

# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF JOINING K-POP TWITTER FAN COMMUNITIES ON STUDENTS' READING SKILLS AND PERCEPTIONS: A MIXED-METHOD STUDY

**Bunga Putri Kinanthy**

*(Mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Unisma)*

Email: kinanthyputri1225@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This study aims to investigate the relationship between participation in K-pop fan communities on Twitter and college students' reading skills, as well as to find out detailed perspectives on its influence on their reading skills. This study used a mixed method, with a sample of 29 students who are active in K-pop and Twitter communities. Using purposive sampling based on specific criteria. Two instruments were used: a modified and validated questionnaire aimed at measuring students' participation and its impact on reading ability, and in-depth interviews to explore students' perceptions. The results of this study show that participation in K-pop fan communities on Twitter does not significantly affect students' reading ability, because there are other more influential factors such as the quality of interaction, reading interest, and individual motivation that play an important role. For future researchers, it is recommended to focus on a specific group of global fans and use methods such as narrative studies or case studies to gain a deeper understanding.

**Key Words:** K-pop, Twitter, Reading skills, Perceptions

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between cultures from all over the world due to the effects of globalization is increasing rapidly. The process of obtaining information supported by technological sophistication allows the exchange of information from one person to another, from one city to another, and even from one country to another only takes a few seconds. A clear example of globalization in the field of culture today is the rise of Korean culture among young people. Korea has attracted the attention of Indonesia and other countries around the world. According to Tuttle (2016), the phenomenon of K-Pop culture is caused by the rapid

globalization of Korean culture so that it can be spread and accepted by the global community thanks to technological advances.

The virtual world has made it possible for people to communicate across linguistic barriers, geographical boundaries, and physical distances. People interact online, especially the youngsters (Prensky, 2001; Xu et al., 2018). One popular online domain is fandom activity, where fans of a celebrity figure, idol, musician, model, or TV show gather to enthuse about their favorites (de Kloet & van Zoonen, 2007). This is a way for fans to show affection, admiration, and pride for their favorite idol. Fandom is a term to describe a community of fans who are highly dedicated and enthusiastic about something, such as a celebrity, artwork, movie, book, music, or even a specific topic. Fandom is formed when individuals share a strong interest and enthusiasm for a particular subject and interact with fellow fans. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a fandom is a community of individuals who share a strong passion for a specific person or thing.

K-pop, a popular South Korean music genre, has gained significant global attention. Its fusion of various musical styles and visually appealing performances have attracted a massive international following. The internet has played a crucial role in spreading K-pop culture worldwide, fostering the growth of numerous fandoms across different countries. The internet is commended for making K-pop culture a global sensation (Darmawan, 2022). Twitter has become a central platform for K-pop fans to connect, share information, and express their passion. The platform's user-friendly interface and real-time features make it ideal for engaging with the K-pop community. Many K-pop fans use English to communicate on Twitter, contributing to a globalized fan culture.

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between K-pop fan community participation on Twitter and the development of English reading skills among university students. Previous research conducted by Darmawan (2022), on "Writing Skill Development in K-pop Stan Twitter Communities." This research uses quantitative methods by distributing questionnaires to high school students who actively use Twitter and join the K-pop community. The results in this study revealed that most students agreed that the K-pop community on Twitter had a significant influence on their writing skills. Furthermore, in Faiza's research (2020) on "Stimulating English learning in the global K-pop community on Twitter." This research uses a qualitative method by interviewing 10 K-pop fans. The results of this study reveal that K-pop

stimulates fans to learn English by tweeting and following K-pop-related things. The main factors that make them eager to learn English are interest and curiosity about their idols' information. Because English skills are a bridge that connects them and their favorite idols. Therefore, to support their interest in K-pop, they must be proficient in English.

Based on the above research, the researcher is interested in exploring more about K-pop fans on Twitter in Indonesia who use English in their daily posts. This research focused on analyzing the impact of participation in the K-pop community on Twitter, especially from the university students' perspective, and the influence on their reading skills. The researcher utilized this platform to understand the extent to which the K-pop community on Twitter can influence university students to improve their reading skills. Therefore, this study aims to answer two research questions:

1. Is there any impact of joining K-pop fan community on Twitter to learners' reading skill?
2. How does the participants' participation in the K-pop fan community on Twitter influence their reading skill?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted mixed-method research with a sequential explanatory design. The researcher combined quantitative and qualitative to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. The first research question is the impact of joining K-pop fan community on Twitter, uses a quantitative design. While the qualitative design used to find out the perspective of students' participation in joining K-pop fan community in Twitter.

