

# Analyzing Idolization and Mental Health in Bandung's K-Pop Fans: Social Cognitive Perspectives in Communication

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## Abstract

K-Pop has become a global phenomenon, with its popularity continuing to grow worldwide. According to a survey conducted in Indonesia by the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange; MCST (South Korea) in 2019, 59% of respondents considered K-Pop to be very popular in their country. K-Pop has been found to have positive psychosocial outcomes for fans, including increased happiness, self-expression, and social connectedness. Mental health is very important to adolescents. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), A state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being known as mental health influences our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as well as how we respond to stress, interact with others, and make decisions. The phenomenon of idolization is especially characteristic of adolescents. The objects of idolization come from various domains of life such as sport, entertainment, music, etc. The purpose of this study is to determine whether adolescents understand about positive mental health and the positive side of idolization. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach and uses Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) alongside with Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT).

Keywords- Idolization, Mental Health, K-Pop.

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## Abstrak

*K-Pop telah menjadi fenomena global, dengan popularitasnya yang terus berkembang di seluruh dunia. Menurut survei yang dilakukan di Indonesia oleh Yayasan Korea untuk Pertukaran Budaya Internasional; MCST (Korea Selatan) pada tahun 2019, 59% responden menganggap K-Pop sangat populer di negara mereka. K-Pop telah terbukti memberikan hasil psikososial yang positif bagi para penggemarnya, termasuk peningkatan kebahagiaan, ekspresi diri, dan hubungan sosial. Kesehatan mental sangat penting bagi remaja. Menurut Pusat Pengendalian dan Pencegahan Penyakit (CDC), keadaan emosional, psikologis, dan kesejahteraan sosial yang dikenal sebagai kesehatan mental memengaruhi pikiran, perasaan, dan perilaku kita serta bagaimana kita merespons stres, berinteraksi dengan orang lain, dan membuat keputusan. Fenomena pengidolaan merupakan ciri khas remaja. Objek pengidolaan berasal dari berbagai bidang kehidupan seperti olahraga, hiburan, musik, dll. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah remaja memahami tentang kesehatan mental yang positif dan sisi positif dari idolisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi dan menggunakan Teori Kognitif Sosial (Social Cognitive Theory/SCT) bersama dengan Teori Kognitif-Perilaku (Cognitive-Behavioral Theory/CBT).*

*Kata Kunci- Idolisasi, Kesehatan Mental, K-Pop.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

K-Pop has become a worldwide phenomenon, with a huge following in locations like Bandung, Indonesia, where 59% of participants in a 2019 survey said it was extremely popular. K-Pop is shown to have profoundly favorable benefits on fans' mental health, beyond its catchy tunes and energetic performances. These advantages include greater happiness, self-expression, and social connectivity. Fanbases like @Off\_exobandung in Bandung, for example, are prime examples of this optimism; they arrange events that develop friendship and provide occasional opportunities to interact with idols. Despite unfavorable preconceptions, these fans exhibit admirable conduct on the internet, highlighting the necessity of a wider acknowledgement of K-Pop's positive effects and a move away from unjustified stigmas.

The researcher uses questions about overcoming mental obstacles, encouraging personal development, and achieving happiness to investigate adolescent impressions of positive mental health in Bandung. The study, which is based on the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, which emphasizes the interaction between ideas, feelings, and behaviors, will concentrate on developing resilient cognitive patterns, embracing adaptive behaviors, and confronting harmful thinking patterns in order to enhance general wellbeing.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory, which describes the complex mental, emotional, and social changes that occur between the ages of 12 and 25, is the basis for the study of adolescent psychology. According to this concept, every stage offers distinct developmental tasks that lead people toward confrontational crises, which are essential for personal development. Erikson specifically highlights the significance of resolving identity crises in adolescence (ages 15 to 25), positing that individuals who are able to forge a stable self-identity demonstrate improved resilience, self-awareness, confidence, and decision-making skills. Notably, adolescents use social media and technology in today's digital age as tools for academic progress, communication, and information sharing, which further shapes their developmental path. (Erikson et al. in Desmita, 2013)

