

Exploring Demographics, Personality Traits, and Attachment Styles in Parasocial Relationships Among Indian K-Pop Fans

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Abstract:

➤ Background:

Parasocial Relationships are one-sided bonds formed by fans with their favourite celebrity or media figures. This concept has been intensified worldwide due to the immense growth of the Hallyu wave, also known as the Korean wave. Emerging adults in India, particularly those who are K-pop fans, are rapidly forming these asymmetrical attachments with K-pop idols. While researchers have extensively explored the dynamics of Parasocial Relationships in Western contexts, the research in South Asian countries, especially India, remains limited, with only a small number of studies focusing on K-pop fandom. Considering the mental health concerns associated with parasocial bonding, it is pertinent to investigate the various aspects of this new psychological phenomenon.

➤ Objectives:

The present study aims to explore various demographic characteristics among Indian K-pop fans, along with assessing the relationship between Attachment Styles, Personality Traits, and Parasocial Relationships.

➤ Methodology:

The sample consisted of 80 emerging Indian adults (Females = 74, Males = 05, Not disclosed = 01) who were surveyed online across various Indian states. The Big-Five Inventory-10 Scale (Rammstedt & John, 2007), the Revised-Adult Attachment-Close Relationship Version Scale (Collins & Read, 1996), and the Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale (Bocarnea & Brown, 2007) were employed for data collection. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation were used for the analysis of the data.

➤ Results:

Findings show that 40 (50%) of participants in the current study experienced high levels of Parasocial Relationship intensity. Similarly, remaining 40 (50%) participants experienced low levels of PSR intensity. Moderate and enduring levels of fandom participation were observed, with participants intently consuming K-pop music and content mainly via social media platforms inducing Instagram, YouTube, and Weverse, whilst making financial commitments. However, spending behaviour was seen less within the sample. Fans showcased diverse group preferences and were primarily participant-based. Furthermore, there were weak and non-significant correlations between Parasocial Relationship, Personality Traits, and Attachment Styles.

➤ Conclusion:

Overall, the present study fills in a crucial gap and contributes to a foundational benchmark for future psychological and sociocultural analyses of Parasocial Relationships in the Indian context.

Keywords: Parasocial Relationships, Personality Traits, Attachment Styles, K-Pop fandom.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has catalysed the emergence of shared popular culture (pop culture) that extends beyond national boundaries. Over the past few decades, the growth of music, fashion, skincare, films, and cuisine has reshaped consumer choices and cultural identities (Jin, 2019; Kong, 2016). South Korea, a comparatively small country with a population of 51 million as of 2024, has transitioned into a new cultural powerhouse (Kong, 2016), becoming one of the largest entertainment exporters globally and gaining significant popularity, especially in South Asian countries like India (Song, 2020).

Since the mid-1990s, the rapid development of Korean culture has led to a revolution known as the “Hallyu” or “Korean Wave” (Kong, 2016) in the neighbouring Asian countries. The term *Hallyu* was derived from the Chinese term “Hanryu” (Bora, 2020), which comprises two root words: Han (한/韓) meaning ‘Korea’, and Ryu (류/流) meaning ‘flow’ or ‘wave’. Together, they translate to the “flow of Korea” (Kim, 2015). Hallyu gained prominence in China and Japan, after which it spread throughout Southeast Asia and eventually attained global recognition.

As the global interest increased, the tourism sector experienced exceptional growth, as more visitors and students travelled to Korea, reflecting the country’s growing cultural influence across the world (Joseph, 2024; Roy & Das, 2022). The wave transformed the global entertainment industry, boosted the national GDP, and expanded Korea’s international recognition (Joseph, 2024). Over the past two decades, Hallyu has become a worldwide movement, redefining cultural exchange across linguistic, ethnological, and geographical boundaries while promoting global unity and cross-cultural understanding, with K-pop serving as its most prominent and influential facet (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020; Jang & Chang, 2023; Roy & Das, 2022).

The arrival of the Hallyu wave in India can be traced back to 2012, when the release of PSY’s viral hit “*Gangnam Style*” marked a breakthrough moment, introducing K-pop culture to the Indian audience. During this period, the government of Manipur announced a ban on Hindi films and satellite channels, arguing that Bollywood content had undermined Manipur’s values and cultural beliefs (Sarma, 2023). This led to cultural chaos, creating a gap that was filled by alternative entertainment sources from Hollywood, Thai, Chinese, and Korean media. Manipur’s audiences regularly consumed these through imported goods such as CDs and DVDs, as well as through broadcast of Korean TV channels like Arirang TV and KBS (Joseph, 2024; Reimeingam, 2014). Korean media was so consumed so extensively in Manipur that the same was referred to as “Mini Korea” (India Today, 2017). Due to the repeated exposure to Korean content, Korean phrases such as ‘*Annyeonghaseyo*’ (Hello), ‘*Gwaenchana*’ (Okay), ‘*Saranghae*’ (I love you), ‘*Mwoya*’ (What), ‘*Hwaiting*’ (Fighting/Best of luck) became part of everyday conversations among youth, reflecting the process of cultural acculturation and hybridization (Ashwinia & Hemmige, 2025; Reimeingam, 2015). Over the years, the popularity of Korean entertainment surged across the country, with K-dramas such as *Boys Over*

Flowers, *Goblin*, and *Descendants of the Sun* captivating large audiences through online streaming platforms such as Viki, HiTv, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Dramakool. These platforms made Korean shows and culture more accessible for international fans (Roshni, Devaraj, & Rao, 2023; Joseph, 2024).

