

# **An Analysis of the Ups and Downs of fandom for BTS among Iranian fans**

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## Introduction

Models play a crucial role in shaping the personalities of individuals and societies. Models are like lighthouses that show the way to ships, they show the way to the ship of existence of humans and societies. Therefore, from religious viewpoints to contemporary psychological and sociological perspectives, all of them have confirmed the significance of models as essential for guiding human behavior and societal norms.

The significant impact of models on the education of individuals and societies has led both well-intentioned individuals and institutions, as well as malicious entities seeking to exploit societies and human existence, to recognize the power of modeling and utilize it to their desirable Models. While virtuous individuals and reputable institutions may use positive models to inspire and guide others, those with malicious intent may manipulate seemingly noble models to lure individual's malevolent goals. They try to turn people towards evil goals by processing seemingly valuable and sublime models, relying on seemingly attractive models.

Examining the progression of role models throughout human history reveals an intriguing trend. Early general role models in societies fixated on singular exceptional traits of individuals, such as Rostam was a mountain of muscles, Barbod and Nakisa were genius in musicianship or Cleopatra was a prototype of beauty. But, in the recent decades during developing role models, mankind has embraced more intricate and influential role models to achieve its goals. This shift is exemplified creation of two-dimensional Models by the fusion of sports and art. Individuals like Arnold, a renowned bodybuilding champion, ventured into the realm of art and turned to an iconic figure in movies. This integration showcases the importance of adapting to multidimensional models processing in human development.

In the new wave of role models processing, if someone was for example interested in sports, often find themselves drawn to the movies of iconic figures such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, and Bruce Lee for inspiration and entertainment; and if someone was interested in the art of cinema, Again, while cinema fans can admire their performances and contributions to the film industry and entertained the same movies.

Examining the model processing process currently shows that the sheer importance of models has caused some institutions and social movements to try to process multi-dimensional models in order to achieve their goals. Consequently, the process of model processing has transitioned from converting one to two-dimensional models to now encompassing the handling of multi-dimensional models as a necessary advancement.

Among the institutions that have been successful in processing multi-dimensional models, we can mention the Big Hit Entertainment Company (Kpopery BTS Group Company)<sup>1</sup>. Right from the group's inception, the company strategically implemented the processing of multi-dimensional personalities.

In its initial operations, Big Hit Company handpicked "beautiful" boys to create a group. These individuals, known for their good looks, underwent rigorous disciplines such as singing, dancing, media, and acting. In addition to their vocal abilities, they also captivate audiences with dynamic, high-energy dance routines that are challenging even for the average person to perform.

In addition to their spectacular performances, the BTS boys have positioned themselves as champions of youth through their music, which addresses the challenges and conflicts faced by young people. Delving into themes of rebellion against outdated values, they have established themselves as an intellectual group and a beacon of hope for the younger generation. By offering guidance on overcoming the obstacles of the harsh world surrounded youth, and

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<sup>1</sup> Big Hit Entertainment established BTS in 2010, and since 2013, the group has attained remarkable global success.

Bang Si-Hyuk, the CEO of Big Hit Entertainment Company, having this idea in mind that today's youth need heroes who support them without preaching to them from above (Wikipedia) established the Bangtan Boys (also known as BTS).

Suga, one of the seven members of BTS, expressed in an interview that they aim to empathize with their audience by telling stories that resonate with people's emotions, anxieties, worries, and pains. They focus on portraying aspects of human experience that may be overlooked by others.

These insights led the BTS group to cultivate a distinct atmosphere compared to other Korean pop groups, resulting in widespread recognition both domestically and internationally.

"BTS's "Blood, Sweat and Tears" topped all South Korean charts and their album "Map of the Soul: 7" ranked on number1 in Billboard Hot 100™ and Billboard Hot 200™ charts. Their music video also set a record for the most viewed YouTube premiere and garnered over 100 million views within 24 hours of its release. Additionally, BTS received awards at the Billboard Music Festival. These are just a few of the remarkable of the BTS group, which has become a role model for many teenagers and young people" (Wikipedia.)

In addition to their recent accomplishments, the Big Hit Entertainment Company and its BTS group have unexplored dimensions that this current compilation seeks to uncover through field interviews with Iranian fans of the BTS group. Beyond evaluating their recent global successes, the collection aims to analyze the overt and concealed economic, cultural, social, political, moral-ideological, psychological, and aesthetic goals of Big Hit Entertainment Company and its BTS group.

by portraying themselves as full supporter of the new generation, BTS has solidified their reputation as the "savior for the youth".

