that they like K-pop by their attendance at various events related to K-pop. According to Jung (2011), "With youth fan groups as the backbone of the phenomenon, K-pop, predominantly the product of idol girl and boy band music, has also gained recognition in Indonesia. In 2010, over 120 fan-operated K-pop-related events were held, including fan gatherings and Korean pop festivals and concerts". More and more teenagers in Indonesia like K-pop, causing Indonesian promoters to invite boy bands and girl groups from South Korea. Recently, in September 2018, one South Korean boy band, BTOB, gave a concert in Jakarta (Puspa, 2018). Of course, at the concert there were many sellers of K-pop merchandise ('K-stuff'), because there are many fans who will buy it. The interest K-poppers have towards K-stuff causes them to become very acquisitive. Besides this, being a K-pop fan can satisfy the mind, and also encourages K-poppers to start their own business such as opening a store that sells many kinds of K-pop souvenirs/merchandise/albums. One K-pop fan from Indonesia has been successful because her business sells K-pop items. Thus, Orchidia Cindy, known as Cindy Noona, started from a liking for EXO (a K-pop boy band), and now has become the owner of an online shop, attending dozens of EXO concerts.

The popularity of K-pop is increasing with the opening of the Star Museum global auditions and others. The opportunity for teenagers to become Korean artists makes K-pop increasingly a part of their lives because the teens feel "embraced" by K-pop.

Many K-pop fans become fanatical, and many even become hysterical when they see their idol artists in person. Whatever is done and worn by K-pop artists becomes the centre of conversation and establishes a trend.

From the perspective of politics and economics, this phenomenon is very beneficial for South Korea; with the fanaticism of the world's youth towards K-pop it is easier for South Korea to market its products and for South Korean culture to influence the lifestyle of teenagers elsewhere. The spread of K-pop music and the impact of K-pop culture on teenagers in Indonesia will be the focus of this research.

## 1.2 *Research objectives*

From the outline above, we can see that fanaticism towards K-pop has an impact on the lives of teenagers. Many of them have acquisitive lifestyles in order to buy K-pop merchandise but this can also have a positive side, as seen from their productivity in working independently and even creating new jobs. The aim of the research was to understand the extent of the pervasiveness of K-pop in 21st century Indonesia and the reasons why Indonesian teenagers like K-pop.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Korean pop*

Korean culture has been spreading since the 1990s and the big boom of the Korean drama brought a cultural and social phenomenon called the Korean Wave, known as *Hallyu*. K-pop is modern music from Korea. Lie (2011) explained that at the beginning of the 20th century,

Korean people were not familiar with Western music. Until the 1970s, Koreans did not have music with diatonic scales but used the pentatonic scale. However, in the 1970s diatonic Western music began to become known to the Korean people. Western musicians influence Korean music, so for the Korean community diatonic scales are familiar. Korean music is even able to meet the world's musical tastes, especially those of the United States, such that Korean music is able to dominate the world. Although there is also J-pop (Japanese pop), K-pop is more able to satisfy the tastes of today's generation so that K-pop is more popular.

Raden (2014) mentioned that Korean society has already been successful in embedding the importance of music in daily life. As a result, music consumption in Korea is very high in terms of traditional, pop, rock, jazz, or classical music. Modern K-pop appeared in March 1992, when Seo Taiji and Boys released their first album; the first song was 'I Know' (Culture, 2013, p. 63), followed by many new producers and groups between 1994 and 1997 that caused K-pop to become more developed.

## 2.2 *The presence of K-pop music*

The pervasiveness of K-pop music is a reflection of the presence and acceptability of K-pop in a society. Presence can be seen in quantitative and qualitative terms. Quantitatively, presence can be seen in numbers, while qualitatively it can be viewed in terms of depth. The presence of K-pop in society can be interpreted as the number of fans and the number of K-pop events that exist; how far the fans feel the pervasiveness of K-pop can be seen from how deeply K-pop becomes part of life.

## 2.3 *Interference of the Korean government*

It can be said that the success of the dissemination and development of Korean music cannot be separated from the influence of the state. The Korean government is facilitating the boom in Korean music, even using K-pop as an agent, both in cultural and product terms. One of the leading Korean cosmetics companies achieved a 44% increase in its overseas sales, and Korean games accounted for \$3 billion in Korean exports for the year 2014 (Jung-a, 2016).