Furthermore, the global success of K-pop groups like BTS, BLACKPINK, and EXO has further amplified India’s interest, since the groups’ music, performances, and digital presence spread quickly all-over social media and streaming platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Spotify, and YouTube Music (Sarma, 2023). According to Facebook analytics, India now has over 15 million consumers of Korean cultural products, including K-pop and K-dramas (Bora, 2020). This cultural expansion led to the emergence of a massive fandom culture in India (Bhatt, 2020; Bora, 2020; George, 2021), particularly among Indian youth. The genre’s catchy music, vibrant aesthetics, and synchronized choreography (Cho & Lee, 2025) facilitated the creation of hundreds of Indian K-pop fan accounts on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram. Dedicated fan websites like *Destination of K-pop* and *K-pop High India* were launched in 2018 and have become central hubs for this growing community, fostering fan engagement through platforms like Weverse, Telegram, and organized events in regions like Mizoram. Additionally, YouTube’s recommendation algorithm has deepened this exposure by introducing Indian audiences to other aspects of Korean culture, including skincare, fashion, and cosmetics (Bora, 2020).

➤ Emergence of Parasocial Relationship into Digital Era

The concept of ‘Parasocial Relationships’ (PSRs) was first introduced by anthropologist Donald Horton and sociologist Richard Wohl (1956) in their seminal essay “*Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance*”, published in the *Psychiatry Journal*. They defined PSRs as a one-sided psychological relationship formed by audiences/fans toward their favourite media figure/celebrity, where only one party experiences the relationship without any reciprocity from the other. This type of relationship often evokes a sense of closeness and kinship despite the absence of real and reciprocal interactions. Horton and Wohl’s (1956) distinctive research laid out the foundation for one of the most influential fields in media and communication studies. However, the concept has become more prevalent after the technological advancements in the field of media (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Rubin and McHugh (1987) stated that parasocial intensity (PSI) refers to certain “interactions” the viewers may experience with a persona that sparks interest in them, and these repeated “interactions” can eventually foster a deeper connection with that persona, developing into a Parasocial Relationships (Chung & Cho, 2017).

Recent technological shifts, particularly the rise of social networking sites (SNS) such as Instagram, YouTube, X, and Twitch, have transformed the nature and intensity of PSRs, making them more interactive (Kowert & Daniel, 2021). From the contemporary standpoint, fans form parasocial bonds not only with celebrities but also with Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and even with brands that share customized, relatable,

and emotionally engaging content (Aw & Chuah, 2021). Nowadays, Parasocial Relationships are easy to develop since the audience has easy access to social media and can stay updated with their favourite media figure's life by following their daily lives and keeping track of their personal narratives. Audience experience a sense of connectedness and emotional intimacy regardless of the relationship's one-sided nature (Leite & Baptista, 2022). Followers often perceive social media influencers as distant friends and trustworthy sources of information (Berryman & Kavka, 2017; Lou, 2021) because of their relatable, personal, and conversational communication style, which transforms casual followers into dedicated fanbases (Deiphari et al., 2025). Such Parasocial Relationships can significantly influence trust, consumer loyalty, and purchasing intentions toward both influencers and brands they endorse (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Rungruangjit, 2022).

Research into Parasocial Relationships has been growing considerably in recent years to investigate both its antecedents and consequences. Components such as source validity, attractiveness, and homophily, which refer to a perceived conformity between the fans and their media figure/celebrity, have been identified as key predictors of PSRs' intensity (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Young adults develop parasocial bonds with media figures/celebrities, and these relations serve as psychological tools that are crucial for their developmental phase, such as identity, autonomy, and emotional expression (Saikia & Mitra, 2025). Similarly, young adults who are deeply invested in media figures exhibit higher intensities of PSRs compared to other age groups (Giles, 2002; Cohen, 2003).

The terms parasocial interactions and parasocial relationships are used interchangeably in studies and fans do not experience both phenomena as two separate psychological dimensions, even if they both differ in conceptual value (Zabukovec & Faganel, 2024). Moreover, Parasocial Interactions normally indicate brief and temporary feelings of intimacy with favourite celebrities, whereas Parasocial Relationships signify an enduring sense of familiarity or personal knowing (Giles, 2018). Fans who consistently interact with their favourite celebrities or their content, such as watching live streams, commenting on their posts, or receiving public acknowledgements, develop an "interaction" that later feels like a relationship (Hoffner & Bond, 2022).

