# BISMA

# Attachment Styles and Parasocial Relationships among K-Pop Fans in Indonesia

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# ABSTRAK

Fenomena Korean Pop yang sedang ramai terjadi di seluruh dunia termasuk Indonesia telah menciptakan salah satu budaya baru di kalangan penggemarnya, yaitu budaya membangun hubungan parasosial dengan idola. Hubungan parasosial yang bersifat ilusi dan satu arah hanya dari sisi penggemar, dapat dilatarbelakangi oleh gaya kelekatan yang dimiliki individu selaku penggemar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat hubungan antara 4 jenis gaya kelekatan yaitu gaya kelekatan aman, gaya kelekatan cemas, gaya kelekatan terikat, dan gaya kelekatan lepas yang dijabarkan oleh Bartholomew dan Horowitz (1991) dengan hubungan parasosial pada fans K-Pop di Indonesia. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 378 fans K-Pop dari seluruh Indonesia yang diambil dengan purposive sampling. Alat ukur untuk gaya kelekatan yaitu Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) oleh Oudenhoven, Hofstra, dan Bakker (2003) yang sudah diadaptasi ke dalam Bahasa Indonesia oleh Fitriana dan Fitria (2016). parasosial Sedangkan hubungan diukur menggunakan Multidimensional Measure of Parasocial Relationship to a K-Pop Idol (MMPR-K-Pop) yang dikembangkan oleh Garcia, Bjork, dan Kazemitabar (2022). Hasil uji hipotesis menunjukkan adanya korelasi positif antara gaya kelekatan cemas dengan hubungan parasosial (r = 0,344; p<0,05) dan antara gaya kelekatan terikat dengan hubungan parasosial (r = 0,130, p<0,05), sedangkan terdapat korelasi negatif antara gaya kelekatan aman dengan hubungan parasosial (r = -0.150; p<0,05) dan antara gaya kelekatan lepas dengan hubungan parasosial (r = -0, 157; p < 0, 05).

#### ABSTRACT

The Korean Pop phenomenon that is currently happening all over the world including Indonesia has created a new culture among its fans, a culture of building parasocial relationships with their idols. Parasocial relationships that are illusory and one-sided relationships from the fan side only, could be influenced by the fans' attachment style. This study aims to analyze the relationships between the 4 types of attachment styles: secure attachment style, fearful attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, and dismissing attachment style according to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) with parasocial relationships among K-Pop fans in Indonesia. Samples in this study were 378 K-Pop fans from all over Indonesia who were taken with purposive sampling technique. Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) by Oudenhoven, Hofstra, and Bakker (2003) which has been adapted to Indonesian by Fitriana and Fitria (2016) were used as the tool to measure the attachment styles. Meanwhile, parasocial relationships were measured using the Multidimensional Measure of Parasocial Relationships to a K-Pop Idol (MMPR-K-Pop) developed by Garcia, Bjork, and Kazemitabar (2022). The results of this study showed that there are positive correlations between fearful attachment style (r = 0.344; p<0.05) and parasocial relationships and also between preoccupied attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = 0,130, p<0.05), while there are negative correlations between secure attachment style and parasocial relationship (r = -0,150; p<0,05) and also between dismissing attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = -0,157; p < 0,05).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The South Korean Culture Wave has been increasing in recent years. Data reported by the Korea Foundation shows a total of 100 million members in 1,835 fanclubs related to the Korean Wave throughout the world as of September 2020 (Antee, 2021; Choi et al., 2016). Its development in Indonesia can be seen from data released at the end of the year by. Indonesia is ranked fifth among the countries that most often talk about Korean Wave cultural products such as films, dramas and music or what is known as Korean Pop. Indonesia has also been the country with the most Korean Pop fans in 2021 (Allison, 2023; Oh et al., 2019). These data show that the interest of Indonesian people who follow the Korean Wave is mostly in Korean Pop music content or what is more often called K-Pop. Previous study explains that K-Pop has its own charm from the music presented with high quality, innovative performances, to contents outside of stage performances (Kumala et al., 2022). The point of K-Pop's popularity also lies in the participatory culture and the culture of parasocial relationships carried out by fandom or groups of K-Pop fans (Andina, 2019; Hoskin et al., 2022). Individuals represent participation in a social group by joining the fandom of a particular music group and taking an active role in the development of their idols because individuals tend to like a group or music genre that represents their personality and identity. That is why parasocial relationships are very close to fandom culture and K-Pop popularity, apart from because K-Pop music and groups were created with the aim of fulfilling the persona desired by people at large so that they can reach as large an audience as possible (Andina, 2019; Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021).

