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The Influence of Interest in K-Pop Idols on Increasing the Motivation to Read Alternative Universe Fiction Works among K-Pop Fans

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital literacy culture among young people has been shaped by the growing popularity of K-Pop culture and the consumption of Alternative Universe (AU) fiction on social media platforms. This phenomenon indicates that reading practices are no longer limited to academic or conventional materials but have increasingly expanded through fandom-based digital media. This study aims to analyze the influence of interest in K-Pop idols on the motivation to read AU fiction among K-Pop fans. A quantitative approach with a descriptive method was employed. The population consisted of 82,425 followers of the X account @Localauniverse, from which 102 respondents were selected through simple random sampling using the Slovin formula. Data were collected using closed-ended questionnaires based on a four-point Likert scale and analyzed through normality testing, linearity testing, simple linear regression, and coefficient of determination analysis using SPSS version 25. The findings reveal that interest in K-Pop idols has a positive and significant influence on the motivation to read AU fiction, as indicated by a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a regression coefficient of 0.573. The coefficient of determination value of 0.228

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further indicates that interest in K-Pop idols contributes 22.8% to reading motivation, while the remaining proportion is influenced by factors beyond the scope of this study. The study concludes that emotional attachment, parasocial relationships, and participation in digital fandom culture play an important role in strengthening fans' motivation to engage with AU fiction. These findings contribute to the literature on digital literacy, fandom-based reading practices, and youth reading motivation by demonstrating how popular culture and digital media can serve as alternative strategies for promoting reading engagement among younger generations.

Keywords: Alternative Universe Fiction; Digital Fandom; Digital Literacy; K-Pop Idols; Reading Motivation

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed the way people access, consume, and distribute information, particularly among younger generations. Digital transformation has not only altered patterns of information acquisition but has also reshaped contemporary literacy practices through the emergence of digital-based reading cultures. Reading activities that were previously dominated by printed media have gradually shifted toward digital platforms that offer accessibility, interactivity, and convenience for users from various social backgrounds. This phenomenon demonstrates that literacy activities are no longer confined to conventional forms but continue to evolve through digital media closely integrated into the daily lives of modern youth (Nasrullah et al., 2017). Within this context, social media platforms have become alternative spaces for reading, sharing information, and building communities based on shared interests. The transformation of digital literacy culture has intensified alongside the increasing use of social media among adolescents and young adults. Platforms such as X, TikTok, Instagram, and Wattpad have become prominent spaces for social interaction and entertainment consumption in the digital era. The high intensity of social media usage indicates that younger generations spend more time engaging with digital environments than participating in conventional reading activities. This condition is often perceived as a challenge to the development of reading culture because social media is frequently associated with entertainment-oriented consumption rather than deep literacy engagement. Nevertheless, the expansion of digital media

simultaneously creates opportunities for the emergence of new literacy practices that are more relevant to the characteristics and preferences of contemporary youth (Liansari & Nuroh, 2018).

One of the most influential global popular culture phenomena shaping contemporary media consumption patterns is Korean Pop or K-Pop. The rapid expansion of the South Korean entertainment industry has successfully established highly active fan communities across many countries, including Indonesia. K-Pop has evolved beyond entertainment products and has become an integral part of youth cultural identity and lifestyle. The presence of K-Pop idols through carefully constructed visual representations, personal narratives, and continuous digital interactions has created strong emotional attachments between fans and the idols they admire (Hakim et al., 2021). These emotional connections subsequently influence various fan behaviors, including media consumption patterns and reading practices. Fan engagement within K-Pop culture is not limited to listening to music or following idol-related updates. Instead, fans actively participate in digital fandom communities that function as interactive and productive cultural spaces. Fandom refers to a community formed by individuals who share a common interest in particular cultural objects and who collectively engage in social and cultural participation (Jenkins, 2013). Within K-Pop fandoms, fans are not merely passive consumers but also active producers who create various forms of creative content inspired by the idols they admire. These activities include fan art, fan edits, fan projects, and fan fiction production distributed through digital platforms (Fauziah, 2015). The emergence of digital fandom demonstrates that popular culture can function as a participatory space in which fans construct social identities and cultural expressions through digital media.