The emotional shift between fans and celebrities occurs quite effortlessly and swiftly, considering today's social networking sites (SNS), which blur the boundaries of Parasocial Relationships (Balaban et al., 2022). Furthermore, high Parasocial Interaction signifies active fan involvement with the celebrity, giving good feedback to their content and experiencing a sense of reciprocity illusion, where fans feel known by the celebrities (Huang & Mohammad, 2025). When heightened PSI is prolonged and asks for some emotional depth, it turns into a parasocial relationship. This shift denotes that a fan doesn't require any immediate interaction cues to feel close to the celebrity; the celebrity or media figure becomes a psychologically stable part of their fans' small inner world, like that of a lifelong friend or a role model (Xie et al., 2025). This subtle shift forms a relationship-like intimacy where the fans start caring about their favourite celebrities' well-being,

analyzing their personality traits beyond screens or social media, and assimilating them in daily thoughts, dreams, motivations, etc. In short, parasocial interaction is akin to a temporary feeling that serves as a foundation to develop a deeper parasocial relationship, which is an everlasting emotional attachment with the celebrities (Sheng et al., 2025).

➤ *Personality and Parasocial Relationships*

Personality traits play a crucial role in influencing how individuals interact with and experience parasocial relationships (Yan & Yang, 2020). At an individual level, personality traits contribute not only to the possibility of forming parasocial bonds but also to shaping the psychological significance and emotional intensity of these relationships (Gleason et al., 2017). The *Big Five Personality Traits* is a psychological model developed by Costa and McCrae (1992) that describes personality across five broad dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. These traits are believed to remain relatively constant throughout an individual's lifespan (Kabigting, 2021). This model provides a sound theoretical framework to understand the association between personality traits and parasocial relationships. Several studies have shown that personality traits significantly shape the formation, intensity, and maintenance of parasocial relationships (Gleason, 2017; Ganta et al., 2025).

Moreover, Bandura's social-cognitive model (Bandura, 2014) recognize that people learn and internalize behaviours through observation, modelling, and self-reflection, suggesting that personality evolves through continuous interaction between individual agency and social experience. At the same time, biological and evolutionary perspectives explore how genetic makeup and brain mechanisms shape temperament and predispositions (Cloninger et al., 2019). It also suggests that individuals are more prone to imitate the behaviours that are shown or modelled by the idols or figures they admire or find engaging. These imitations and learning cultural expressions can heighten parasocial relationships among such individuals (Rosidi et al., 2024). In the light of the above theories, it becomes evident that personality traits are linked to parasocial relationships.

In the context of digital and online fandoms, personality traits interact dynamically with parasocial relationships. Research shows that individuals high in neuroticism are often more emotionally vulnerable and prone to invest heavily in mediated social relations. Furthermore, extraversion is related to relishing parasocial interactions as substitute social channels (Jarzyna, 2020). Extraverted fans are more likely to actively participate in Twitter trends (Kim & Kim, 2017), Weverse interactions, and livestream engagement, whereas neurotic fans may experience stronger emotional dependency and heightened sensitivity to perceived threats or criticism of idols (Pirzade et al., 2024). Agreeableness has been demonstrated to foster humane involvement in parasocial bonds, whilst openness is linked with reflective and value-based engagement with celebrities (Garcia, 2025). Those high on agreeableness often participate in collective fan behaviors, supporting idol groups through coordinated streaming, merchandise purchases, or advocacy, demonstrating how personality shapes both the emotional and behavioral manifestations of para-sociality

(MacNeill & DiTommaso, 2022; Qu & Zhong, 2025). Individuals high on openness are more likely to explore cross-cultural media content, like K-pop, and engage in diverse fandom activities, including fan communities, voting events, or social media campaigns, which in turn strengthen the intensity of PSR (Jin & Yoon, 2016). Interacting with limited real-world social support, particular personality traits might contribute to dependence on parasocial connections, allowing celebrities or media figures to redeem unmet interpersonal needs such as social validation, sense of belongingness, and emotional proximity. Thus, personality traits work as key elements for both parasocial relationships and emotional significance associated with such relationships. Conversely, traits such as conscientiousness or low openness are generally associated with weaker parasocial engagement, as these individuals may prioritize structured, real-life relationships over one-sided media attachments (Greenwood et al., 2018).