Parasocial relationships are something commonly experienced by individuals at the early adult stage, because there is a need to create social relationships with other people but this is difficult to do in a real environment so these relationships are built by individuals with their idols (Park, S., Ryu & McChesney, 2019; Schmid & Klimmt, 2011). The main point of parasocial relationships according to its originators, is that relationships are one-way or non-dialectical, controlled by media personas, and cannot develop towards real interaction. Previous study explains that parasocial relationships are caused by parasocial interactions that occur repeatedly with individuals from their idols which create attachment as friends and feelings of intimacy for the individual (Toraman, 2020). People can feel that their idol is interacting and talking to them directly so they perceive positive words from their idol as motivation and inspiration aimed at them (Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021; Larasati et al., 2022). Other study explain that parasocial relationships are close, one-sided relationships with commitment and feelings of connection that individuals have to their idols (Wu et al., 2022). Parasocial relationships are built by aspects of affection, behavior, cognitive, and decision making, such as in the formation of individual attitudes towards the people around them, so that parasocial relationships are said to be an extension of the type of social relationships that are carried out in real terms with the people around them. Other study states that the motivation to build social relationships, self-esteem, similarities with idols, attachment styles, and communication that occurs between fans are factors that influence the occurrence of parasocial relationships between individuals and their idols (Fahri & Qusyairi, 2019; McLean et al., 2018).

Attachment is an emotional bond that occurs between two people who have the same feelings towards each other and do things together to maintain that attachment. According to previous study, there are 4 types of adult attachment styles, namely secure attachment style, fearful attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, and dismissing attachment style (Santos & Schlesinger, 2021; Zhu et al., 2021). These four attachment styles were developed from 2 dimensions of attachment identified, namely the model of self (the individual's view of themselves) and the model of others (the individual's view of others), and viewed from the level of anxiety and avoidance in building connection (Fauzi & Tarigan, 2023; Saarni, 2014). According to other study attachment style is the human tendency to have a way of building strong affective bonds with certain people around them (Acar, 2011; Wardhani et al., 2022). The attachment style in adult individuals is applied to those closest to them such as friends and partners, but this attachment style was developed from the early stages with their parents. People who as children had parents or other attachment figures who were present and cared for them well, can develop a healthy relational model and develop a secure attachment style which is a balance between the ability to build comfortable relationships with other people without becoming dependent on other's presence. On the other hand, people who receive rejection or inconsistent responses from their parents or attachment figures during childhood tend to develop insecure attachment styles that avoid close relationships or are too dependent on other people, namely fearful attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, and dismissing attachment style (Moreira et al., 2018; Perdana & Kartidjo, 2022).

Previous study found that the attachment style in early adult people is related to their parasocial relationships with their idols, so that the intensity of the parasocial relationships can be predicted from the individual's attachment styles (Saarni, 2014). People with a secure attachment style can fulfill relational needs and gain benefits from building relationships such as affection, self-disclosure, and

connectedness through social relationships with people around them so that they tend not to need onesided relations such as parasocial relationships (Setiati, 2015; Suwanda, 2015). However, people with insecure attachment styles tend to utilize parasocial relationships as a substitute for social relationships that they found difficult to build in real life.