On the other hand, the boys of the BTS group, at the same time as trying to provide productions to "fill the leisure time of the fans and entertain them", started "they have also formed deep and meaningful connections with their followers", they, for example claim this slogan: "If you have no refuge If you don't have, we in Seoul think about you and you can always count on us as your support and allies".

The "philanthropic and seemingly altruistic" actions of the BTS group on the one hand and their "social-political activities" on the other hand, are other attractions that the Big Hit Entertainment Company has, and finally, boys by , by abstaining from marriage maintaining a distance from public romantic relationships with girls, indirectly present themselves as "love" and "potential wife of female audience".

The combination of attributes within the BTS group presents these stars as the multi-dimensional role models (beautiful, full of excitement, with a beautiful voice, altruistic, having socio-political concerns, intellectual depth, savior of the youth, and the like). It's possible that in the realm of human models it's rare to find individuals or groups who embody all these qualities simultaneously.

Analyzing the field evidence among BTS fans highlights the significant influence the group holds over its audience, particularly among female fans.

The preliminary investigations of the researcher and his students in the field of understanding the effects of the BTS group on its fans indicate that sometimes powerful fan organizations have been formed at the level of the BTS fans, which is assumed to be the case with the release of 8 hours of annual travel videos of the boys of BTS (Bon Voyage) in the virtual space, a dedicated fan organization mobilizes a team of 30 translators to work tirelessly throughout the night translating the content of the BTS boys' films, and after the translation is finished, they hand over the prepared content to the editors of the group and themselves try to take a rest or go to sleep while editors try to prepare the final edition of text, and leave it to the third team of their group for uploading and take a rest themselves. And, the uploading team immediately uploads the prepared content in the virtual space and delivers it to the hands of countless fans of The BTS group. Similarly, there have been instances where fans have exhibited intense dedication by streaming new BTS songs round the clock in order to boost their favorite group's ranking on global music platforms or to secure wins in popular people's choice awards. Fans have known to engage in



activities such as "continuous listening to the desired song for 24 hours a day" or "participating in voting campaigns" to increase song plays and votes, leading to high rankings on prominent music sites like Billboard, Spotify, and other similar platforms, and even win the people's choice awards.

One of the writer's students mentioned in her report that when she went to one of the girls' high schools to collect the required data, she noticed that almost half of the school's students were crying and when she was surprised to find out more about this asked if someone from your teaching staff had passed away that you are so impatient, the students answered that "No, Jin - one of the boys of BTS - has joined to the military service!"

During their interviews, many girls expressed extreme devotion to their favorite K-pop idols<sup>1</sup>. Some stated that they were "willing to sacrifice their lives for the boy band", while others confessed to "experiencing panic attacks when confronted by rival group fans hat words". Shock, one girl claimed she "would sell her kidney to afford a night at Jimin's house". There were reports of "Some students argue over the claim that a specific idol is their "husband," leading to fights with other students and pulling each other hairs in school" and "have commissioned people who are good writers to prepare pornographic stories centered on themselves and one of the boys of the group". "Some fans even resorted to threatening their own families to fund trips to South Korea or engage in self-harm". Some have "started organizing large gatherings in the presence of BTS channel admins, BTS page admins, BTS collectors, BTS storytellers, and regular fans to honor the boys of the group in Iran". "Practiced dancing for 5-6 hours a day in the hopes of being selected as backstage dancers for BTS performances". "Hearing the rumor of their favorite star being in a relationship with a girl, they have started having suicidal thoughts." They talk as if they are married to the star they admire". Or even "They claim to be pregnant with a child from their favorite star".

The preliminary field investigation conducted by the research group has shown that numerous students, including elementary students, have started teaching themselves the Korean language. Some have become proficient that they can translate Korean texts with ease or manage their Instagram pages with Korean writing.

The high sales of Korean language teaching books, following English language books, in society of Iran is a clear example of the influence of K-pop groups, especially BTS, on Iranian teenagers and young people. Moreover, high school

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<sup>1</sup> The literal meaning of 'idol' is a figure of worship, but in K-pop, it refers to a singer or members of a group. In the present text, this word is considered equivalent to 'star'

students are seen with the seven members of the boy band BTS as their computer screen background, while their parents or school staff are either unaware of them or simply overlook the reasons behind this behavior..