➤ Attachment Styles and PSRs

In modern psychological studies, attachment theory has been elongated beyond face-to-face involvement, including Parasocial Relationships (PSRs) (Kaya, 2025). The development of parasocial attachment stems from initial parasocial interactions that evolve into parasocial relationships (Schmid & Klimmt, 2011), and the parasocial attachment that some individuals form with media personas fulfils attachment needs (Stever & Lawson, 2013). The Parasocial Attachment Theory developed by Cole & Leets in 1999 serves as a framework to extend conventional attachment theory into the dimension of mediated and one-sided non-reciprocal relationships. Later scholars like Stever (2018) argued that individuals or fans form parasocial relationships to seek comfort during stress, creating a haven and using the celebrities as a constant presence to understand their own identity while feeling a sense of secure base. Expanding upon Bowlby's (1969) ideology of attachment as a structured system around seeking intimacy, emotional regulation, and a sense of security, parasocial attachment theory claims that media figures can act as "symbolic attachment figures", figures that would accomplish the uniform psychological functions without any reciprocity (Cole & Leets, 1999). Such figures are believed to be available, responsive, and emotionally meaningful, enabling fans to initiate the attachment processes via repeated media exposure. The Parasocial Attachment Theory (Cole & Leets, 1999) further states that parasocial bonds are monitored and maintained through media assets like perceived proximity, narrative consistency, and back-to-back exposure; these affordances simulate connectedness and availability.

Existing literature highlights that attachment styles are associated with how individuals engage with celebrities, shaping the levels of parasocial intensity, emotional dependency, and other psychological significances (David et al., 2019; Balaban et al., 2022). For example, anxious attachment style is related to stronger parasocial bonds because individuals who are high in anxiety seek emotional reassurance and are more likely to build a compensatory bond with media figures (Qu & Zhong, 2025; MacNeill & DiTommaso, 2022). Rosaen & Dibble (2015) noted that avoidant individuals often prefer emotional distance and engage in Parasocial Relationships only when they feel safe enough from reciprocity. Findings have shown that individuals seek solace,

regulate affect, and restore emotional stability through engagement with mediated figures (Derrick et al., 2008; Derrick, 2012; Lakey et al., 2014). These figures provide comfort during distress or disruptions in social routines (Bond, 2021) and enable individuals to explore thoughts and emotions otherwise inaccessible in daily life (Blumberg et al., 2019). When such parasocial bonds are disrupted, such as when a media figure becomes unavailable, individuals may experience *separation distress*, manifesting as grief, anxiety, or anger, much like reactions to the loss of real-life relationships (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Bond & Calvert, 2014).

The empirical record shows emerging but still limited India-focused research on attachment and PSRs. The existing evidence confirms that Indian youth express strong parasocial bonds, despite physical distance from idols, largely facilitated by Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, and fandom apps (Bora, 2020; Sarma, 2023). India's media ecology (Bollywood dominance, regional language media, and varied internet access) interacts with globalized K-pop fandom in unique ways, making India an important site for future attachment-PSR research that tests cross-cultural moderation. Available literature on Indian samples indicates the prevalence of the use of parasocial ties for identity exploration and social belonging (Ravi & Patki, 2025) but still lacks studies examining the association between attachment and PSR in Indian samples.

II. RATIONALE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The one-sided relationship formed by the fans toward their favourite celebrity is referred to as a parasocial relationship (PSR), a concept introduced by Horton & Wohl (1956). When maintained within healthy boundaries, PSRs can be beneficial, providing fans with comfort, motivation, emotional satisfaction, and even a sense of belonging or purpose. Fans often derive happiness and a dopamine boost from interactions such as fan meetings or online engagements with their idols (Degen, 2023; Safithri et al., 2019). However, excessive parasocial involvement can lead to various psychological concerns (O'Donovan, 2016), including depression stemming from unmet expectations or lack of recognition (Szeto, 2025; Tantra, 2020), disrupted sleep patterns due to constant online monitoring of idols, feelings of betrayal when idols are romantically linked to others, and obsessive behaviours such as stalking or overanalyzing every detail of an idol's life (Balaban et al., 2022).

While substantial research on parasocial relationships exists in Western contexts, studies focusing on South Asian countries, particularly India, remain limited. Interestingly, despite earlier assumptions that India would have minimal exposure to Korean culture, the trend has shifted dramatically. According to Twitter's (now X) internal data in 2020, India ranked 9th globally among countries with the largest K-pop fandoms. This highlights a sharp rise in fan engagement and, consequently, the potential intensity of parasocial relationships. Moreover, given that India is a collectivist society, where personality traits and attachment styles are shaped by social and cultural factors, exploring parasocial relationships within this context becomes especially valuable. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the levels and nature of parasocial relationships among Indian K-pop fans, examining

demographics, personality traits, and attachment styles among Indian K-pop fans.