The Korean government's support for K-pop plays a big role in the spread of Korean culture and products. This is because programmes related to the arts sector become more formal, so transactions become very obvious. This is something that was not done by the governments of other countries. Lee (2011) reported that the Korean government played an active role by aiding the Korean media in publicising Korean popular culture around the world; Medina (2017) found that K-pop is a soft diplomatic tool.

As part of the arts, K-pop is a very effective tool of diplomacy. The beauty displayed in the art of Korea by both artists and their artworks is a very effective tool of ingratiation, because if someone loves something more, then they will ignore other things. That is what happens to Indonesian teenagers.

This intelligence on the part of the Korean government in using art as a means of diplomacy is something that is not done by any other country. In general, the state does not interfere in the affairs of the arts. Indeed, many arts are becoming marginalized because the arts, including music, are not considered important. The marginalization of music compared to other fields is evidenced by the relatively small number of hours of music lessons.

Art teachers in Indonesia also complain that if there are meetings or community service events, they often use time intended for art lessons. Another frequent example is that art subjects are not taught by art teachers but by teachers from other fields who are considered able to play music.

This is not only happening in Indonesia; according to one teacher in The Netherlands, in the beginning the appreciation of parent guardians in their schools for music was also lacking, so the school did not have adequate musical equipment. But after music teachers were able to show their success by students giving musical performances, the views of parents of students changed and parents voluntarily buy musical instruments for the school (Astuti et al., 2012).

The seriousness of the Korean government in supporting K-pop has succeeded in making Korea a country whose culture is known in other countries. In Indonesia, many teenagers feel proud if they use Korean products and adopt Korean styles, in terms of hairstyles, clothes and favourite foods.

#### 2.4 *The inclusion of K-pop culture in Indonesia*

The popularity of Asian art for Indonesian teenagers begins with the success of teenage soap operas from China, Taiwan and Korea. Soap operas such as *Meteor Garden*, *Princess Hours*, *Full House*, *Dae Jang Geum*, and *My Love from The Star* are opening up insights for Indonesian teens in relation to the culture and history of these countries. This is because, for example, Korean culture is close to Indonesian culture, which is from East Asia. This is in accordance with the opinion of Ryoo (Lee, 2011), who said that “South Korean popular culture is much more readily relatable and acceptable to Asian audiences”.

For Indonesian teenagers, Korean culture had previously been a “mystery”, so that when they could see Korean culture through these dramas, it was felt to be something interesting because it answered their curiosity. The “smoother” politeness, ethics, and practices of Korean culture displayed in these dramas are very interesting to Indonesian teenagers.

If in the 2000s, Indonesian teenagers were excited by soap opera figures from China, Taiwan and especially Korea, in the decade of the 2010s Indonesian teenagers greatly admired K-pop artists such as Super Junior, Big Bang, Girls’ Generation, and 2NE1, who were K-pop pioneers. The K-pop boom is still felt today. BTS, EXO, Blackpink, and Twice are K-pop groups that are very popular with Indonesian teenagers in the second decade of the 21st century.

Things that happened in Indonesia apparently also occurred in neighbouring Asian countries closer to Korea, such as Japan, Vietnam and China. This is implied in Lie’s (2011) statement that K-pop from South Korea first spread to neighbouring Asian countries such as Japan and Taiwan, and from there spread to America and the Middle East. The same thing was stated by Bok-rae (2015), who described how *Hallyu* (the phenomenon of Korean popular culture) is very popular among young people in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

#### 2.5 *Characteristics of adolescents*

Teendom encompasses puberty and transitioning both physically and mentally. Physically, there are very large changes such as height, body shape, voice pitch, and the arrival of menstruation, often causing lack of confidence. Mentally, teenagers need to establish their identity. This causes teenagers to look for idols that can be used as a guide and role model. Most adolescents like to follow the ‘peer group culture’. This group adopts a particular way of talking, walking and behaving that can seem very strange to adults. In general, adolescents tend to behave according to their feelings, bypassing analytical thought.

It can be said that adolescence is a critical period because it involves the search for identity. At that age, teenagers tend to judge things on the basis of appearance, and will readily imitate things without appreciating their implicit values.

The K-pop culture that is so widespread among teenagers can have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact is that K-pop artists can inspire teenagers to achieve, and be creative. But if teenage fanaticism for K-pop goes beyond certain limits, with most time and money spent on K-pop and other more useful things being neglected, K-pop can have a negative impact on teens.