One of the most prominent forms of creativity emerging from K-Pop fandom communities is fan fiction, particularly the Alternative Universe (AU) genre. Fan fiction refers to fictional works created by fans using characters or public figures from existing media texts and reimagining them within new storylines and settings (Bahoric & Swaggerty, 2015). In the context of K-Pop fandom, AU has become highly popular because it places idols in fictional scenarios and alternative settings distinct from their real-life identities. Fans reconstruct idols as protagonists in diverse genres, including romance, comedy, fantasy, thriller, and slice-of-life narratives (Hulspas, 2017). AU stories provide unique reading experiences because readers are able to imagine their favorite idols in emotionally engaging and imaginative situations closely connected to fans' personal fantasies and

emotional experiences. The popularity of AU on digital platforms indicates that fandom-based digital fiction possesses significant appeal among adolescents and young adults. AU stories function not only as entertainment but also as emotional outlets, imaginative spaces, and forms of social interaction among fans. The use of idols as central characters creates stronger emotional engagement between readers and the text. This emotional involvement makes AU reading experiences more enjoyable and immersive compared to conventional reading materials. Consequently, interest in K-Pop idols can potentially function as a motivating factor that encourages reading engagement among fans (RNM & Rachmani, 2022).

Within literacy studies, emotional engagement with reading materials is closely associated with the development of reading motivation. Reading activities driven by personal interests tend to generate more enjoyable and sustainable reading experiences. When readers feel emotionally connected to the content, they become more willing to allocate time to reading voluntarily. Therefore, AU may be understood as a form of popular literature capable of bridging popular culture interests and digital literacy practices among younger generations. The existence of AU demonstrates that literacy development does not exclusively emerge from formal academic reading materials but can also evolve through popular texts that resonate with readers' personal interests and emotional preferences. The increasing consumption of K-Pop fan fiction has become an important phenomenon to examine because it reflects the intersection between popular culture and digital literacy practices. Amid concerns regarding low reading interest among Indonesian society, AU consumption illustrates that young people continue to engage actively in reading activities when the materials align with their interests and emotional needs. Reports concerning Indonesia's relatively low reading culture continue to highlight literacy as a major challenge in national human resource development. However, the widespread engagement with AU stories on social media simultaneously indicates that digital reading practices remain highly active among younger generations when presented through attractive and relatable formats.

This condition suggests that literacy practices in the digital era are undergoing significant transformation. Reading activities are no longer restricted to printed books or formal educational texts but increasingly include flexible, interactive, and digitally mediated forms of reading. Within this context, AU may be interpreted as a form of popular digital literacy emerging through fandom participation and social media interaction. The existence

of AU demonstrates that popular culture possesses substantial potential as a medium for cultivating reading habits among younger generations. Consequently, research investigating the relationship between interest in K-Pop idols and reading motivation becomes increasingly relevant in understanding how popular culture may contribute to the development of digital literacy practices. This study argues that interest in K-Pop idols should not merely be perceived as passive entertainment consumption. Instead, such interest can also encourage productive and positive activities, particularly in the form of increased motivation to read digital fiction. Fans who develop emotional attachments to idols tend to seek and consume various forms of idol-related content, including AU fan fiction. The stronger the emotional attachment toward the idol, the greater the possibility that fans will engage intensively and consistently in reading activities. Therefore, fandom culture should be understood not only as an entertainment phenomenon but also as part of contemporary digital literacy practices among younger generations.