- *Objectives of the Study*

- ✓ *To investigate various demographic characteristics among Indian K-pop fans.*
- ✓ *To assess the relationship between Attachment Styles and PSR.*
- ✓ *To examine the relationship between Personality Traits and PSR.*

- *Hypotheses*

- ✓ *There is a significant relationship between PSRs and Attachment styles.*
- ✓ *There is a significant association between PSRs and Personality traits.*

III. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Participants*

The sample consisted of 80 young adults (74 females, 05 males, and 01 who preferred not to disclose their gender) aged between 18 and 28 years who were Indian fans of Korean pop culture (K-pop). The mean age of the total sample was 21.83 years. The mean age for males was 23.2 years, and the mean age for females was 21.75 years. To recruit participants for this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting young Indian adults familiar with K-pop. The survey was created using Google Forms and then distributed across various social media platforms such as Reddit, Discord, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp, and Weverse. Additionally, participants who met the inclusion criteria were encouraged to share the survey further with others fitting the same conditions, facilitating more responses through snowball sampling. This combined approach ensures that the sample accurately represents the intended population and provides more nuanced findings and insights that are relevant to the study's objectives.

➤ *Psychological Measures*

- *Big Five Inventory - 10 Scale (BFI-10S)*

The personality traits of the participants were assessed using the BFI-10 scale developed by Rammstedt and John (2007). The Big Five Inventory-10 comprises 10 items assessing five personality dimensions, such as Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, with two items representing each personality trait. This psychological tool is a concise measure used to assess the BFI personality traits highlighted by the Five Factor personality Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 5 (Agree strongly). The scoring for each subscale is determined by summing the two correlating items and then dividing the whole by 2 to receive the mean score for each trait. Items no. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are reversely scored. High scores on each dimension indicate a strong presence of the correlating personality trait. The Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) illustrates decent reliability and validity across various studies. Test-retest reliability coefficients range between 0.68 and 0.84, signifying

the satisfactory temporal constancy over small intervals (Rammstedt & John, 2007).

- *Revised Adult Attachment Scale – Close Relationship Version (RAAS-CRV)*

The Revised Adult Attachment Scale – Close Relationship Version (RAAS-CRV) has been developed by Collins and Read (1996). It is an 18-item self-report assessment tool that evaluates the adult attachment patterns within close relationships, which include friendships, familial bonds, and romantic partnerships. It evaluates the three dimensions, namely, Closeness (CLOSE), Dependence (DEPEND), and Anxiety. Respondents must rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all characteristics of me) to 5 (Very characteristic of me). The CLOSE subscale comprises items such as 1, 6, 8*, 12, 13*, and 17* that assess comfort with connectedness and emotional proximity. The DEPEND subscale includes items 2*, 5, 7*, 14, 16*, and 18*, evaluating to an extent where an individual could feel that they can depend on others. The ANXIETY subscale holds items 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 15, measuring problems about being unloved or abandoned. Items that have an asterisk (*) are reversely scored before calculating the subscale mean. The total score for each subscale is computed by averaging the response scores, with high scores on CLOSE and DEPEND indicating a greater sense of security in attachment. High scores on ANXIETY represent a greater attachment to insecurity. The RAAS-CRV has been administered on diverse populations, showing evidence of good psychometric properties. According to Collins and Read (1996), Cronbach's alpha values showed adequate internal consistency in the dimensions of Close (0.77), Dependence (0.78), and Anxiety (0.85). The scale also remains highly valid, with a value of 0.95, which confirms the scale's robustness.

- *Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale (CPPIs-20)*

Inspired by other parasocial interaction scales, Bocarnea and Brown (2007) constructed the CPPI to assess the strength of relationships formed with celebrities through social media and television. The Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale encompasses 20 items, with each item rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Items such as 8, 18, and 20 are reversibly scored to control response bias. After re-arranging the reverse-scored items, all item scores are to be summed to calculate a total score. The total score ranges from 20 to 100, where higher scores indicate a strong parasocial relationship with celebrities or, in this context, idols, and lower scores indicate weaker parasocial bonds. The CPPI demonstrates strong psychometric properties comparable to other parasocial interaction scales, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging from .80 to .90, indicating high internal consistency (Bocarnea, 2001; Brown et al., 2003a; Matviuk, 2006). Factor analytic analyses yield single-factor solutions with high loadings, confirming that parasocial interaction can be validly measured as a single conceptual variable. Furthermore, the scale exhibits good criterion-related validity, as CPPI items consistently predict theoretically hypothesized outcomes such as identification with popular celebrities (Bocarnea, 2001; Brown et al., 2003b; Matviuk, 2006) and are, in turn, predicted by media exposure to celebrities and personas (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Babb & Brown, 1994; Basil & Brown, 1997; Brown et al., 2003a,

2003b). These findings collectively support the CPPI's reliability and validity as a robust measure of parasocial interaction. Avoid combining SI and CGS units, such as current in amperes and magnetic field in oersteds. This often leads to confusion because equations do not balance dimensionally. If you must use mixed units, clearly state the units for each quantity that you use in an equation.

➤ Procedure

For data collection, a Google form was prepared by the researcher, including tools Parasocial Relationships (PSRs), Personality Traits, and Attachment Theory. The link of the survey was shared with participants through various social media platforms that are commonly used by young adults today. The form consisted of two sections.