The collection of what was mentioned prompted the writer to act in the direction of clarifying the changes that have occurred in the processing of models in the contemporary world<sup>1</sup>.

The author's approach in compiling this collection involved initial training of undergraduate, MA, and doctoral students on qualitative research methods, emphasized on the importance of role models and model processing of the BTS group under Big Hit Company. Subsequently, the students were instructed with conducting in-depth interviews with fans of the BTS group upon finding

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<sup>1</sup> The research method employed in this study was qualitative in nature. In the realm of humanities, researchers often encounter issues and inquiries that cannot be adequately addressed through common research methods. These questions may involve complex or abstract concepts that defy easy definition, they may lack precedence in existing literature, making it difficult to formulate an easy to test hypothesis. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for addressing such novel and unexplored topics.

Qualitative research is characterized by a non-linear process where various components intersect rather than progress in a linear fashion. In other words, in qualitative research, data collection and analysis take place simultaneously, with the researcher continuing this iterative process until reaching a point of saturation. Saturation represents the stage at which the researcher is confident in the quality and adequacy of the collected data for generating a comprehensive and accurate analysis.

The qualitative research methodology adopted in this study was grounded theory. This approach is particularly well-suited for investigating topics with limited existing knowledge.

The theorists utilizing grounded theory strive to cultivate an understanding of the processes linked to issues. In qualitative research, it is essential for researchers to effectively report their interpretive findings without relying on statistical methods.

Qualitative research method books typically recommend conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with sample sizes ranging from 8-12 or 20 participants. However, I believe these suggested numbers may be unreliable in the Iranian context due to several factors.

The difference in the socialization processes between the West and Iran can be considered as the first key factor. In Iran, socialization is often perceived as a challenging and occasionally conflicting process, contrasting with the smoother experience in Western societies.

For instance, the values instilled by the primary socializing institutions such as the home, school, and society in Iran exhibit a diversity of perspectives. In other words, parents emphasize survival skills and resilience, educational institutions highlight sacrifice, jihad, martyrdom, while, individuals in Iranian society observe that economic corruption has become pervasive, with many officials and their relatives engaging in rent-seeking activities. These scenarios contribute to challenges and hurdles in the socialization process in Iran, representing a complex landscape of integration and socialization compared to Western societies where socializing agents typically align their messages and actions.

Another factor that presents a significant challenge when deciding about increasing the sample size in qualitative research is the limited financial support available for many researchers in Iran. Unlike in the Western context that researchers typically compensate participants for their time and cooperation, such practices may not be feasible in the Iranian research environment. And this limitation can lead to interview endings as participants may be unwilling to spend sufficient time due to the lack of compensation and end the interview before providing enough information. Additionally, political apprehensions among respondents in Iran, although relatively minor in this study, along with issues such as respondent fatigue, lack of focus, conflicting responses, particularly common among younger participants, further highlight the challenges faced in qualitative research settings in Iran.

The challenges faced by Iranian researchers have led to an increase in the number of in-depth interviews conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative phenomenon under study. And in the present study, the number of interviews required to collect research data exceeded the recommendations found in qualitative research literature.

participants. The interviews aimed to gather insights on the experiences, challenges, and successes of Big Hit Company, BTS, and their fan base. The unique challenges faced by Iranian researchers necessitate an increase in the number in-depth interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative phenomenon under study.

In the current research, interviews were conducted with available samples from various cities in Iran. The criteria for participating in the interviews were being a fan and having knowledge about BTS.

The collected information was categorized into three main headings after gathering the necessary field data: "Investigation of the obvious and hidden aspects of Big Hit Company" (the company that owns the BTS group), "Investigation of the obvious and hidden dimensions of the BTS boy group," and "Investigation of the ups and downs of fans of the BTS group."

The present book focuses on "analyzing fan works of BTS from the viewpoint of Iranian fans" and consists of an introduction and 10 chapters.

The introduction of the book outlining the research methodology while also provides an broad overview of the topics discussed.

The subsequent chapters of the book present the results of 47 in-depth interviews conducted with BTS fans, exploring the BTS impact on the Iranian fans across various dimensions including psychological, social, cultural, educational, moral-ideological, economic, political, artistic, aesthetic, and familial aspects.