The emotional attachment between fans and K-Pop idols may be explained through the concept of parasocial relationships. Parasocial relationships refer to one-sided psychological relationships in which audiences experience emotional closeness toward public figures despite the absence of direct interaction (Sagita & Kadewandana, 2018). Social media strengthens these relationships through visual content, symbolic communication, and interactive digital activities that create perceptions of intimacy between fans and idols (Wardani & Kusuma, 2021). Such emotional proximity subsequently influences fan behavior, including digital media consumption patterns and reading practices associated with K-Pop-related content.

In this study, Uses and Gratifications Theory serves as the primary theoretical framework for explaining fan behavior in consuming AU fan fiction. This theory conceptualizes audiences as active individuals who consciously select particular media to fulfill specific psychological and social needs (Kriyantono, 2010). K-Pop fans engage with AU stories not solely for entertainment purposes but also to obtain emotional satisfaction, social identity, and a sense of belonging within fandom communities. Reading AU becomes a means of fulfilling affective and social gratification through digital media engagement (Nurudin, 2017). Therefore, reading motivation in the context of AU fan fiction can be understood as the outcome of gratification-seeking processes conducted by fans through digital reading activities. In addition to Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study also employs the concept of reading motivation to explain readers' engagement with fan fiction.

Reading motivation refers to internal and external drives that encourage individuals to participate voluntarily and consistently in reading activities (Sugihartati, 2010). Within the context of AU, reading motivation is influenced not only by informational needs but also by emotional fulfillment and entertainment associated with K-Pop idols. The inclusion of idols as fictional characters creates stronger emotional involvement, enabling readers to experience reading as an enjoyable and meaningful activity.

Previous studies concerning K-Pop fan fiction and fandom culture have contributed valuable insights into digital fandom practices. Research conducted by RNM and Rachmani (2022) demonstrated that AU fan fiction significantly influences reading interest among Indonesian adolescents. Their findings indicate that fandom-based reading materials can function as effective media for encouraging reading engagement among younger generations. Meanwhile, Farabi (2020) revealed that fans' motivation to write fan fiction is influenced by both internal and external factors related to emotional attachment toward K-Pop idols. In addition, Sa'diyah (2019) examined digital fandom culture as a form of participatory fan engagement within social media environments. Despite the growing body of literature, studies examining the relationship between interest in K-Pop idols and reading motivation in the context of AU fan fiction remain limited. Most previous research has focused primarily on fandom culture, fan fiction production, or general reading interest. Research specifically investigating how emotional attachment to K-Pop idols influences motivation to read AU fan fiction on the X platform is still relatively scarce. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to emphasize reading interest rather than reading motivation that incorporates emotional, social, and regulatory dimensions of reading behavior.

Based on these limitations, the research gap of this study lies in the lack of scholarly attention addressing the relationship between emotional attachment to K-Pop idols and reading motivation within fandom-based digital literacy practices. This study does not merely discuss fandom culture as an entertainment phenomenon but also examines how emotional attachment toward idols may function as a driving force behind digital reading activities among K-Pop fans. In doing so, this research seeks to expand digital literacy discourse through the perspectives of popular culture and parasocial interaction. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of parasocial relationship theory, digital fandom culture, and reading motivation within the context of K-Pop AU fan fiction on the X platform. This study positions interest in K-Pop idols as a variable influencing motivation

to read digital fiction, thereby offering a new perspective on the relationship between popular culture and digital literacy practices. Furthermore, this research employs reading motivation indicators derived from the Reading Motivation Questionnaire (RMQ) developed by Schiefele and Schaffner to measure readers' motivation comprehensively (Felicia et al., 2017). The study also adapts indicators of parasocial interaction and digital fandom culture to examine emotional attachment among K-Pop fans (Syawal, 2023).