Other study states that people with fearful attachment style tend to develop higher level of parasocial relationships because they have never been able to build a real romantic relationship (Moreira et al., 2018). With an idol they have never met in person, they can feel affection, receive attention and motivation just like things that happen in a real romantic relationship without having to commit to building a relationship with another person. People with fearful attachment style form strong parasocial relationships with their idols because they do not need to worry about themselves getting hurt if they get too close to other people (Deichmann & Ahnert, 2021; Espericueta-Medina et al., 2020). People with a preoccupied attachment style also tend to form higher parasocial relationships compared to individuals with a secure attachment style and dismissing attachment style, because individuals with preoccupied attachment style have a tendency to be very attached to people who they think can increase their selfimage, improve their view of themselves, and fulfill the desire for intimacy with others (Park et al., 2015; Wardhani et al., 2022). People with preoccupied attachment style tend to be very possessive as fans and involve themselves too much in every activity and decisions made by their idols even though they have never met them in person. This is caused by the tendency of individuals with preoccupied attachment style to become very dependent on their attachment figures. Their idols are considered as a close friend who is always supported because their idols provide motivation, support, and fulfill their desires to build close relationships (Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021; Larasati et al., 2022). However, not only do they feel responsible for supporting their idols, individuals with preoccupied attachment style also feel a strong sense of belonging to their idols so they need to always involve themselves for their idols.

Meanwhile, people with a dismissing attachment style do not build parasocial relationships with their idols because they feel that they can be independent, do not need close relationships, and do not easily trust other people including their idols. A study by previous study explains that people with dismissing attachment style tend to be attracted to idols who are identified like themselves, usually idols who have an independent personal (Wardhani et al., 2022). People with dismissing attachment style can develop great admiration for idols who have similarities with them, gain inspiration from these idols, but they are not building parasocial relationships with idols (Kumala et al., 2022). However, there are also studies that state that people with dismissing attachment style tend to utilize parasocial relationships to gain a sense of connection without having to build close relationships with other people in order to minimize the threat that can occur in close relationships such as hurting their self-esteem, emotional exhaustion, and dependency with others.

Previous studies have shown several points regarding the correlations and influence of attachment styles on parasocial relationships, that secure attachment style and dismissing attachment style are negatively correlated with parasocial relationships, while fearful attachment style and preoccupied attachment style are positively correlated with parasocial relationships. This current research aims to expand the study of attachment styles and their correlation with parasocial relationships, especially in the context of the K-Pop phenomenon which has been developing in recent years. The novelty of this study by seeing that parasocial relationships have an impact that is not temporary but long-term for K-Pop fans and that there is not much research on parasocial in Indonesia motivated the implementation of this research. Attachment styles used as an independent variable because of the influence of attachment style which strengthens parasocial interactions into parasocial relationships, so this research will examine the correlation between attachment styles (X) and parasocial relationships (Y) among K-Pop fans in Indonesia.

#### 2. METHOD

This quantitative research with correlational approach aims to determine the relationship between attachment styles (independent variable) and parasocial relationships (dependent variable) among K-Pop fans in Indonesia. The research participants were 378 K-Pop fans who were members of the Telegram application group "KPOPERS INDONESIA". Participants are people who have been fans of K-Pop idols for more than a year, are in the early adult stage (18-23 years old), also actively use social media and follow particular media or applications about K-Pop to interact and obtain information about their idols. The non-probability sampling technique used in taking participants was purposive sampling. The number of participant samples was calculated using the Isaac and Michael formula (Sugiyono, 2009). The scale used to measure attachment styles in this research is the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ) which has been translated into Indonesian. The ASQ scale was developed to measure four types of attachment styles

identified, namely secure attachment style, fearful attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, and dismissing attachment style. The ASQ scale consists of 24 items that measure each attachment style separately (7 items for secure attachment style, 5 items for fearful attachment style, 7 for preoccupied attachment style, and 5 items for dismissing attachment style). The reliability coefficient of the Indonesian translation of the ASQ scale for each attachment style is 0.58 for secure attachment style, 0.69 for fearful attachment style, 0.65 for preoccupied attachment style, and 0.58 for dismissing attachment style. Items on the ASQ scale are measured with 5 alternative Likert scale answers, namely 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The research began by conducting a series of literature reviews regarding attachment styles and parasocial relationships. An initial survey was also carried out by distributing questionnaires filled in by 231 respondents and interviews with 5 K-Pop fans to explore the phenomenon of parasocial relationships that occur among K-Pop fans in Indonesia. Then, the MMPR-K-Pop scale was prepared by translating it into Indonesian and testing it with experts before being used in this research. The ASQ scale can be used directly because it uses the Indonesian version for this research. The ASQ scale and MMPR-K-Pop scale were distributed to participants using an online questionnaire. The Informed Consent section is also included in the questionnaire. The data obtained was then processed using the SPSS version 25, to be analyzed and reported systematically. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistical tests in order to describe the categories and levels of attachment style (X) and parasocial relationships (Y) among K-Pop fans in Indonesia as participants. The product moment-Spearman correlation test was used to see the relationship between each attachment style (X) and parasocial relationships (Y) because the data was not normally distributed (p<0.05) when the assumption test was carried out.