In the chapter focusing on the psychological effects of BTS fandom, the following topics are covered:

Adolescent confusions, motivation, improved self-confidence, mood enhancement, relaxation, joy creation, Adjustment of impressionability over time, imaginative love, maternal relationship fulfillment, satisfaction of sensation-seeking , sensation-oriented engagement, mental exhaustion, time-wasting, hallucinations, being stuck in the concrete operational stage, gradual degradation of sensitivity , cognitive significant errors, occurrence of some mental disorders, Sexual ambiguity, dependence and addiction to BTS, and other psychological aspects are also discussed.

In the chapter on the social effects of BTS fandom, the following topics have been discussed:

Criticism of Iran's domestic constraints; Criticizing the professional and moral weaknesses of Iranian celebrities, Starting a fandom journey from a young age,

celebrities addressing the youth-related issues, deepening the relationship between celebrities and fans, to have a multi-dimensional and multifaceted approach toward the BTS group and its members, encouraging immigrating to South Korea, face-to-face and virtual friendships, altruism, globalization and global thinking, imitating celebrities, identity transformations, evolution of fans social relationships, feeling obligated to support the group, trying to increase fans, Being biased in favoritism, engaging in emotional encounters with insiders and outsiders, criticizing the policies of the BTS group company and other social issues.

In the chapter of cultural impressions of BTS fandom, the following topics have been discussed:

The growth of K-pop groups in the primary cultural infrastructure establishments of Korea, the promotion of K-pop music to an entertainment industry, the provision of content and entertainment of interest to teenagers and young people by the BTS group, encouraging fans to read books and watch videos, interest in learning more about Korean culture, spreading Korean language learning among fans, welcoming Korean food, appreciating fan-created content and exploring other cultural aspects.

In the chapter on the educational impacts of fandom from the BTS group, following topics are discussed, including:

Active learning techniques, improving fans' technical skills, lack of attention to lessons and academic failure, and various awareness campaigns.

In the chapter of moral-ideological impacts of fandom from BTS group, the following topics are discussed:

Encouraging moral tolerance, moral-value effectiveness, diminishing ideological dimensions, motivating fans to embrace the sexual revolution, accepting relativistic ethics, moral transformation in the family environment; and transformation in individual social and environmental ethics of some fans.

In the socio-political and economic impacts of being a BTS fan, various issues have been explored, including:

Alignment of BTS with the capitalist system, promotion of consumerism, influence of power center on artistic direction, political engagement of BTS, career role model, fan's spending to support BTS, income generation through fans advertising for BTS.

In the chapter on the artistic effects of fandom within the BTS community, the following topics are examined:

The superiority of BTS K-pop over Western pop, the presence of meaningful, complex, and mysterious content in BTS music videos, the variety of BTS songs, group's stage presence, their individual charms, and the fusion of BTS music intricate and exciting dance routines.

In the chapter of aesthetic works of fans of BTS group, the following topics are discussed:

The external attractiveness of BTS stars, their influence on beauty and fashion trends, and their modeling endeavors in fashion industry are discussed.

In the chapter on the impact of BTS on fans and their families, some aspects have been explored, including:

The feeling of being a family with the stars, the emergence of some familial conflicts due to fandom of the BTS group and damage to the family.

In the following, the aforementioned topics will be discussed in detail.

## 2- The psychological effects of being a fan of BTS

"Fire, fire, fire, fire,  
When I wake up in my room, I have nothing.  
After the sun sets, I stagger and walk.  
I'm completely drunk, drunk.  
Just cursing on the street, on the street.  
I've lost my life, I'm like a crazy guy  
Everything's a mess, livin' like beep  
Live however you want, it's your life anyway  
Stop trying, it's okay to lose  
...  
You compare me with others, who do you think you are to compare me?  
Stop comparing, I'm just me!  
So what?  
Just live the way you want, your life is yours.  
Don't try too hard, it's okay if you lose.  
Fire, in every step you take,  
Fire, jump and go crazy,  
Set it all on fire, woo woo woo" (a part of BTS' Fire song).

The fandom surrounding various groups, with BTS being a prominent example, can have a multitude of effects on individuals spanning psychological, social, cultural, moral-ideological, educational, economic-political, aesthetic, artistic, health, and familial dimensions.

This discussion specifically explores the psychological impacts associated with being a fan of BTS. The following aspects will be considered in relation to the psychological effects of BTS fandom:

Adolescent identity struggles, motivation, bolstering of self-esteem, mood enhancement, help to feel comfort and happiness, fostering creative expression, adaptability over time, imaginative love, and realization of maternal treatment.