The first section comprised demographic information such as participants' age, gender, occupational status, how long they've been into K-pop, and which K-pop group they like, etc. The second section encompassed Big-Five Inventory–10 Scale, Revised Adult Attachment Scale–Close Relationship, and Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale.

The form did not collect any personal information from the participants, and all the necessary precautions were considered to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was taken from the participants before they started filling out the form. Clear and detailed instructions were given regarding the nature of the study and its objectives. Moreover,

the participants took about 10-15 minutes to complete the form. The respondents were encouraged to give honest answers. They were not provided with any incentives. The responses were stored and converted automatically into spreadsheets for analysis. The link was open and accepted responses from 02/09/2025 to 26/10/2025.

➤ Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the normality of the data, along with calculating the prevalence of various demographic questions. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was computed to analyse the relationship between Parasocial Interaction (PSI), Personality Traits, and Attachment Theory among Indian K-pop Fans.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before running the inferential tests, descriptive statistics, including Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis, were calculated (see Table 1).

Table 1 signifies the values of the variables such as Parasocial relationships, Personality Traits, and Attachment styles among Indian K-pop Fans. Mean and Standard Deviation values describe the central tendency and variability of the data, while skewness and kurtosis fall within the acceptable spectrum for normality of data; therefore, the data collected were normally distributed, which states that further inferential statistics can be employed in this study.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics Results of Parasocial Relationships, Personality Traits, and Attachment Styles among Indian K-Pop Fans

Variables	Total Sample of Indian K-Pop Fans (N=80)			
	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parasocial Relationships	68.61	14.266	-.066	-.605
Openness	6.71	1.685	.419	-.319
Conscientiousness	5.73	1.467	-.001	-.065
Extraversion	4.91	2.112	.366	-.697
Agreeableness	7.53	1.842	-.614	-.262
Neuroticism	6.64	1.759	-.027	-.214
Close	18.18	4.263	.036	-.131
Depend	15.79	4.426	-.185	-.282
Anxiety	19.01	6.005	-.017	-.751

Table 2 Favourite K-Pop Groups*

Favourite K-Pop Groups	Frequency	Percentage
BTS	50	39.68%
BLACKPINK	11	8.73%
SEVENTEEN	11	8.73%
TXT	08	6.34%
ENHYPEN	07	5.56%
STRAY KIDS	07	5.56%
TWICE	06	4.76%
ATEEZ	05	3.96%
OTHERS	21	16.67%

*The sum of percentages is 126.1% because participants could select multiple groups.

Table 2 shows that Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) is leading in the category of "favourite K-pop group" with 50 participants (39.68%). Followed by Others (groups that received less than

5 votes) with 21 participants (16.67%), followed by Blackpink (BP) and Seventeen (SVT) with 11 participants (8.73%), along with Tomorrow by Together (TXT) with 08 participants

(6.34%), followed by Enhypen (EN-) and Stray Kids (SKZ) (5.56%) each with 07 participants. Twice with 06 participants (4.76%) and finally, ATEEZ (ATZ) with only 05 participants (3.96.0%).

Overall, the results of Table 2 suggest that Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) has appeared as the most favourite group in this sample, emphasizing both the dominance of major global

acts (Parc & Kim, 2020) and the scope of the fans' interests. Furthermore, the representation of the boy bands (BTS, TXT, EN-, SVT, SKZ, and ATZ) was more than that of the girl bands (Black Pink and Twice) out of the total seven K-pop groups. This finding aligns with Jin and Yoon's (2016) study, where idols, mainly male idols, cultivate emotional and proximate bonding with fans by showcasing curated personas that magnify perceived closeness and approachability.

Table 3 Number of Years Spent Being a Fan of K-Pop

K-Pop Fan in Years	Frequency	Percentage
6 months to 1 year	04	5.0%
2 years and above	12	15.0%
4 years and above	32	40.0%
6 years and above	24	30.0%
8 years and above	04	5.0%
10 years and above	04	5.0%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 3 reveals how long respondents have been fans of K-pop. 32 participants have been fans for 4 years or above (40.0%), followed by 24 participants who have been in the fandom for 6 years or above (30.0%). 04 of them have been fans for 6 months to 1 year (5.0%), and the rest 08 participants have been fans for 8 years or above (5.0%), and 10 years or above (5.0%), respectively. This showcases the prolonged

nature of fandom involvement indicating that the majority of participants have been fans of K-pop for many years, suggesting that Indian K-pop fans reflect stable engagement over an extended period, maintaining consistency with studies showcasing that sustained fandom contributes to the formation of identity and social affiliation (Chandi & Trehan, 2022).