# 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The preoccupied attachment style was the most common among 179 participants with a percentage of 47.4%. Apart from the types of attachment styles which each stand alone, there were also 4 participants (1.1%) who had secure attachment style scores and dismissing attachment style scores which were the same size so they were categorized as having a positive model of self, 27 participants (7.1%) who had same secure attachment style scores and preoccupied attachment style scores so they were categorized as having a positive model of others, and 1 participant (0.3%) was categorized as having an insecure attachment style because they had same scores for fearful attachment style, preoccupied attachment style, and dismissing attachment style but had a small secure attachment style score. Data was obtained by comparing the scores of each attachment styles and the highest score indicates the attachment style owned by the individual. The descriptive analysis result can be seen in Table 1.

Attachment Styles	Number of Participants	Percentage
Secure Attachment Style	153	40.5%
Fearful Attachment Style	8	2.1%
Preoccupied Attachment Style	179	47.4%
Dismissing Attachment Style	6	1.6%
Positive Model of Self	4	1.1%
Positive Model of Others	27	7.1%
Insecure Attachment Style	1	0.3%
Total	378	

#### **Table 1.** Types of Attachment Style in Participants

Categorization was carried out on each attachment styles to determine the high-low intensity of the type of attachment styles owned by the participants. Most participants were in the moderate levels for each attachment styles, including secure attachment style (66.4%), fearful attachment style (65.3%), preoccupied attachment style (69.8%), and dismissing attachment style (71 .2%). Figure 1 shows the results of attachment styles categorizations.

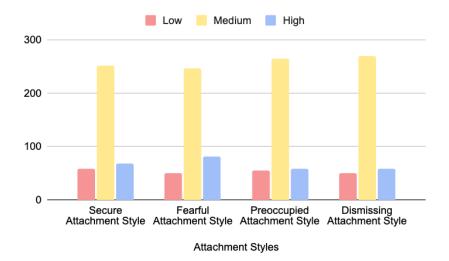


Figure 1. Attachment Styles Categorizations

Categorization was also carried out on parasocial relationships to determine the level of parasocial relationships experienced by participants towards their idols. Most participants had moderate levels of parasocial relationships (66.9%). Figure 2 shows the result of parasocial relationships categorization.

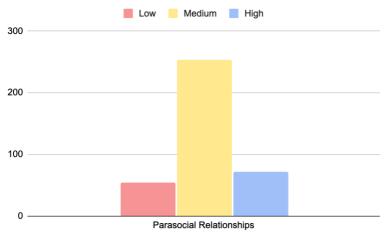


Figure 2. Parasocial Relationships Categorization

The results of the normality test show that the attachment styles variable and the parasocial relationships variable have data that is not normally distributed (p<0.05). So, the data is then tested as non-parametric data. Information can be seen in Table 2.

## Table 2. Normality Test Results

Variables		Asymp. Sig (P)	
Attac	Attachment Styles		
a.	Secure	0.000	
b.	Fearful	0.000	
c.	Preoccupied	0.000	
d.	Dismissing	0.000	
Para	social Relationships	0.023	

The results of the linearity test show that there is a linear relationship between fearful attachment style and parasocial relationships, as show in with a linearity coefficient of 0.000 (p<0.05) and a deviation from linearity coefficient of 0.095 (p>0.05). There is also a linear relationship between preoccupied attachment style and parasocial relationships with a linearity coefficient of 0.011 (p<0.05) and a deviation from linearity coefficient of 0.434 (p>0.05). Meanwhile, in the secure attachment style

with parasocial relationships and the dismissing attachment style with parasocial relationships, there are imperfect linear relationships because the linearity coefficient meets the requirements (p<0.05) but the deviation from linearity coefficient does not meet the linearity requirements. More detailed information can be seen in Table 3.