Satisfying excitement, making thrilling encounters, mental exhaustion, wasting time, engaging in illusions, being stuck in the concrete operational stage, gradual desensitization, serious cognitive errors (such as avoiding new information and lacking critical analysis, exaggeration, involvement in emotion-driven interactions, justification, disregarding contradictions, conflicting perceptions, reliance on weak logic and contradictory sources, interpreting intentions, deferring topics to third, engaging in futile disputes, self-deception, self-censorship, living in a fantasy world, dreaming, resorting to deception, pretense, impulsive reactions, shaping perceptions, manifestation of mental disorders (anxiety, mental preoccupation, feeling humiliation, frustration, jealousy, depression, nervousness, physical deformity, alienation), loss of sexual identity, dependency and addiction to BTS, and other psychological concerns (enhancement of critical thinking among fans, acceptance of fan-generated content, exploration of taboo thoughts, distraction of curiosity, seeking refuge in music, experience of content saturation, using of explicit content, sexual arousal among fans, disregard for mental health considerations).

In the following, the aforementioned topics will be examined.

## **1-2- Adolescent confusions**

Adolescence is a crucial and tumultuous stage for teenagers, impacting not only the individual but also their family. It is a period marked substantial physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and ideological transformations. Recent research brain imaging techniques has shed light on the significant changes that take place in the brain during puberty, adding another layer to our understanding of this developmental stage.

Recent research suggests that disparities in myelination and maturation of nerve in the adolescent brain contribute to heightened emotional responses. Due to incomplete development in cognitive centers, adolescents may experience more intense emotional reactions, impacting their recent emotional behavior. In addition, during adolescence, the brain reaches its peak growth in the gray cortex and accumbens, often referred to as the pleasure center of the brain. This growth leads to heightened experiences of pleasure for teenagers. However, as the gray cortex thins out post adolescence, the brain, including the nucleus accumbens may not be able to recreate the same level of pleasure experienced during adolescence in adulthood.

The transformation of the sleep cycle during adolescence is another biological factor that contributes to the challenges for both teenagers and parents. While an

increase in melatonin, sleep hormone, in parents' brains signals bedtime, fluctuating levels of melatonin in teenagers' brains can make them either alert and at the time that melatonin in the parents brain drains out, and they are awake, its abundance in the teen brain makes them sleepy. This mismatch in sleep patterns can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, as parents may not fully comprehend the biological changes occurring in their adolescent's brain.

What was mentioned will lead to an increase in risk-taking and emotional behaviors in teenagers, while parents often challenge them for their recent behaviors due to the lack of awareness of the adolescent's brain changes. .In addition to what was mentioned, the transformation of the sleep cycle during adolescence is another biological factor that provides reasons for the relative monotony of children and parents. This means that when the parents need to sleep due to the increase of melatonin (sleep hormone) in their brain and go to bed, a little melatonin in the brain of the teenager keeps him awake and when there is a lot of melatonin in the brain of the teenager, it makes him sleepy. He continues to sleep, at that time, there is no melatonin in the parents' brains and therefore they are awake, as a result, again, the lack of understanding of the specific biological changes that occur in the adolescent's brain, causes some other criticisms of the parents towards the adolescent.

In addition to the changes in the adolescent brain and sleep cycle, parents may struggle to understand the emotional and psychological changes their teenager is undergoing, leading to criticism or conflicts with their teen. Adolescence is often characterized by a period of negation and defiance as teenagers seek to establish their independence and identity. Psychologist Henry Wallen describes this as the "age of denial," where teenagers assert themselves by saying no to their parent's requests. During this stage, teenagers transition from complying with parental authority to their own autonomy and seeking independence. To illustrate this to their parents that it's important to understand that parents who once had to set boundaries for their child during their formative years, now find themselves confronting new reality as their child enters adolescence. At this stage, the child is transitioning being obedient to exploring their own autonomy and seeking independence. It allows them to establish their identity separate from their parents' control, and this process of self-discovery is essential for the child to learn how to stand on their own feet and navigate the complexities of adulthood.

During puberty, adolescents often experience a heightened sense of isolation which can lead to conflicts with their parents. This may lead parents to misconstrue their child behavior by assuming romantic relationships are the



cause of this isolation. But in fact, this period of self-absorption and isolation is a crucial phase for teenagers to engage in self-reflection. This offers them the opportunity to contemplate the values principles that will shape their identity as responsible male or female members of society in the future.