This research focuses specifically on K-Pop fans who read AU fan fiction on the X platform as part of digital fandom activities. The platform was selected because X has become one of the primary spaces for AU dissemination and fandom interaction among Indonesian K-Pop communities. The high level of fan activity on the platform indicates that social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as an active and participatory digital literacy environment. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze the influence of interest in K-Pop idols on motivation to read K-Pop fan fiction.Ultimately, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how popular culture may contribute to the development of reading motivation among younger generations in the digital era. The research is also expected to contribute theoretically to the fields of digital literacy, popular culture studies, and parasocial relationship research within the context of K-Pop fandom. In addition, the findings are anticipated to support the development of literacy strategies that are more relevant to contemporary youth characteristics, particularly through the utilization of digital media and popular culture as tools for fostering sustainable reading habit

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive research method to examine the influence of interest in K-Pop idols on the motivation to read Alternative Universe (AU) fiction among K-Pop fans. A quantitative approach was selected because the study focused on measuring the relationship between variables through numerical data analyzed statistically. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain objective findings regarding the level of fans' attachment to K-Pop idols and its contribution to reading motivation within digital fandom communities. The descriptive method was applied to systematically and accurately describe the phenomenon of fandom engagement, particularly the reading practices associated with fan-generated fictional content. Accordingly, the study

not only tested the proposed hypothesis but also provided an empirical overview of how K-Pop fandom culture contributes to reading behavior in digital environments. The research design was structured to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable was interest in K-Pop idols, while the dependent variable was reading motivation toward Alternative Universe fiction. The variable of interest in K-Pop idols was operationalized through several indicators, including attention toward idols, emotional attachment, parasocial relationships, parasocial intimacy, intensity of idol-content consumption, and involvement in fandom activities. Attention toward idols referred to activities such as following idol-related updates and accessing information about idols. Emotional attachment reflected feelings of happiness, pride, sadness, and empathy experienced by fans toward their favorite idols. Parasocial relationships described fans' perceptions of personally knowing and understanding the idols' personalities and lives. Parasocial intimacy represented emotional connectedness and feelings of being acknowledged by idols through digital media interactions. The intensity of idol-content consumption was measured through the frequency of accessing social media, broadcasts, and visual content related to idols. In addition, involvement in fandom activities included reading fan fiction and participating in fandom discussions or online communities.

The dependent variable, reading motivation, was measured using indicators of curiosity, reading engagement, academic value, competition, social recognition, emotional regulation, and avoidance of boredom. Curiosity referred to reading activities intended to broaden knowledge and explore topics of personal interest. Reading engagement described the extent to which readers became emotionally immersed in the text. Academic value reflected reading motivation associated with improving academic performance, while competition referred to reading in order to outperform peers. Social recognition measured the desire to gain appreciation from others through reading activities. Emotional regulation described the use of reading as a coping mechanism to reduce negative emotions, whereas avoidance of boredom represented reading as a leisure activity to fill free time. Collectively, these indicators were used to explain the relationship between K-Pop fandom culture and the enhancement of reading motivation among fans consuming digital fictional narratives. The population of this study consisted of followers of the X (Twitter) account @Localauniverse, totaling 82,425 followers as of December 1, 2025. This population was selected because the account actively distributes and facilitates interaction related to

Alternative Universe stories among K-Pop fandom communities. The sample was determined using a simple random sampling technique, as every member of the population had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. The calculation resulted in 99.998 respondents, which was rounded to 100 participants. The sampling technique was chosen to ensure representativeness and minimize sampling bias in the research process.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected directly through online questionnaires distributed to the respondents. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly literature, previous research articles, and theoretical references related to fandom behavior, idol fanaticism, parasocial relationships, and reading motivation. The use of both data sources strengthened the theoretical foundation of the study and supported a more comprehensive interpretation of the research findings.

The research instrument consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire employing a four-point Likert scale. The four-point scale was intentionally selected to reduce central tendency bias, which frequently occurs when respondents choose neutral responses on odd-numbered scales. The response options included always, often, sometimes, and never, scored from four to one. The collected data were subsequently categorized into very poor, poor, good, and very good classifications based on predetermined score intervals. The questionnaire items were systematically developed according to the research indicators to ensure that each statement appropriately represented the variables under investigation. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Validity testing was conducted in two stages, namely expert validation and item validation. Expert validation involved specialists in both subject matter and language to evaluate the appropriateness of the questionnaire content. Subsequently, item validity testing was conducted using SPSS version 25 through Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis involving 30 pilot respondents. The findings indicated that all items within variables X and Y obtained correlation values higher than the r-table value of 0.361 with significance levels below 0.05, indicating that all questionnaire items were valid.

Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha through SPSS version 25. The results demonstrated that variable X achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.916, while variable Y obtained 0.921. Both coefficients exceeded the minimum reliability standard of 0.70, indicating a very high level of reliability. Therefore, all questionnaire items

were considered internally consistent and suitable for use as research instruments. Data collection was carried out through the online distribution of closed-ended questionnaires to respondents who met the research criteria. The distribution process was conducted systematically to ensure that respondents understood the objectives of the study and completed all questionnaire items appropriately. The research was conducted in 2025, referring to the follower data of the X account @Localauniverse as of December 1, 2025. The research process covered several stages, including instrument development, pilot testing, questionnaire distribution, data processing, and statistical analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages, including editing, tabulation, and descriptive analysis. The editing stage involved checking the completeness of respondents' answers to minimize data-entry errors. Subsequently, the data were tabulated into frequency tables to facilitate interpretation and statistical processing. Descriptive analysis was used to explain the findings based on score interpretation for each variable. In addition, prerequisite tests consisting of normality and linearity tests were conducted. The normality test employed the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to determine data distribution, while the linearity test was used to confirm the linear relationship between interest in K-Pop idols and reading motivation. Hypothesis testing was performed using simple linear regression analysis with the assistance of SPSS version 25. This analysis aimed to determine the extent to which interest in K-Pop idols influenced motivation to read Alternative Universe fiction. Decision-making was based on significance values and t-test results. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination was employed to identify the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. A higher coefficient of determination indicated a stronger contribution of interest in K-Pop idols toward enhancing reading motivation among K-Pop fans

RESULTS

1. Description of Research Variables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
X	102	22	48	34.14	5,964
Y	102	32	64	49.63	7,157
Valid N (listwise)	102				

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables, presents the descriptive statistics of variables X and Y based on responses from 102 respondents. Variable X obtained a minimum score of 22 and a maximum score of 48, with a mean score of 34.14 and a standard deviation of 5.964. Meanwhile, variable Y obtained a minimum score of 32 and a maximum score of 64, with a mean score of 49.63 and a standard deviation of 7.157. The standard deviation values of both variables are lower than their respective mean values, indicating that the data distribution is relatively stable despite some variation in respondents' responses. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents tended to provide positive responses toward both variables.

2. Normality Test

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov [a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
X	.080	102	.112	.979	102	.112
Y	.066	102	.200 *	.985	102	.299

**. This is a lower bound of the true significance.*

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Table 2 Normality Test Results, presents the results of the normality test for variables X and Y. Based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the significance values for variable X and variable Y were 0.112 and 0.200, respectively. Meanwhile, the Shapiro–Wilk test showed significance values of 0.112 for variable X and 0.299 for variable Y. Since all significance values were greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data for both variables were normally distributed. Therefore, the data fulfilled one of the assumptions required for regression analysis.

3. Linearity Test

Table 3. Linearity Test Results

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Y * X	Between Groups	(Combined)	2109.684	24	87,904	2,209	.005
		Linearity	1179,332	1	1179,332	29,636	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	930,353	23	40,450	1,016	.457

	Within Groups	3064.159	77	39,794		
	Total	5173.843	101			

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Table 3 Linearity Test Results, presents the results of the linearity test between variables X and Y. Based on the ANOVA table, the significance value for Linearity was 0.000, which is lower than 0.05, indicating a linear relationship between variable X and variable Y. In addition, the significance value for Deviation from Linearity was 0.457, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that there was no significant deviation from linearity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship between variables X and Y is linear and fulfills the linearity assumption required for regression analysis.