#### 2.6 *Factors that influence adolescent attitudes*

Broadly speaking, there are two types of factor that influence attitudes: intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. Thus, an intrinsic factor is a factor of the adolescents themselves, such as interest and motivation. Extrinsic factors are factors outside of adolescents, such as the environment, including family, school and society.

K-pop is an extrinsic factor for teens that can affect adolescent attitudes. If an extrinsic factor such as K-pop is stronger than pre-existing intrinsic factors, then K-pop culture will be reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of Indonesian youth.

### 2.7 *The influence of K-pop on Indonesian youth culture*

Geertz (1973, p. 89) sees culture as “a system of conceptions inherited [from previous generations] and expressed in symbolic form; with the help of human culture communicating, perpetuating”. While according to Lévi-Strauss (quoted in Ortner, 1994, p. 387), cultural pluralism is realised not because of the isolation of social groups, but precisely because of the continuous contact between these groups. In addressing this in the era of globalisation, Alam (2014) stated that the process of “globalisation and cultural change” does not need to be faced with extreme self-closing attitudes. On the contrary, by understanding how culture is constructed through discourse and practice, for example, we can also use the process of globalisation as a means to enrich the diversity of our cultures. Habieb (2017) shows that K-pop influences the lives of adolescents between 17 and 21 years of age, and he recommends that teenage Indonesia should be able to filter the culture of good and bad; to develop and promote a culture of Indonesia itself.

This is very reasonable because not all things in K-pop are in accordance with Indonesian culture. For example, the culture of drinking alcoholic beverages together, which is common in K-pop, is something that is prohibited in Indonesia because the majority of Indonesians are Muslims.

### 2.8 *Framework of thinking*

The age of adolescence is the age at which teenagers are still in the process of establishing their identity and is an unstable period because teenagers do not yet have a strong guide for judging and deciding something. The presence of idol figures in their lives provides an answer for them, being easy to imitate whatever the idol characters do in terms of lifestyle and behaviour, regardless of economic or physical circumstances, or conformity with their personality or the values of their social society.

In general, adolescents will imitate idol figures who are of the same age as themselves. K-pop is often performed by artists of similar age to teenagers, so that teens will be more interested and like K-pop artists. Moreover, the promotion of K-pop is so intense that it “constrains other idol figures including Indonesian artists themselves”. It can be said that K-pop has a strong pervasiveness in Indonesia, because the K-pop culture arrived in force, being different from popular music in Indonesia, which is not managed jointly between private and government institutions as is the case in Korea. Thus, it can be said that the close working of Korean arts people has allowed K-pop to successfully pervade the Indonesian music scene. This is in accordance with the theory of Mursell (2007), who said that working together will produce accuracy and speed.

Accuracy will make a work more perfect, while speed will make a work the most timely. Perfection and timing are the keys to the success of selling a product.

The products that incessantly enter Indonesia have caused Indonesian teenagers to love K-pop. Given the age and immaturity of adolescents, their reason to idolise K-pop could be driven by extrinsic factors that only consider appearance, and not for deeper reasons such as ideology.

### 2.9 *Hypotheses*

Based on the description, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. K-pop is a genre of music that being appreciated by Indonesian teenagers.
2. The reason Indonesian teenagers like K-pop is based on appearance, not on ideological grounds.

### 2.10 Relevant research

Research relevant to this study includes that of Adnan Habieb on “The influence of K-pop in Indonesia’s students behaviour”, which found that Korean drama has an influence on the lifestyle of Indonesian youth. Our study, however, focuses on the influence of Korean music.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

This research is survey-based research with data collection techniques involving a questionnaire, observation, and internet surfing. The questionnaire was used to reveal the pervasiveness of K-pop in Indonesian adolescents, which included their knowledge of K-pop, how long they had known it, their frequency of listening, and how much they spent on it. Observation techniques were used to determine the behaviour of Indonesian adolescents in terms of lifestyle, and interviews were used to explore the rationale of teenagers for liking K-pop. The respondents sampled were 65 adolescents between 17 and 23 years of age. Data analysis techniques involved descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics used were the maximum mean values, while inferential statistics used chi-squared hypothesis tests.

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following describes the results of the research and discussion. The data revealed by respondents included gender, age, knowledge of K-pop, how they knew K-pop, indicators of their affection for K-pop, the frequency of listening to K-pop, and whether they idolised artists other than K-pop. Table 1 shows the populations involved in each part of our survey.

Explanations of more detailed analysis of the data can be found in the following subsections.