During adolescence, teenagers are often driven by a strong desire for independence, which may manifest in risky behavior and romantic relationships. Furthermore, adolescents go through a process of psychological weaning, where they start to distance themselves from their family's values and establish their own within their peer group. Misinterpretations of these developmental milestones by parents can to misunderstanding and strain in the parent-child relationship, ultimately resulting in a potential crisis.

Adolescent's desire for independence in the midst of his sensation-seeking , the interest of teenagers and young people in relationships with the opposite sex, finding the importance of the peer group for the teenager and the realization of psychological weaning (meaning a relative separation from the family and its values and entering the group of peers), Each of these factors can contribute to parents forming negative perceptions of their teenager, leading to misunderstandings and potentially straining the parent-child relationship, resulting in a crisis.

In addition to the mentioned scenarios, teenagers are also exposed to the virtual world, where they see curated versions of people's lives on social media platforms like Instagram. This exposure can distort their perception of reality, making them compare their own lives with the seemingly extravagant and perfect lives they see online.

These unrealistic expectations and perceptions can create tension within the family dynamic as teenagers may feel entitled to certain privileges that their parents are unable to provide.

In addition to the mentioned cases, the teenager's encounter with the virtual space and his encounter with the showcase of many people's lives in social networks such as Instagram, exposes the teenager to exaggerated realities. On the other hand, when the teenager does not have similar experiences in their own life, such as dining at luxury restaurants, attending extravagant parties, or going on foreign trips, having access to brand-name clothing, they may internalize feelings of guilt and inadequacy. This can create tension within the family as the teenager may their parents responsible for not being able to offer them the same level of material comforts as others.

Furthermore, as the teenager interacts with the society, they Given that, according to Piaget's theory, the teenager is in stage of idealism and may perceive himself as a savior Messiah, but the stark contrast between their idealistic view of the world and the harsh realities of the society like the class gap, the rent-seeking of many officials and their relatives, economic corruption and many other things they witness can lead to a profound sense of disappointment and frustration in the teenager.

Furthermore, as teenagers engage with society, they are confronted with societal expectations, such as the emphasis on physical attractiveness, particularly for women. Given that not girls are able to attain the societal standards of beauty during puberty, this pressure can undermine their self-confidence and create feelings of concern among young people, especially girls.

The combination of these factors that briefly described can leave the teenager feeling overwhelmed and even despondent as they perceive the disparities between themselves and their parents, educators, and community parents<sup>1</sup>-including those observed in other countries.

The brain changes that occur in adolescents, coupled with the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, and ideological shifts experienced during their biological maturity, generate stressful conditions for the majority of teenagers.

In addition to factors that contribute to youth experiencing instability and unbalance, many parents, lacking understanding of their teenagers' brain development, often find themselves in and challenges with their children, exacerbating the adolescent crisis.

If there are individuals or groups who advocate for and support teenagers, promoting respect, dignity, and recognizing their potential as successful future leaders, teenagers are likely take notice. This is crucial, as teenagers often face misunderstanding and skepticism from biological parents, education parents, and community parents at large when it comes to the complexities of adolescence.

Amidst the recent confusion faced by teenagers and young people globally, Big Hit Company assigned their music group, BTS, the role of motivating, instilling hope, and supporting for the adolescent and the youth. This initiative aims to

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<sup>1</sup> The term "social parents of adolescents and youth" primarily refers to the policymakers of society, while teachers and educators fall under the category of educational parents.

empower this big demographic portion and position BTS as youth leadership to continue promoting their ideology to teenagers and young people.

Based on the feedback from the surveyed population, it is evident that a significant portion of BTS fans, precisely from the critical age of their teen, discovered the boy group during their form years and found solace and comfort in their music during challenging times.

20-year-old Massoud, in his interview, mentioned that he discovered the BTS group at age of 13-14. During a statement, 18-year-old Fereshteh shared that she first encountered the BTS boys at the age of 13, finding their music to create a beautiful world during her teenage years. In her recollection, 15-year-old Diba recalled that when teenagers grapple with concerns about their appearance or self-image such as why my face is like this or why my height and skin are not like that, the group serves as a source of comfort and hope, guiding them towards peace through their empowering messages:

- "Masoud, which age group do you believe comprises the majority of BTS fans?

As far as I have seen, most of my friends are teenagers between the ages of thirteen, fourteen and twenty-five.

- Are there fans who are twenty-five years old or older?

Can't say no, but there are fewer fans of twenty-five years old and above. Most of the peak of fandom is in middle school and high school. The ones who are over twenty-five years old may prioritize important life events such as marriage, education, and career pursuits, causing their interest in fandom to diminish or wane over time."