#### **Table 3.** Linearity Test Results

Between Groups	Linearity	Deviation from Linearity	
Secure Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.000	0.000	
Fearful Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.000	0.095	
Preoccupied Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.011	0.434	
Dismissing Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.000	0.000	

The results of the correlation test for each sub-variable of attachment styles show a significant correlation (p<0.05) with the parasocial relationships variable. The correlation coefficient between fearful attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = 0.344) shows a sufficient correlation, while the correlation coefficient between secure attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = -0.150), preoccupied attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = -0.150), also dismissing attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = -0.157) show weak correlations. The results of the correlation test also show that there is a negative correlation between secure attachment style and dismissing attachment style with parasocial relationships, and there is a positive correlation between fearful attachment style and preoccupied attachment style with parasocial relationships. Information can be seen in Table 4.

### Table 4. Correlation Test Results

Correlations	Correlation Coefficients (r)	Significance (P)
Secure Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	-0.150	0.002
Fearful Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.344	0.000
Preoccupied Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	0.130	0.006
Dismissing Attachment Style*Parasocial Relationships	-0.157	0.001

#### Discussion

Attachment styles are stated to be a predictor of the intensity of parasocial relationships and can be called a factor in the occurrence of parasocial relationships between individuals and their idols (Garza & Travis, 2019; Westenberg & Rutten, 2017). The results of this research also show that each type of attachment style is correlated with parasocial relationships in the context of K-Pop fans in Indonesia.

Based on the research results, secure attachment style is negatively correlated with parasocial relationships (r = -0.150; p<0.05), meaning that K-Pop fans tend to have low levels of parasocial relationships if they have a strong secure attachment style. According to previous study people who have a secure attachment style are individuals with positive internal working models, who find it easy to get close emotionally to other people and can face social relationships with confidence (Acar, 2011; Aldabbus, 2018). Other study further explained that people with a secure attachment style fulfill social relationship needs such as a sense of connection, affection, and self-disclosure without feeling insecure through real relationships with the people around them (Wardhani et al., 2022). This is what causes a secure attachment style to be negatively correlated with parasocial relationships, because K-Pop fans with a secure attachment style tend not to need one-sided relationships such as parasocial relationships.

Dismissing attachment style also has a negative correlation with parasocial relationships (r = -0.157; p<0.05) according to the results of this study. This negative correlation can be interpreted as meaning that K-Pop fans with a strong dismissing attachment style tend to have low levels of parasocial relationships. People with a dismissing attachment style tend to avoid building close relationships with other people because they have a negative view of other people (model of others), and feel comfortable without being dependent on other people (Park et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2014). Individuals with a dismissing attachment style tend to feel that they do not need close relationships and feel that they can live independently, so they tend not to want to build social relationships, including one-way ones such as parasocial relationships, even though they only occur through the media.

In contrast, a positive correlation occurred between fearful attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = 0.344; p<0.05) also between preoccupied attachment style and parasocial relationships (r = 0.130, p<0.05). A linear relationship also occurred between fearful attachment style and preoccupied attachment style with parasocial relationships (p>0.05). These results mean that K-Pop fans with strong fearful attachment style and also K-Pop fans with strong preoccupied attachment style tend to build high levels of parasocial relationships with their idols (Maas et al., 2022; Winarno et al., 2022). People with fearful attachment style have negative internal working models, tend to have difficulty building social relationships because of concerns about themselves and also have difficulty giving trust to others (Acar, 2011; Aldabbus, 2018). By the correlation coefficient, it can be seen that fearful attachment style is the sub-variable that can give rise to parasocial relationships among K-Pop fans in Indonesia compared to other sub-variables of attachment styles, with a percentage of 34.4%. So, people with fearful attachment style tend to be able to build intense parasocial relationships with their idols because they get affection, a sense of connection, motivation, and perceived support without feeling worried because they don't need to build commitment with other people (Khikmah, 2020; Susanto et al., 2021).