Table 4 Most Used Apps to Engage with K-Pop Idols (Participants Could Select Multiple Options)

Most Used Apps	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	70	84.3%
You Tube	65	78.3%
Weverse	41	49.4%
X (Twitter)	34	41%
Others	14	16.8%

According to Table 4, the most used app is Instagram, chosen by 70 participants (84.3%). Whilst the second most used app is YouTube, with 65 respondents (78.3%), followed by 41 participants (49.4%) selecting Weverse as the app used to engage with K-pop Idols, then X (formerly known as Twitter) is the fourth most engaged app by K-pop fans, with 34 participants (41%). Lastly, apps such as Threads, Spotify, YouTube Music, Station Head, Reddit, and KakaoTalk were classified as 'others' selected by 14 respondents (16.8%).

Most used media in the present study highlighted the platform-driven characteristic of fandom engagement within India, with Instagram and YouTube appearing as the most used channels to engage with K-pop related content. These social media sites do more than just host music and visuals; they encourage parasocial relationships, which are one-sided emotional and psychological relationships that fans form with idols even in the absence of direct reciprocity (Chung & Cho, 2017). Additionally, a recent study found that Instagram was the most utilized platform for celebrity engagement, followed by YouTube, underlining how visual and engaging content on these networks remarkably supports perceived closeness and emotional connection with media figures (Saikia & Mitra, 2025).

An additional study shows YouTube as the primary medium through which Indian K-pop fans can access the content for free and build enticing bonds with the idols, which then contributes to the stronger parasocial engagement (Ganta et al., 2025). Other apps, such as Weverse, an app made by a Korean company with the purpose of encouraging parasocial relationships between the idol and fans, were considered the third most used app in the present study. The usage of X (formerly known as Twitter) and Threads further signifies that while fans have diversified engagement strategies across various platforms, Instagram's reel and image-focused feature, and YouTube's video content stay central to how Indian fans interact with and relate emotionally to their favourite K-pop idols.

Table 5 shows that most of the fans (31) reported that they never purchased any K-pop-related items (38.75%), while 24 rarely spent money on things related to K-pop (30%). Meanwhile, 19 fans reported that they sometimes spend their money on such things (23.75%); 06 participants stated that they often spent money on K-pop-related stuff (7.50%). Although 0 respondents chose always as an option, as seen in Table 5.

Table 5 Money Spent on K-Pop Related Purchases (Idol Merch, Albums, Toys, etc.)

Money Spent on Buying Merch/Stuff	Frequency	Percentage
Never	31	38.75%
Rarely	24	30.00%
Sometimes	19	23.75%
Often	06	7.50%
Always	0	-
Total	80	100%

Table 6 Time Invested in Watching K-Pop Content

Time spent on K-Pop Related Content	Frequency	Percentage
1-2 hours	38	47.5%
3-4 hours	21	26.3%
5-6 hours	13	16.2%
More than 6 hours	08	10%
Total	80	100%

Table 6 demonstrated that the majority of participants spent only 1-2 hours out of 24 hours on K-pop related content (47.5%), while some 21 participants spend around 3-4 hours on the content (26.3%), followed by 13 individuals who spent 5-6 hours consuming K-pop content (16.2%) and only 08 reported consuming K-pop content for more than 6 hours (10%).

Tables 5 and 6 showed that financial investment in merchandise was low among participants, while time spent consuming was moderate, with most participants consuming for limited hours, whereas a few participants reported infrequent financial investments in merchandise or other related purchases. This concept signifies the affective attachment and symbolic participation, like streaming videos, following idols on social platforms, voting for them, and engaging in fan events. All these serve as foremost expressions

of fandom instead of material consumption. Research has shown that symbolic rites, investing time, and emotional labour can act as emotionally salient engagement practices, despite the absence of heightened levels of consumer spending and challenging stereotypes that powerful fandoms critically translate into heavy financial investment (Stanfill, 2019). Another study found that while a sustained number of individuals actively consume K-pop content and actively participate in fandom-related events such as fan signs, lives, or any other celebrations relating to idols, there is a proportion of fans that would remain passive supporters or interact mainly via social media rather than extensive purchase behaviour (Sarma, 2023). This further highlight that the relationship Indian fans form with K-pop is significantly shaped by repeated media exposure as compared to that of financial investments (Sarma, 2023).

Table 7 Number of Fans Considering Themselves Part of the Fandom

Part of the Fandom	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	44	55%
No	10	12.5%
Maybe	26	32.5%
Total	80	100%

As Table 7 illustrates, only 44 participants out of 80 consider themselves a part of the fandom (55%), while 10 participants do not consider themselves a part of the fandom (12.5%); meanwhile, 26 participants aren't sure whether they are or are not a part of the fandom (32.5%).

Findings of Table 7 reinforce the fluid and self-defined characteristics of fandom identification among Indian K-pop fans. The percentages signal that the fandom identification in India is debatable and fixed to behavioural criteria. This aligns with the study of Gray et al. (2017), who suggested that modern fandoms are moulded by media-based participation and

personal interpretation instead of strict membership standards. Furthermore, the study discovered that fandom and self-identity formation are impacted by globalized media consumption and immersive digital experiences, with young adults combining worldwide cultural influences with native social understandings rather than sticking to rigid insider-outsider boundaries (Roy & Das, 2022). In short, these results show that Indian K-pop fandom is a continuous, digitally enabled, emotionally valuable, and characterized by flexible identity discussion formed by psychological proximity, repeated media exposure, and socio-cultural contexts.