This research will focus on @Off\_exobandung, Offc. EXO-L Bandung is a K-popers community created for people in the city of Bandung. This community has existed since January 4, 2012 and has many activities and also many members who join this K-Pop community. Although this community has organized many activities that make its members happy, no specific survey has been conducted to find out whether K-Pop can have a positive influence on people who consume the content. Therefore, the reason the researcher chose to conduct research from members of the @off\_exobandung community is to obtain data on whether the act of idolization has positive effects on the mental health of those who consume K-Pop content.

Idolizing someone can provide a sense of inspiration that can boost one's mood and positive emotions. When one has an idol, it can be a source of motivation, hope, and joy in everyday life. Through the process of idolizing, individuals may feel connected to something bigger than themselves, which in turn can improve their mental and emotional well-being. While on the topic of idolization, the researcher will apply a Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which is most appropriate for this idolization phenomenon, because the focus of this research revolves around modeling, influences, and dependencies.

Albert Bandura created the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which is a theory that places an emphasis on the contributions that social experience, mutual dependence, and observational learning contribute to the formation of personality and behavior. According to SCT, people can learn from both their own experiences and by seeing the actions and outcomes of others. Because this study involves the subject of idolization in examining how adolescents in Bandung understand positive mental health. Based on the Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, questions about mental health, overcoming adversity, personal development, and happiness will be asked. In order to improve psychological well-being and general mental health, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) emphasizes the relationship between ideas, feelings, and behaviors. It promotes the development of healthy cognitive patterns, the adoption of adaptive responses to obstacles, and the challenge of negative thought processes.

The purpose of this research is to find out whether adolescents of @Off\_exobandung can understand about positive mental health and the positive side of idolizing K-Pop stars.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Mass Communication

According to Gerbner in (Ardianto et al., 2017), mass communication is the technology-driven production and broad dissemination of communication messages to a large audience. It is characterized by its universality, anonymity of communicators, and capacity for unification. Its generalist substance, wide target appeal, and primarily one-way transmission through media like newspapers and television are among its key attributes. Mass communication fosters social connections and information sharing, but it may also oversimplify problems, stifle debate, and raise problems with truth and portrayal. Essential to the development of society, it has undergone revolutionary stages from print to digital, with seminal technologies like television and the internet redefining interactions and opening the door for "new media." (Onyejelem, 2018)

### B. Health Communication

Health communication is an organized attempt to improve public health behavior through the use of a variety of widely accepted communication theories and techniques, including mass and interpersonal communication, as well as disease prevention, health promotion, health maintenance, and facility selection. (Harahap et al. in Wahyuningsih, 2022). The internet, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), radio, television, newspapers, and other forms of media can all be used to spread health-related information. Asyar in (Wahyuningsih, 2022) states that communication media can be categorized into four groups; Visual media, Audio media, Audio-visual media, Multimedia.

### C. Mental Health

Mental health relates to the way we think, feel, and perform in the various life situations we face on a daily basis. It also relates to how we perceive ourselves, our own lives, and others. Just like physical health, mental health is an important aspect in every phase of one's life as it involves coping with stress, relating to others, and making decisions. Killander in (Yusuf, 2018:27), defines mentally healthy individuals and he refers to them as normal people. These are people who, when the difficulties of everyday life become bothersome, show emotional maturity, acceptance of reality, appreciation of living in community, and a sense of control over life. There are several characteristics of a healthy mentality which are avoiding symptoms of mental disorders, can adjust themselves, developing potential as much as possible and achieving personal and other people's happiness.