- "Fereshteh, at what point do you feel your fascination with K-pop become more serious?

From the age of 13, it was summer and we definitely didn't have any special fun, and what could be better than a new, complete, beautiful, and captivating escape into a teenage world."

- "What age group does the majority of BTS audiences generally fall within?

In my opinion, the majority of BTS audiences typically start around 12 or 13 years old, known as the youth age, as children begin to explore virtual space and find new interests. The appeal of BTS and K-pop may be attractive for them.

The reason why they are attracted at a young age, in my opinion, is that at that age, a person finds fault with himself a lot and struggles with his self-knowledge and always says to himself, "why am I like this?" And why do I look like this? For this reason, I think that at that age it is possible to become familiar with K-pop."

In an interview, 17-year-old Samaneh pointed out that young individuals who are grappling with self-doubt and uncertainty can often find that the slogan of "Love yourself" promoted by the BTS group is catalyst for them to value their own worth and increases their resilience in challenging situations.

25-year-old Shabnam also shared her personal experience of the uplifting impact of the recent slogan by reiterating similar themes:

- "What is the age range of fans of this group?

Umm... well, it can be said that it starts from 12 or 13 years old and lasts until 20 or 22 years old, that is, with the majority of fans are in their teenage years.

- Then how do they, the BTS, affect this group of people?

They have both motivational and exciting songs, with some more mellow tracks as well. In my opinion, these songs have a double impact on teenagers, particularly in high spirits looking for music to match their mood. The lyrics often convey of self-worth and love, instilling a sense of importance in the listener. This sentiment is encapsulated in their slogan: "Love yourself."

- Shabnam, how has your interest in BTS influenced your appearance?

Well, since childhood, I was fat, which often led to feelings of embarrassment. This was especially challenging in school where I faced taunts and teasing. When I discovered Korean movies and observed the looks and thinness of female artists, I might have felt embarrassed. I attempted various diets and exercise routines several times, but my efforts were often short-lived, and I eventually gave up halfway through.

But, as I little by little delved deeper into the messages and concepts embraced by BTS, particularly their emphasis on self-love and acceptance, being fat was not an important issue for me anymore. Firstly, I used to notice in fan dance videos that individuals, whether performing solo or in groups, were comfortable with their weight. Furthermore, the underlying message in BTS's songs was to accept yourself the way you are."

Some fans have highlighted other aspects of the BTS group that have positively impacted them.

In an interview, 21-year-old Reihaneh pointed out that individuals who faced oppression at home and in society for various reasons found a safe environment they, could be themselves within the BTS community, where they were treated without judgment or insult. Similarly 17-year-old Ehsan, citing the disparity between genders in many families, commended BTS's promotion of gender equality, which helped address feelings of inferiority and disadvantage among females. Additionally, 15-year-old Reihaneh expressed gratitude for the courage and independence that BTS, stilled in her and her friends, making it easier to confront challenges; And has made the feeling of being independent an accessible thing for them, she mentions this issue with gratitude:

"...While Western music often focuses on sexual and superficial themes, in K-pop you can see psychological, philosophical, and social issues (although there are also instances of sexual and superficial content in K-pop)."

"... While in the West, they mostly work on sexual and superficial content, in K-pop you can see many works with psychological, philosophical and social issues (of course, in K-pop there are also works with sexual and superficial content).

From their inception, BTS have been vocal about critiquing the Korean government and its education system in schools. Over time, they evolved to create an imaginative world to convey their narratives. Their stories often revolve around teens struggling with various problems during their puberty years, drawing from personal experiences to create relatable song lyrics that resonate with their fans. These narratives address issues that many of their followers may also be facing.

BTS provided a sanctuary for teenagers who felt being oppressed by society and within their own families. Through their message of self-love and acceptance, the group asked young people to open up and share their stories, no matter what race, color, country or gender they have. As a result, fans found a safe haven in BTS and other similar groups, allowing them to freely express themselves without fear of judgment or discrimination.

However, despite its positive aspects, the K-pop industry also had outcomes. These include fight among fans, fan fiction<sup>1</sup> that may contain superficial and sexual content although there are also high-quality fan fiction works), excessive

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<sup>1</sup>Fanfiction is a form of creative writing where fans of a specific book TV series, movie, music group, athletes, etc., craft fictional stories inspired the original work. Authors of fanfiction draw on the characters and storylines the source material to create fresh narratives in their own style. While fanfiction traditionally limited to fan magazines, it is now widely accessible on the Internet, alongside various other fan activities.

favoritism, unrealistic and extreme shippings<sup>1</sup>, and the promotion of inappropriate role models, among other issues."