4. Regression and Hypothesis Test

Table 4. Regression and Hypothesis Test Results

Coefficients [a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	30,067	3,654		8,229	.000
	X	.573	.105	.477	5,434	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Y						

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Table 4 Regression and Hypothesis Test Results, presents the results of the simple linear regression analysis between K-Pop idols (X) and reading motivation toward alternative universe fiction works (Y). Based on the SPSS output, the regression equation obtained was Y=30.067+0.573XY = 30.067 + 0.573XY=30.067+0.573X. The constant value of 30.067 indicates that if the K-Pop idol variable has a value of 0, the reading motivation variable would have a score of 30.067. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient value of 0.573 indicates that every one-unit increase in the K-Pop idol variable increases reading motivation by 0.573 units. The positive coefficient shows a positive relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the t-test results showed a t-value of 5.434 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05 and the t-value was higher than the t-table value (1.984), H0 was rejected and Ha was accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that K-Pop idols have a significant influence on the reading motivation of alternative universe fiction works.

5 Coefficient of Determination

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination Results

Model Summary [b]				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Standard Error of the Estimate**
1	.477 [a]	.228	.220	6,320
a. Predictors: (Constant), X				
b. Dependent Variable: Y				

source: Compiled by the researcher (2026)

Table 5 Coefficient of Determination Results, presents the results of the model summary analysis. The R value of 0.477 indicates that the relationship between variables X and Y is in the moderate category. Meanwhile, the R Square (R^2) value of 0.228 indicates that the K-Pop idol variable (X) contributes 22.8% to the reading motivation toward alternative universe fiction works (Y), while the remaining 77.2% is influenced by other factors outside the variables examined in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that K-Pop idols have a significant influence on reading motivation toward alternative universe fiction works, although the contribution of the effect is categorized as moderate.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that interest in K-Pop idols has a positive and significant influence on motivation to read Alternative Universe (AU) fan fiction among K-Pop fans. This conclusion is supported by the results of the simple linear regression analysis, which revealed a significance value of 0.000 and a regression coefficient of 0.573. These findings indicate that the higher the level of fans' interest in K-Pop idols, the stronger their motivation to engage in reading AU fan fiction. Consequently, this study confirms that popular culture phenomena, particularly K-Pop, do not merely function as forms of entertainment but are also closely associated with digital literacy practices among adolescents and young adults. The findings suggest that interest in K-Pop idols functions as a psychological stimulus that encourages fans to actively seek, access, and consume digital fiction related to their favorite idols. In this context, reading motivation does not emerge solely from academic obligations or educational demands, but rather from strong emotional engagement with the reading material itself. The inclusion of idols as central characters in AU stories creates emotional proximity between readers and the text, making reading activities more enjoyable, personal, and meaningful for fans. This condition

indicates that reading experiences grounded in personal interests possess considerable potential for cultivating voluntary and sustainable reading habits.

More specifically, the findings reveal that the emotional relationship between fans and K-Pop idols contributes to increased engagement in digital literacy activities. When fans develop strong attachment and admiration toward idols, they are more likely to follow various forms of idol-related content, including AU fan fiction. This emotional attachment subsequently develops into intrinsic reading motivation because readers obtain emotional satisfaction, entertainment, and imaginative experiences through the stories they consume. In this regard, AU fan fiction functions not only as entertainment media but also as an affective space that allows fans to construct psychological closeness with the idols they admire. The study also found that the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.228 indicates that interest in K-Pop idols contributes 22.8% to reading motivation for AU fan fiction. Although this contribution falls within a moderate-to-low category, the finding remains significant because it demonstrates that popular culture can function as one of the factors influencing literacy behavior among younger generations. The remaining 77.2% of reading motivation is influenced by other variables beyond the scope of this study, such as personal interest in reading, narrative quality, peer influence, digital trends, and social media habits. This suggests that reading motivation is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by multiple interconnected factors rather than a single variable.