### D. Social Cognitive Theory

Based on the idea that cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors influence learning, Albert Bandura created the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1991). Bandura proposed that almost all learning events may be observed by looking at other people's conduct and the results of it, in contrast to the old psychological theories that focused on learning through direct experience (Bandura, 1986). Humans are the managers of their own behaviors, according to the Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights that observational learning is more complicated than simple imitation (Bandura, 2001). Bandura has identified a number of concepts that are essential for learning based on this theory, which includes observational learning, self-regulation, self-efficacy, reciprocal determinism, and behavioral outcomes. K-Pop fans that look up to celebrities may experience these four phenomena. K-Pop fans often pick up new habits from the celebrities they look up to. They often copy their style choices, attitudes, and other traits. If individuals witness their idols get rewards for doing certain behaviors, they may also replicate the habit more frequently. Modeling oneself after an idol has both positive and negative consequences. If K-Pop followers realize that their idols actions may result in consequences, they will probably stop copying them. They will probably quit copying the actions of their idols as a result of this.

#### E. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory

Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, also known as cognitive behavioral therapy, combines the two distinct psychological fields of behaviorism and cognitive approaches. The combination of the two approaches was started in the early 1960s by Aaron Beck; it offers specific skills that individuals can learn, practice, and use for managing behavioral and emotional problems. CBT emphasizes the interconnectedness of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, offering strategies like cognitive restructuring to promote healthier thinking patterns. It also focuses on improving social relationships and addressing emotional triggers behind behaviors, aiding in the development of effective coping mechanisms and potentially reducing crime and violence (Milkman & Wanberg, 2007). There are also a few key points that we have to remember, which are the recognition and restructuring of negative thought patterns, development of coping strategies, emphasis on problem-solving skills, and focus on changing behaviors to improve mental health outcomes. These elements work together to address both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of challenges faced by individuals.

#### F. Celebrity Worship / Idolization

Although the terms "celebrity worship" and "idolization" are the same, the term "worship" is now more commonly used because non-K-pop fans view K-pop fans as aggressive and obsessive. Worship and modeling are the two main pillars of idolization, which is more than just listening to music and learning the basic elements of it, which also represent a typical appreciation of music. An abnormally high level of respect and adoration for an idol is referred to as worship. This can be demonstrated by actions like diligently gathering knowledge and items about the idol or trying to meet them in person. Modeling is the urge to imitate the idol, which can take the form of copying the activities, speech, attire, hairdo, and other social behavioral patterns of the idolized figures. Therefore, idolization can generally be shown in a variety of ways, depending on factors such as culture, age, gender, and surroundings (Raviv et al., 1996), while celebrity worship is a type of obsession with celebrities that results from one-sided relationships between a person and the characters they regard as their idol. Celebrity worship is the act of obsessing over the lives of those who develop personalities, identities, connections, and loyalty through activities including reading, watching, and listening to their idol's content. (Maltby et al., 2005). According to (McCutcheon et al., 2002), celebrity worship is influenced by three factors; Age, People with low social skills, and Gender.

### III. METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

#### A. Research Method

The method used in this study is a qualitative one. Qualitative methods provide descriptive information that may be observed by researchers, like statements or voice recordings from individuals or behaviors. The qualitative approach looks for and examines information in greater detail as opposed to gathering a lot of data. Qualitative research methods are a descriptive data gathering approach that tries to generate a thorough and detailed description of a phenomenon, as defined by (Sugiyono, 2013). With this approach, the meaning, interpretation, and experience of the topic being studied are given more attention. (Sugiyono, 2013) highlights in his book *Quantitative, Qualitative, and R&D study Methods* that qualitative methods give researchers a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape study participants. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative methods are divided into five kinds, namely phenomenological research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study and narrative research.

#### B. Research Approach

In this research, the research approach used is the phenomenological method. The aim of phenomenological study is to investigate people's deepest understanding of the experience and its significance. In phenomenological research, a phenomenon is defined as an experience or event that becomes visible to the subject. Phenomenology has a place and function in a variety of applications such as the study of philosophy, attitudes toward life, and research methodologies. Focusing on human life experiences, the phenomenological approach is a qualitative

research tradition with philosophical and psychological roots (sociology). Data collection techniques for the phenomenological method are in-depth interviews and observation (Pujileksono, 2015).