### **Participants**

This study focused on Indonesian university students majoring in English Education who had taken reading courses and were active members of K-Pop fan communities on Twitter. In the quantitative stage, a purposive sampling method was used to select 29 participants based on specific criteria, including active Twitter usage for at least a year, K-pop fandom membership for at least a year, and consistent English-language tweeting. For the qualitative stage, two participants were randomly chosen, one with the highest and one with the lowest scores from the quantitative questionnaire.

## **Instrument**

Data was collected using two instruments, a modified questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire adapted by Wardani & Sari (2020) and Rambitan (2013) research questionnaire, which has been modified and validated by experts and used to measure students' participation in K-pop fan communities and its impact on their English reading skills. Interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions of the community's influence on their reading abilities. For the interview questions, researcher used in-depth interviews adapted by Jenol and Pazil (2020) and Khoirunnisa (2023).

## **Data collection**

Data collection process in this study used questionnaires to collect data to determine the student's English reading skills. This questionnaire contains 29 closed-ended questions in Indonesian to make it easier for participants to understand. The questionnaire included sections on participant demographics, fan community participation, Twitter activity, and reading skills. A Likert scale was used for responses with a scale of 1-5. consisting of scale 1 means "strongly agree," scale 2 means "agree," scale 3 means "neutral," scale 4 means "disagree," and scale 5 means "strongly disagree." The research questionnaire was distributed online using WhatsApp and Twitter to make it more effective and to cover more distant participants so they could fill out the questionnaire without having to meet with the researcher. Interviews were conducted by taking samples from the questionnaire results using simple random sampling techniques. The interview conducted using a Google Meet with a duration of 20 minutes which recorded as evidence of the interview and data to be analyzed.

## **Data analysis**

The data from each variable was processed using SPSS after being organized in Microsoft Excel. Students' reading skill levels were determined from questionnaire scores, and the significance of differences between the reading skills of K-pop community participants on Twitter was analyzed using multiple linear regression. Interviews with representatives from high and low-scoring groups provided deeper insights into how the K-pop community on Twitter affects their reading skills. The interview data was analyzed using Miles et al. (1994) method, involving data reduction and verification with participants.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

***Is there any impact of joining K-pop fan community on Twitter to learners' reading skill?***

The following is a description of the results of the questionnaire analysis using SPSS to answer the first research question regarding how the impact of joining the K-pop fan community on Twitter, students' activeness in using Twitter on the development of students' reading skills.

The output of the multiple linear regression shows that the constant of 16.433 indicates the baseline value of the dependent variable when the value of the independent variable is 0. The regression coefficient for fan community (X1) is 0.261 and Twitter (X2) is 0.557, which means that an increase in fan community and Twitter usage will each contribute to an increase in reading skills (Y).

**Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model        | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|              | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1 (Constant) | 16.433                      | 8.337      |                           | 1.971 | .059 |
| Fan_Comunity | .261                        | .259       | .172                      | 1.007 | .323 |
| Twitter      | .557                        | .180       | .530                      | 3.101 | .005 |

a. Dependent Variable: Reading\_Skill

Furthermore, the results of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) show that the Adjusted R Square value is 0.345. It can be concluded that the effect of the fan community (X1) and Twitter (X2) on students' reading skills (Y) simultaneously is 34.5%, while the remaining 65.5% is influenced by other variables.

**Table 2. Determination Coefficient**

**Model Summary**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .626 <sup>a</sup> | .391     | .345              | 3.757                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Twitter, Fan\_Comunity

To further test the significance of these effects, hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test and f-test. The t-test results show that the fan community variable (X1) has no

significant effect on students' reading ability with a significance value of 0.323 ( $> 0.05$ ), while the Twitter activity variable (X2) has a significant effect with a significance value of 0.005 ( $< 0.05$ ).

**Table 3. Partial Test (T-Test)**

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |                             |            |                           |       |      |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model                     | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|                           | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1 (Constant)              | 16.433                      | 8.337      |                           | 1.971 | .059 |
| Fan_Comunity              | .261                        | .259       | .172                      | 1.007 | .323 |
| Twitter                   | .557                        | .180       | .530                      | 3.101 | .005 |

a. Dependent Variable: Reading\_Skill

Based on the simultaneous results (f-test) shows that the value of Sig. 0.002 ( $< 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that the fan community (X1) variable and the activeness using Twitter (X2) simultaneously have a significant effect on students' reading skills (Y) variable.

**Table 4. Simultaneous Test (F-Test)**

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |                |    |             |       |                   |
|--------------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| Model              | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.              |
| 1 Regression       | 236.088        | 2  | 118.044     | 8.361 | .002 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual           | 367.085        | 26 | 14.119      |       |                   |
| Total              | 603.172        | 28 |             |       |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Reading\_Skill

b. Predictors: (Constant), Twitter, Fan\_Comunity

### ***How does the participants' participation in the K-pop fan community on Twitter influence their reading skill?***

The following descriptions are the results of interviews with two students to understand how their participation in the K-pop fan community on Twitter affected their reading skills.