### 4.1 Gender relationship to K-pop

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that Indonesian K-pop fans are predominantly (92.3%) female.

This is confirmed by the chi-squared test presented in Table 3.

Table 1. K-pop survey population.

		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
	Gender	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Knowing K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
Source K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
Frequency of Watching K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
Love towards K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
Budget for K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
When start loving K-Pop	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%
OTHER FAVORITE	Male	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
	Female	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%

Table 2. Gender of Indonesian K-pop fans.

gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	5	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Female	60	92.3	92.3	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Gender significance of Indonesian K-pop fans.

gender	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Male	5	21.7	-16.7
Female	60	43.3	16.7
Total	65		

In Table 3, it can be seen that there are five male fans of K-pop, while 60 are female. It can also be seen that the expectation of the number of men is 21.7, but there are just 5, which is lower by 16.7.

Based on the results of statistical tests (see Table 4), the significance is 0.00. This means the number of K-pop fans among males and females is significantly different. Thus, it can be said that K-pop fans in Indonesia are predominantly female.

The next step is to test chi-squared independence. First, we check whether the distribution violates the related chi-squared assumption of "minimum expected cell frequency, which is 5 or greater 80% of cells expected frequencies of more" (Pallant & Manual, 2007, p. 216)

Based on the chi-squared analysis in Table 6, it can be seen that it shows less than 5, so that the distribution does not violate the assumption (more than 0.08). Thus the analysis can be continued by looking at the Pearson chi-squared value. Because we have  $2 \times 2$  tables, we obtain Table 7.

The continuity correction value is 2.560 which associated with 0.110 level of asymptotic significance 2-sided; thus not significant, so there is no relationship between gender and knowledge about K-pop. Even though there are many more female K-pop fans than male ones, among men and women who like K-pop there are not significantly different levels of knowledge about K-pop.

Table 4. Statistical tests results.

Test Statistics	Gender	Knowing K-Pop
Chi-square	19.231 <sup>a</sup>	124.069 <sup>a</sup>
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.  
The minimum expected cell frequency is 21.7.

Table 5. Crosstab results.

Crosstab			Love towards K-Pop				
			Streaming video	Merchandise	Watching concert	Others	Total
Gender	Male	Count	5	0	0	0	5
		% within gender	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within love towards k-Pop	13.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%
		% of Total	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%
	Female	Count	33	24	2	1	60
		% within gender	55.0%	40.0%	3.3%	1.7%	100.0%
		% within love towards k-Pop	86.8%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	92.3%
		% of Total	50.8%	36.9%	3.1%	1.5%	92.3%
Total	Count	38	24	2	1	65	
	% within gender	58.5%	36.9%	3.1%	1.5%	100.0%	
	% within love towards k-Pop	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	58.5%	36.9%	3.1%	1.5%	100.0%	

Table 6. Chi-Square tests 1 results.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.849 <sup>a</sup>	3	.278
Likelihood Ratio	5.662	3	.129
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.008	1	.083
N of Valid Cases	65		

a. 6 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Table 7. Chi-Square tests 1 results.

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.188 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	2.560	1	.110		
Likelihood Ratio	5.329	1	.021		
Fisher's Exact Test				.077	.077
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.000	1	.001		
N of valid Cases	65				

a. 3 cells(75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .0.8.

b. Computed only for a 2\*2 table



#### 4.2 The pervasiveness of K-pop in Indonesia

The pervasiveness of K-pop in Indonesia is tested via chi-squared to establish whether Indonesian teenagers only like K-pop or whether they also like other music and/or idol artists. Statistical data is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics results.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
OTHER FAVORITE	65	1.00	3.00	1.2615	.50858
Valid N (listwise)	65				

Based on these data it can be seen that the mean of 1.26 (minimum value of 1 and maximum of 3) means that it is below the average. Thus it can be said that K-pop artists are not the only idols for Indonesian teenagers.

Based on the open question about the reason why teenagers enjoy K-pop, all respondents answered that the reason for watching K-pop was because it is cool and entertaining.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study showing that K-pop succeeded in pervading Indonesia, it was shown that a majority of Indonesian teenagers were familiar with K-pop. In general, K-pop fans are women between 17 and 23 years old. However, Indonesian teenagers not only like K-pop, but also like other types of music and artists. The types of music that Indonesian teenagers also like needs to be explored in future studies. The second conclusion is that Indonesian teenagers like K-pop largely because of its appearance, rather than on ideological grounds.

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