C. Unit of Analysis and Sampling Technique

- Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis can be interpreted as something related to the focus or component being studied.

*Table 1. Unit of Analysis*

Unit Analysis	Sub Analysis
Positive Mental health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid Symptoms of Mental Disorders</li> <li>2. Self-Adjustment</li> <li>3. Develop Potentials</li> <li>4. Achieve Personal Happiness</li> </ol>
Needs and Motivation of Idolizing K-pop stars	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information</li> <li>2. Personal Identity</li> <li>3. Social Integrity and Interaction</li> <li>4. Entertainment</li> </ol>

- Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling will be used in the research project for choosing informants. The process of choosing samples based on certain criteria or considerations is known as purposeful sampling. According to Sugiyono (2013) purposive sampling is a sample technique that involves multiple considerations.

The specific criteria are:

1. Individuals who have liked K-Pop for at least 5 years.
2. Individuals who enjoys K-Pop activities (Concerts, Fan events, Stream songs, etc.)
3. Aged around 15 - 25 years old.
4. Residing in Bandung.

D. Data Collecting

Data collecting is an essential step in the research process that is necessary to make the study successful. To gain trustworthy and dependable data, the appropriate data sources and methods must be used. Since gathering data is the primary goal of research, data collection is still a strategic phase, according to (Ghony and Almanshur, 2012:164) in the book *Qualitative Research Methods*. Primary and secondary sources may be used in data collection, depending on the data source. The researcher will use observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation to collect the data for this research.

E. Informant Data

*Table 2. Informant Data*

No.	Name	Age	Years of liking K-Pop
1.	Penta	18	5 years
2.	Cornelia	19	5 years
3.	Nadia	25	10 years
4.	Raysa	21	12 years
5.	Agnes	23	7 years
6.	Alyssa	22	10 years

F. Data Analysis and Data Validity

Researchers use the Miles and Huberman data analysis process to analyze qualitative data continuously until completion. Tasks include data reduction, visualization, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2017).

In this study the researcher used triangulation as the data validity technique. Triangulation is a term used to describe a method of gathering data that combines different methods of gathering data with pre-existing data

sources. When data is gathered while being tested for trustworthiness, that is, when data is verified using a variety of data sources and data gathering methods.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### A. Results from Positive Mental Health

- Avoid Symptoms of Mental Disorders

Several coping mechanisms were identified among the informants, showcasing varied approaches to dealing with difficult situations. Alyssa turns to physical activities like running and horseback riding, while Raysa finds comfort in positive thoughts, fun activities, and confiding in friends. On the other hand, music serves as a common coping method for four informants, who use it as a way to express their emotions and escape. Penta and Cornelia place a high value on using music to take care of themselves, Nadia mixes music with socializing and hobbies, while Agnes specifically brings up K-Pop as a diversion from mental health issues. The popularity of music as a coping strategy indicates that it is useful for relating to and calming people's emotional states, emphasizing music's function as a medium for emotional expression and comfort for those going through difficult times.

- Self-Adjustment

The process of changing one's behavior, beliefs, or emotions in response to obstacles or changes is known as self-adjustment. The researcher asked the six informants on how they adapt and make positive changes when they are faced with challenging situations. How one person adjusts themselves to a situation may vary. Most of the informants will talk to their close ones to adjust to a new situation, while others may set goals for them to achieve, and lastly, someone may look at the situation in a bright light and think positively.