Table 8 Levels of Parasocial Relationship Intensity among Indian K-Pop Fans.

Parasocial Relationship Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Score <67)	40	50%
High (Score ≥ 67)	40	50%

Furthermore, to assess the level of parasocial relationship intensity, the sample was divided, categorizing participants into low and high parasocial relationship groups using a median split at a score of 67. As seen in Table 8, there were 40 participants in each

group (50%), indicating a balanced distribution. This balance reflects a moderate overall prevalence of parasocial engagement in the present sample.

➤ *The Relationship Between Parasocial Relationships and Personality Traits*

• *Hypothesis 1*

Table 9 Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Between Parasocial Relationships and Personality Traits

Variables	Parasocial Relationships (Correlation Coefficients <i>r</i>)	Significance Levels
Openness	-.144	.204
Conscientiousness	.081	.476
Extraversion	.010	.931
Agreeableness	-.099	.082
Neuroticism	.069	.540

Tables 9 and 10 present Pearson's correlation results examining associations between Parasocial Relationships, Personality Traits, and Attachment Styles. No statistically significant relationships were found, leading to the rejection of

both hypotheses. This suggests that parasocial engagement in this sample may be shaped more by contextual and cultural factors, such as the collectivistic nature of Indian fandoms, rather than stable personality traits or attachment styles.

➤ *The Relationship Between Parasocial Relationships And Attachment Styles*

• *Hypothesis 2*

Table 10 Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Between Parasocial Relationships and Attachment Styles

Variables	Parasocial Relationships (Correlation Coefficients <i>r</i>)	Significance Levels
Close	.074	.123
Depend	.079	.483
Anxiety	.092	.416

Previous authors have also reported a non-significant correlation between the variables, indicating that the relationship may not be uniformly consistent across various samples or behavioural outcomes (Rana & Kumari, 2024). An Indian study examining the relationship between parasocial relationships and personality traits among emerging adults found that while psychoticism showed a weak positive association with parasocial relationships, extraversion and neuroticism did not exhibit significant correlations, suggesting that major personality dimensions may not consistently predict one-sided fan-idol bonds in young adults (Mehrotra & Singh, 2025). Furthermore, attachment styles do not always exhibit clear links with parasocial relationships. Similar findings were reported involving Indian participants by Sibia et al. (2023) and Saikia and Mitra (2025), who documented no significant associations between attachment orientations and parasocial engagement.

A spectrum of other explanatory factors can help in understanding the weak and non-significant correlations identified in this study. There could possibly be potential indirect or mediated pathways between the variables under study. Moreover, in Indian society, social norms, group behaviour, and collective media activism can moderate how individuals experience parasocial bonds, which in turn increases the likelihood of having overshadowed the impact of enduring personality traits or attachment styles. Also, the sample size was small, which may have limited the detection of statistical power and variability. Further, the study employed usage of short-form self-report measures like the Big-Five Inventory 10 and the Revised Adult Attachment Scale-Close Relationship version. Though these tools have good

psychometric properties, there could be a possibility that these scales may have lacked in capturing the minute individual differences in the context of fan-idol complexity.

V. IMPLICATION, LIMITATION, AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The current research contributes significantly to the growing literature on parasocial relationships particularly in a swiftly growing fandom culture that has been understudied in the Indian context. Insights from this study can assist researchers and practitioners in better understanding why some fans experience stronger emotional investment, heightened identification, or increased responsiveness to events involving idols. The outcomes emphasize the role of the digital community and its dynamics as a sustaining force. As many global fandoms continue to become big, understanding how various cultures like collectivistic values, social media behaviours, and India's online youth self-identity interact with parasocial processes becomes pivotal. The research further argues that parasocial attachment in India is not merely a phenomenon generated from the West, rather it is formed by local social norms, technological exposure, and emotional needs. This provides a benchmark for future studies to explore cross-cultural variations in PSRs with better precision.

The study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. The reliance on self-report instruments introduces the possibility of social desirability bias and subjective distortions in how participants evaluate their own attachment or personality characteristics. Future researchers can use a mixed-method approach involving qualitative

interviews or focus groups that can provide richer insights into the emotional depth and nuance that quantitative data alone cannot capture. Moreover, the narrow focus on young, social media-based K-pop fans further limit the broader generalization. Future scholars can explore diverse cultural or regional samples to highlight whether Indian fandom practices align with or challenge mainstream international fandom narratives. Lastly, since the current study used a cross-sectional design, causal inferences cannot be made, and the observed relationships should be interpreted carefully. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal studies to better understand how parasocial bonds evolve, especially as new technologies bring in virtual idols, AI-facilitated interactions, and app-based personalized communication.

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