The findings further indicate that the success of AU fan fiction in attracting readers is influenced not only by the presence of K-Pop idols as fictional characters but also by the narrative and social dimensions embedded within digital fandom culture. Some respondents may engage with AU stories not exclusively because of their emotional attachment to idols, but also because the stories are popular within fandom communities, encouraging them to participate in shared reading experiences. Therefore, AU reading activities are also associated with social needs, particularly the desire to maintain connectedness within fandom communities and to remain engaged with trends circulating on social media platforms. These findings can be explained through Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Blumer and Katz. The theory conceptualizes audiences as active individuals who consciously select particular media to fulfill specific psychological and social needs (Kriyantono, 2010). In the context of this study, K-Pop fans actively choose AU fan fiction as a form of digital media capable of satisfying entertainment needs, affective fulfillment, personal identity formation, and social interaction needs. Reading AU

fan fiction becomes a deliberate media activity because readers obtain gratification obtained, namely emotional satisfaction and enjoyment after consuming stories involving their favorite idols.

The gratification experienced through reading AU stories is reflected in the emotional involvement readers develop toward the narratives and characters represented in fan fiction. Fans are able to visualize storylines more vividly when the main characters are idols with whom they already feel emotionally familiar through social media exposure and fandom activities. This finding reinforces the assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that individuals continue using particular media when those media successfully satisfy their psychological needs. In this study, AU fan fiction serves as an effective medium for fulfilling fans' emotional and entertainment needs, resulting in repeated and voluntary reading behavior. In addition to Uses and Gratifications Theory, the findings are also closely related to the concept of parasocial relationships. Parasocial relationships refer to one-sided psychological connections formed between audiences and public figures through continuous media exposure (Sagita & Kadewandana, 2018). In this study, parasocial relationships were reflected through indicators such as attention toward idols, emotional attachment, parasocial intimacy, and intensity of idol-related content consumption. Fans who possess stronger emotional attachment toward idols tend to engage more actively in seeking idol-related content, including AU fan fiction. Consequently, parasocial relationships function as reinforcing factors that strengthen reading motivation within the context of digital fandom culture.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of RNM and Rachmani (2022), who reported that AU fan fiction contributes to increased reading interest among Indonesian adolescents. Both studies indicate that fandom-based reading materials are capable of enhancing reading engagement among younger generations. However, the present study extends previous findings by focusing not only on reading interest but also on reading motivation, which includes emotional, social, and regulatory dimensions. Therefore, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying fans' engagement with AU fan fiction. This study also supports the findings of Farabi (2020), who argued that fan fiction activities are influenced by both internal and external factors associated with fandom culture. In the present study, interest in K-Pop idols can be understood as an external factor stimulating reading motivation. This interest develops through social media exposure and fandom

participation, which strengthen emotional attachment between fans and idols. Furthermore, the findings are relevant to Sa'diyah's (2019) research, which explained that digital fandom functions as a space for creativity, communication, and cultural production on social media. The presence of AU fan fiction within fandom culture demonstrates that social media serves not only as entertainment space but also as an active and participatory digital literacy environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of digital literacy, popular culture studies, and parasocial relationship research. The findings demonstrate that reading activities in the digital era do not exclusively emerge from formal academic motivations but may also develop through popular culture closely connected to the daily experiences of younger generations. This research expands the understanding of digital literacy practices by showing that entertainment media and fandom culture can function as mechanisms for fostering reading motivation. Additionally, the study reinforces the relevance of Uses and Gratifications Theory in explaining patterns of digital media consumption among K-Pop fans. Practically, this study provides important implications for literacy development strategies in the digital era. The findings indicate that literacy approaches based on personal interests and popular culture possess considerable potential for increasing young people's engagement in reading activities. Consequently, educational institutions, libraries, and literacy organizations may utilize popular media as a means of developing reading culture that is more relevant to contemporary youth characteristics. Libraries and educational institutions could develop digital collections, reading communities, or literacy programs based on fandom and popular culture to create reading experiences that are more engaging and relatable for younger audiences.