- Develop Potentials

The informants talked on how following their passions had improved their mental health. While Cornelia views makeup as a relaxing art form that increases confidence, Penta finds comfort in cooking. Nadia highlights how pursuing a career she likes might help her feel less stressed. Though Raysa acknowledges the difficulties of her academic endeavors, she also values the personal development they have provided. Agnes demonstrates how consolation can be found in cultural pursuits as she turns to K-pop for comfort amid trying circumstances. Alyssa discusses her experiences of self-discovery throughout the pandemic and emphasizes the value of finding joy in whatever you do. When taken as a whole, their narratives highlight the relationship between mental health and pursuing one's passions and demonstrate how this leads to resilience and personal development.

- Achieve Personal Happiness

The informant's experiences show the various ways people use in order to achieve their own happiness. Penta finds happiness and friendship can be developed by preparing and sharing meals. Cornelia effortlessly incorporates K-Dramas and K-Pop into her everyday routines, finding them to be both entertaining and inspirational. Raysa treasures her time spent with loved ones and uses writing as a way to express her thoughts, whereas Nadia sets aside certain hours for reading and games. K-Pop is a favorite genre of Agnes and Alyssa, who find joy and relaxation in its rhythms and energy. When taken as a whole, these thoughts illustrate how finding personal happiness is a complex process where one's own interests, relationships, and daily routines come together to produce happy and fulfilling moments.

##### B. Results form Needs and Motivation of idolizing K-pop Stars

- Information

The informants show a range of reasons for idolizing K-Pop celebrities, each of which provides enjoyment and satisfies an individual's need. Cornelia is fascinated by idols' performances and sense of style, whereas Penta finds inspiration in their abilities and work ethics. Nadia wants to get closer by learning about her idols' everyday lives. Raysa enjoys seeing her idols grow because it creates a personal connection. Agnes shows how K-Pop helps its global followers bridge cultural divides. Alyssa is inspired to pursue her passion for dancing by the talent of her idols. All things considered, learning more about K-Pop idols improves fans' lives by inspiring and developing connections.

- Personal Identity / Self-Expression

The informants talked about their experiences and how idolizing K-Pop significantly influence people's sense of self and identity. For Penta and Cornelia, a stronger feeling of self and determination are developed by the characteristics and beliefs of K-Pop idols matching their own. Nadia's use of K-Pop music to improve her mood demonstrates how healing it can be for improving one's emotional condition. Raysa is inspired by her idols' many skills, which motivates her to pursue new interests and increase her diligence. Agnes emphasizes the sense of community by showing how fandoms build similar identities and promote empathy and unity among members. Alyssa's love for certain idols, such Kai and Baekhyun, has a direct impact on her sense of style and enthusiasm for dancing. When taken as a whole, these stories highlight the significant influence that K-Pop idolization has on fans' personal identities, morals, and ways of expression, demonstrating the field's diverse influence.

- **Social Integrity and Interaction**

The informants emphasize the strong ties and sense of belonging that K-Pop fandoms create. Penta and Cornelia, two fans of the same idol, enjoy the bonds and mutual enthusiasm that these relationships have formed. Nadia and Raysa show how online platforms build international ties by enabling fans to talk about personal issues and create enduring friendships. Agnes and Alyssa emphasize the community-building and supporting aspects of fandoms, where a love of K-Pop idols creates deep bonds and a sense of acceptance. All things considered, these testimonies show how K-Pop goes beyond simple appreciation to create interpersonal relationships and a feeling of global community among fans.

- **Entertainment**

The informants talked about the various ways that idolizing K-pop stars can bring joy and fulfillment to fans' lives. Penta and Cornelia emphasize the joy that comes from seeing their favorite celebrities perform live as well as the close relationships they have with them. Nadia is so passionate about adding real experiences to her fandom that she even goes as far as gathering albums and attending concerts. Agnes enjoys the artistic originality, fashion, and humorous aspects that K-pop provides, while Raysa values the constant presence of K-pop music and entertaining material in her daily life. Through the immersive experience of concerts, Alyssa expresses the essence of K-pop entertainment in an easily understood way. When taken as a whole, these stories highlight the many and deep ways that K-pop fans of all ages and backgrounds may find pleasure, community, and enrichment from the genre.