The preoccupied attachment style is also positively correlated with parasocial relationships. People with preoccupied attachment style are individuals with a negative view of themselves but a positive view of others, so they tend to be very dependent on other people in their social relationships (Aldabbus, 2018; Sukamolson, 2007). According to research by other study people with preoccupied attachment style tend to be fans or very possessive fans because they are very dependent on their idols who are seen as figures who fulfill their needs and desires to build close relationships (Heong et al., 2020; Rini et al., 2020). People with preoccupied attachment style feel they cannot live without their idols because they feel a strong sense of ownership with the idol.

In this research, it is known that the majority of parasocial relationships held by K-Pop fans in Indonesia are in the moderate levels (66.9%). Parasocial relationships in this category mean that K-Pop fans have a sense of attachment or connection to their idols and also have a mindset that interprets the existence of their idols as certain figures in their personal lives, whether as friends or companions (Ardhiyansyah et al., 2021; Hoskin et al., 2022). Behavioral aspects are also shown by K-Pop fans, such as interacting with idols even if only in one direction through the media, providing support for their idols, and interacting with fellow K-Pop fans. Apart from that, the meaning and existence of idols for K-Pop fans influences the decision-making patterns carried out by individuals, for example in terms of preferring to buy products related to idols, following idols' tastes or food choices, and following lifestyle patterns or activities carried out by their idols (Jothi & Chanthiramathi, 2019; Wójcik et al., 2021).

This research has the implication that parasocial relationships can be explained in terms of attachment styles, because an individual's attachment style to other people around him can also influence the individual's social relationship patterns, including those that occur in an unreal way such as parasocial relationships (Kumala et al., 2022; Larasati et al., 2022). People can fulfill their social and psychological needs from their social relationships, so that parasocial relationships can also fulfill their needs if the individual's social situation is less supportive (Darner, 2014; Li, 2022). Attachment styles are formed in individuals from an early age, so it is a good idea to develop a secure attachment style between parents and children so that they can carry over into adulthood and have a better understanding of building social relationships with other people (Saarni, 2014; Wardhani et al., 2022).

Even in adulthood, secure attachment style can be relearned and formed with the closest people such as friends and partner to build good and healthy social relationships. In this way, individuals as fans have a healthier admiration for idol figures and avoid the negative impacts of parasocial relationships, such as consumptive behavior, social media addiction, and the celebrity worship phenomenon which is currently common among K-Pop fans. In K-Pop fans culture who nowadays had also numbers of positive impacts such as increasing empathy for mental health, learning to socialize and building interpersonal relationships with others, and forming individual identities as a result of a healthy fan culture.

Researchers realize that there are still limitations in this research. At the data collection process, information regarding gender of the participants was not collected so that descriptive results regarding gender could not be presented. Also this research is still limited to early adult stage and K-Pop fans so it cannot be generalized to explain the phenomenon of parasocial relationships in other age ranges or among fans other than K-Pop. The suggestions that can be given through this research is that K-Pop fans can use this research as a reference to improve social relationships with a secure attachment style towards the closest people around them such as friends or partners to reduce the formation of parasocial relationships with idols that are illusory or unreal. Apart from that, develop more K-Pop fan culture that is positive and beneficial for individuals and surroundings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research data analysis that has been carried out, the results show that secure attachment style and dismissing attachment style have a negative correlation with parasocial relationships among K-Pop fans in Indonesia. Meanwhile, fearful attachment style and preoccupied attachment style are positively correlated with parasocial relationships among K-Pop fans in Indonesia. The research results answered the research hypothesis, with significant correlation results (p<0.05). Suggestions for further research are to develop research on attachment styles and parasocial relationships in other age ranges, such as teenagers who are also developing K-Pop fan culture, or on attachment styles and parasocial relationships in contexts other than K-Pop fans. The data collected can also be added to include gender, intensity of media consumption, and others which can produce more detailed data as needed.

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