Informant A is representative of students with low scores, Informant B is representative high scores.

### **Involvement in fan community**

Informant A revealed that she is more passive and tends to only look in on the community. She only follows local fanbase accounts and has never communicated in English with fellow fans, so she rarely interacts in English.

*"I don't follow any international fanbase accounts and never communicate in English with fellow fans. I only follow local fanbases. So, I rarely interact in English. My activities are more passive. I'm mostly a silent reader who just listens to the activities in the community without participating much."* (A)

Informant B, an active member of the K-pop fan community, expressed her curiosity about English in K-pop content. Despite initial confusion, she strives to understand unfamiliar terms by using online tools. She also actively engages in fan activities, such as streaming music videos and participating in hashtag trends.

*"I actively follow local and global fan community accounts. I also actively stream music videos, participate in trending K-pop hashtags on Twitter, and watch their variety shows even though I still don't fully understand them"* (B)

Based on the results of the interviews, the two informants conveyed different results in terms of involvement in the fan community depending on their level of participation and interaction in the community.

### **Activeness using Twitter**

In Twitter we have the freedom to search for all information, including searching for educational accounts to learn new English grammar and knowledge. Both informants mentioned that they utilize Twitter as a platform to learn English.

*"I follow the @englishfess account to learn. Its activities most often give comments. But often also find a lot of new knowledge about English, especially on grammar."* (A)

*"I follow several English accounts such as @englishfess, @englishlabdsid, and @subenglishfess. Here I often comment and bookmark vocab that I just learned."* (B)

Informant A spends up to 2 hours daily on Twitter, mostly to read translated idol news and tweets from overseas fans, but does not interact with them.

*"I usually open Twitter for at most 2 hours a day, scrolling through news updates from idols that have been translated from Korean to English. Read tweets from overseas fans."* (A)

Similar to Informant A, Informant B follows a few English educational accounts, but Informant B actively interacts with international fans, and tweets in English to support K-pop idols.

*"I follow several English accounts such as @englishfess, @englishlabdsid, and @subenglishfess. I often comment and bookmark vocabulary that I just learned. I often use Twitter to support K-pop idols by tweeting in English, such as commenting on their posts using English."* (B)

Informant B also revealed that she could spend more time on Twitter, interacting with international fans and using the platform to expand her vocabulary by reading tweets about K-pop and Western singers.

*"Because I'm active on Twitter, I can spend all day scrolling at Twitter. So, I can make friends with other fans from different parts of the world on Twitter. I often read their tweets and we talk about our idols, what we like about our idols etc. Besides that, I also like to find tweets and news about Western singers. So, that gives me a new vocabulary."* (B)

Although informant A still finds difficulties when learning English from Twitter, she revealed that she still wants to use Twitter as one of the English learning media.

*"I still want to use Twitter, because there are many updates about my idol's activities so I continue to use Twitter."* (A)

The same thing was also shared by Informant B, she said Twitter is not only used for fangirling, but also as an effective source for learning English.

*"Because the updates about my idol's activities are mostly on Twitter I continue to use Twitter. Consider it fangirling while learning."* (B)

### **Reading skills development**

Based on the interview results, both informants revealed different approaches to reading English texts.

*"I primarily use the scanning method to find the main points of an article. If I encounter unfamiliar words, I consult a dictionary to understand their meaning in context. However, my reading habits can be influenced by my mood, as I may become less motivated to study or read when I'm feeling down."* (A)

Informant A used scanning method to find the main points and used a dictionary for difficult words. However, she has difficulty when his mood is not favorable, which affects her motivation.

On the other hand, Informant B focuses more on understanding the context and uses Google Translate for words or sentences he does not understand, finding this method very helpful in expanding his vocabulary and understanding complex sentence structures.

*“I usually try to understand the context first. If I am still confused about a particular word or sentence, I will use Google Translate to help me understand it.”* (B)

Lastly, the researcher confirmed and found out the reason for the range of reading skill points before joining the fan community on Twitter and after joining the fan community.

Informant A revealed that the reading skill before joining the fan community was 3 and after joining the fan community was 3.

*“Actually, before becoming a K-pop fan, I was already a bit good at English, but because I rarely practiced, and sometimes I was confused about where to start, overthinking made my mood not good. Maybe because of the lack of reading practice, my English reading duration is less, so there is no progress.”* (A)

In contrast Informant B, before joining the fan community was 4, and after joining the fan community was 8. This means that Informant B's reading skills have developed quite well.