### C. Discussions

- **Positive Mental Health Viewed from Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT)**

The results of the interview research underscore the intricate interplay between cognitive processes, behaviors, and mental health, aligning closely with the core tenets of Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT). The prominence of music, particularly K-Pop, as a therapeutic tool resonates with CBT's focus on restructuring harmful thought patterns and facilitating emotional regulation. The proactive approaches of informants like Penta, Cornelia, Nadia, Raysa, and Agnes, emphasizing goal-setting and assistance-seeking, mirror CBT's emphasis on problem-solving skills and resilience-building. Additionally, the pursuit of cultural interests and emotional expression among the informants reflects CBT's emphasis on coping strategy development and healthy behavioral adjustments. The collective findings highlight the practical applicability of CBT in promoting positive mental health outcomes by addressing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions. Overall, the research underscores CBT's significance in enhancing our understanding and approach to mental health development.

- **Needs and Motivation of Idolizing K-Pop Stars Viewed from Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

The Social Cognitive Theory, as explained by Tadayon Nabavi & Sadegh Bijandi (2023), offers profound insights into the dynamics of K-Pop idolization. It posits that social interactions and observational learning shape individuals' behaviors and beliefs, with self-regulation and self-efficacy playing pivotal roles in achieving goals. Cornelia's admiration for K-Pop idols' intricate performances exemplifies modeling, inspiring her to imitate their styles and routines. Similarly, Penta's emulation of idols' work ethics underscores observational learning, motivating her loyalty and determination. Alyssa's pursuit of dance, influenced by idols like Kai and Baekhyun, illustrates self-regulation as she aligns her goals with actions. Raysa's confidence in her abilities, nurtured by idols' success stories, showcases self-efficacy, empowering her to explore new

interests. The collective experiences of fans, from Nadia's mood-boosting playlists to Agnes's appreciation of K-Pop's global impact, reflect the interplay between behavior, cognition, and environment. This holistic understanding of K-Pop fandom underscores its significance in satisfying various needs and enhancing individual satisfaction within a dynamic global phenomenon.

## V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### A. Conclusion

From the research that researcher have conducted on the positive side of idolization on the mental health of their fans, the researcher can answer the problem identification about whether adolescents in @Off\_exobandung understand about positive mental health and the positive side of idolizing K-Pop stars. Based on the results of the research, K-Pop is very helpful in improving the mental well-being of its fans in several ways. Most of the time, to avoid stress and mental health issues, fans will engage in a variety of K-Pop-related activities, such as attending concerts, joining fan communities, and listening to music. Additionally, it is found that music, especially K-Pop, helps them control their emotions since they use it to distract themselves from negative emotions and maintain a positive emotional state. Since fans frequently mimic after their idols' traits such as determination, diligence, and dedication and see positive changes in their own life as a result, idolizing someone may help in personal development. Besides taking after their traits, fans can also adapt personal identity and self-expression like their idols. This is because they can get inspired by their idols fashion, lifestyle, and work ethics. Lastly, from liking K-Pop, they can develop social connections with other people. Since the K-Pop fandom is big so there are many communities, and fans may find a sense of belonging within the fandom, which enhances their social interaction and reduces feelings of loneliness. By joining a community, they will get to know more people that have the same interests as them and they will have that connection for a long time.

### B. Suggestions

The research emphasizes the positive effects of idolizing K-Pop and provides insights that the researcher hope it would be meaningful to readers, especially to K-Pop fans who may be experiencing mental health issues. Given the overwhelming discourse surrounding the negative aspects of K-Pop, the researcher argues for a more comprehensive investigation of its beneficial effects via more research. By exploring these positive aspects in greater detail, the goal is to promote a more thorough comprehension and appreciation of K-Pop, which ultimately lead to a change in viewpoint and improve fans' mental health.



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