The study also carries methodological implications by demonstrating that digital literacy research may benefit from interdisciplinary approaches integrating perspectives from information science, communication studies, popular culture studies, and media psychology. The use of reading motivation indicators alongside parasocial relationship indicators highlights that reading behavior in digital environments cannot be understood solely through cognitive dimensions but must also consider emotional and social factors influencing readers' engagement. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research employed a quantitative approach using simple linear regression analysis, which limits the ability to explore respondents' subjective experiences in greater depth. Future studies may adopt qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to

obtain more comprehensive insights into fans' emotional experiences when engaging with AU fan fiction. Second, the sample was predominantly composed of female respondents within the young adult age category, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader K-Pop fandom populations.

Third, this study focused exclusively on one independent variable, namely interest in K-Pop idols, whereas reading motivation is influenced by numerous additional factors that were not examined in detail. Variables such as narrative quality, digital reading habits, social environment, and levels of digital literacy may also significantly influence reading motivation and warrant further investigation. Fourth, this study concentrated specifically on the X platform as the primary medium for AU dissemination, thereby excluding other digital platforms such as Wattpad and AO3, which also host substantial fan fiction communities. Overall, this study demonstrates that popular culture phenomena such as K-Pop are closely connected to digital literacy practices among younger generations. Interest in K-Pop idols has been shown to enhance motivation to read AU fan fiction through emotional engagement, parasocial relationships, and gratification obtained from digital reading activities. These findings emphasize that popular culture does not necessarily produce negative effects on young audiences; instead, it may function as an alternative medium for cultivating reading habits and strengthening digital literacy culture in the era of social media.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that interest in K-Pop idols has a positive and significant influence on readers' motivation to engage with *Alternative Universe* (AU) fan fiction among K-Pop fans. The results of the simple linear regression analysis demonstrate that higher levels of interest in K-Pop idols are associated with increased reading motivation. This relationship is supported by a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) and a regression coefficient of 0.573, indicating a positive correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination reveals that interest in K-Pop idols contributes 22.8% to reading motivation, while the remaining proportion is influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study. These findings directly address the main objective of the research, namely to examine the influence of interest in K-Pop idols on motivation to read AU fan fiction. The study confirms that popular culture, particularly the

global phenomenon of K-Pop, functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium capable of encouraging digital literacy practices through fan engagement with online literary content. Emotional attachment, parasocial interaction, and fans' personal connection with idols become important elements that stimulate reading behavior in digital fiction closely related to their interests.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that audiences actively select media to satisfy emotional, entertainment, and personal identity needs. AU fan fiction serves as a form of media gratification that provides emotional satisfaction and enjoyment for K-Pop fans, thereby encouraging repeated reading activities. Practically, this research contributes to the fields of digital literacy and popular culture studies by demonstrating that fandom-based entertainment media can be utilized as an alternative approach to fostering reading motivation among adolescents and young adults. The findings also highlight the evolving nature of literacy practices in the digital era, where social media and global popular culture increasingly shape reading behavior. The implications of this study suggest that popular culture can be strategically integrated into literacy development efforts, especially for younger generations who are highly engaged with digital platforms. Educators, researchers, and literacy practitioners may consider incorporating culturally relevant and interest-based digital content to increase reading engagement. In addition, this research emphasizes that fandom activities should not solely be viewed as recreational consumption, but also as productive spaces that encourage creativity, information engagement, and digital reading culture. Despite its contributions, this study remains limited because it only examines one independent variable with a moderate level of influence. Therefore, future studies are recommended to explore additional factors that may affect reading motivation, such as narrative quality, social media influence, peer environment, or digital platform usage intensity. Further research may also adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain a deeper understanding of fan fiction reading behavior among K-Pop fandom communities

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