*“Honestly, joining the K-Pop fandom made me more aware of my reading skills. At first, I wasn't interested in long texts. But after joining the fandom, I became curious about idol news on my timeline. So, I kept reading news, texts, or fun facts about the idol. I also feel that my interest is useful to be able to better understand the content of the context in the course material, or when scrolling social media, etc.”* (B)

Based on the interview results, both respondents have different approaches to identifying and learning texts in English. Both respondents indicated that despite the different methods and challenges faced, they still strive to continuously improve their English skills through various strategies that they consider effective.

## **Discussion**

### ***Is there any impact of joining K-pop fan community on Twitter to learners' reading skill?***

This study reveals an interesting contrast between the individual and combined effects of participation in fan communities and activity on Twitter on students' reading ability. Individually,

participation in fan communities did not show a significant effect on students' reading ability. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Ramos & López (2023) explaining that although no direct correlation was found between motivation and K-Pop online community interaction, this interaction positively affected the vocabulary, self-confidence, and development of receptive macro skills of the students. The statement that the greatest possible influence on reading ability comes from content outside the fan community is reinforced by the research of Wulandari et al. (2023), which showed Twitter as the dominant factor.

In contrast to the fan community, students' active use of Twitter was positively associated with improved reading ability. This result shows that active interaction on social media platforms such as Twitter can have a positive impact on students' reading skills. These results are in line with a study conducted by Diani et al. (2024), which revealed that Twitter as an online learning media makes it easier for students to access wider and unlimited information. Similar results were revealed by Wulandari et al. (2023) showed that actively interacting on Twitter such as reading various kinds of posts, ranging from short tweets to short stories can improve students' reading skills. If there are words that are not understood, they immediately search for the meaning on the internet. English education accounts are their favorite to get reading material.

However, when these two factors-participation in fan communities and activity on Twitter-were combined, the analysis showed a significant improvement in students' reading ability. Faiza (2020) revealed similar results, that curiosity about K-pop is the main driver of someone learning English because every K-pop news or content uses more English. Therefore, they not only join the fan community of their favorite idol group but also actively follow English educational accounts to improve their English skills, especially their reading skills. The study conducted by Deddy et al. (2019) revealed similar results seven out of ten young people chose Twitter as a medium for English language learning, and five out of ten revealed that their reading skills improved when using Twitter. Twitter makes it easy for them to communicate with other users from abroad, visit accounts that match their interests and hobbies, and obtain a lot of information, new knowledge, and new terms in English.

***How does the participants' participation in the K-pop fan community on Twitter influence their reading skill?***

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how participation in K-pop fan communities on Twitter can affect students' reading skills. The results show that the effect of

participation in the community varies widely and is influenced by several factors, including the quality of interaction, reading interest, and individual motivation. This is in line with the study Faiza (2020) found that some participants did not see any significant improvement in their English language skills, while others felt motivated to learn more. The findings of Arifatizzahra et al. (2024) also support this, where some participants only gained a basic understanding, while others experienced more significant improvements.

Furthermore, the effect of students' active use of Twitter on reading skills shows a positive influence on both informants. The Twitter feature allows them to follow informative and educational accounts, such as @englishfess which can help them get new information quickly. Both informants felt that Twitter remains useful as an English learning medium, despite the challenges in understanding foreign-language tweets. These results are in line with a study conducted by Diani et al. (2024), which revealed that Twitter as an online learning media makes it easier for students to access wider and unlimited information. Similar results were revealed by Wulandari et al. (2023) showed that actively interacting on Twitter such as reading various kinds of posts, ranging from short tweets to short stories can improve students' reading skills. If there are words that are not understood, they immediately search for the meaning on the internet. English education accounts are their favorite to get reading material.

The combination of joining K-pop fan communities and actively using Twitter can provide both informants with a new atmosphere for learning English. Both informants expressed the same thing that they enjoy learning English while fangirling on Twitter. These results are in line with research from Faiza (2020) which reveals that English is the key to accessing all information about their idols. This becomes their strong motivation to learn English, so they actively seek ways to improve their English skills. For example, by joining the global fan community and being active in the community to provide opinions or reactions, interact with native speakers, and read tweets and articles related to their idols in English. Wulandari et al. (2023) in their interview reveal that learning from Twitter is very fun because students can choose what they want to read. In the context of the interview results in this study, both informants enjoy reading news or tweets related to their idols.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study identified a significant relationship between participation in K-Pop fan communities and the use of Twitter with students' reading skills. Although individual variables

might not have shown significant effects, their combined influence is substantial, suggesting that both fan communities and Twitter offer valuable resources for language learning by encouraging active engagement and exposure to relevant content. To strengthen these findings, future research should focus on specific fan groups, employ diverse methodologies, and increase sample sizes. These results underscore the potential of leveraging students' interests in popular culture, like K-Pop, to enhance language learning experiences.

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Advisor 1,

Dr. Muhammad Yunus, S. Pd., M. Pd.

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