- "Why do you believe that the BTS group heavily emphasizes this slogan?

Because, as a South Korean group, BTS is aware the prevalent gender discrimination in Korean and many Asian societies, which often stems from families and manifested in societal norms. Traditionally, sons are favored over daughters, with families and relatives pride having more sons. Sons are typically encouraged and supported but there are fewer families that take pride in having daughters. Recognizing these disparities, BTS aims to challenge these gender stereotypes in Asian societies and fought it with the idea of equality among all humans."

"... However Helma is unaware that they won't get married.

- Don't get married?

Hell no! I want to tell you something, but please don't tell it to my mom. I have read somewhere, they don't plan on getting married because they are gay. I'm not sure what is it, but it seems that members of the group have romantic relationships with each other, this is what some of their videos and fan fictions shows. They display affection that looks like romantic partnerships, they are so close like real couples. Maybe they will marry each other. Don't know, Or it's just fan fiction portraying these relationships, so there's definitely another side to story. However, in principle, they are not supposed to get married, it is against BTS' rules.

- Well, what happens to their feelings and love towards the opposite gender?

They share those feelings with other members and idols, allowing them to express and receive love and affection. It can be said that this is a substitute for marriage.

- In your idea, can this serve as a substitute for one's romantic feelings towards the opposite gender

Well, maybe not 100%, but this is one of the BTS rules. As I said, they adhere and accepted all rules.

- Given these attributions, why do you think girls love BTS so much?

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<sup>1</sup> "Shipping" refers to when an individual envisions two people in fictitious relationship, often idealizing them as a perfect couple and linking them together various scenarios. This phenomenon can involve anything from portraying them as close friends to depicting them in romantic or sexual relationships.

Look, at first glance, it may be it is because of their appearance, but I believe there are other things.

- For instance, what other things?

I believe that girls like me like to make decisions for themselves and stay independent rather than dependence on others... you know, BTS gives us the courage to stay strong and independent. Additionally, all people respect for likes kind and compassionate people, BTS is really kind, compassionate, supports all the youth."

As it has been said, by promoting the message that the future belongs to teenagers and young people, BTS provides hope, motivation, and a sense of purpose to their fan. They aim to inspire the youth to become future leaders who can bring about change in society. By instilling hope in teenagers and young people, BTS significantly reduces confusion among this group in navigating family, school, and societal challenges. Additionally, they distinguish themselves from other K-pop and pop groups that do not address the issues faced by teenagers and young people.

## **2-2- Motivating**

Adolescents and young people go through significant changes in their brains, physical bodies, cognitive abilities, emotions, social interactions, cultural influences, and ideological anchors. They often encounter numerous inconsistencies and conflicts in their daily experiences, leading to a sense of criticality in their situation.

Alternatively, teenagers and young individuals who lack significant social experiences may struggle to cope with the numerous inconsistencies and conflicts they face, they may become overwhelmed and perceive their losses and failures as inevitable outcomes for their future.

In such circumstances, if an individual or a group stand up and by offering hope and encouragement, motivate teenagers and young individuals to navigate through their challenges, this help can be deeply appreciated by teenagers and young people. And they will try to count on him/her as a model for to emulate in their own lives.

Analysis of interviews conducted with teenagers and young individuals reveals that fans of the BTS group are influenced by the group members' strong work ethic. Additionally, they indirectly influenced by the themes present in the group's songs and are directly impacted by statements made by the group members.

This shows how they have been influenced by of the BTS group and the Big Hit company's ideas and have made some changes in their life policies. These impacts can be categorized as surface-level impacts in terms of common acceptance and deeper, more profound effects.

Examining the backgrounds of BTS group members reveals that, with the exception of one member who came from a wealthy family, the rest of the members belonged to poor families. After being recruited by the company, they underwent extensive training and received minimal from the company. They all shared accommodation in the same unit and they were required to provide for their own basic needs for living so that they had to work along with their trainings.

Some of the interviewees, when reflecting on the previous life conditions of their favorite role models, mentioned that they looked up to them as examples and found inspiration to endeavor harder to achieve their own dreams.

In their exclusive interviews, 15-year-old Diba, 18-year-old Pooneh, and 21-year-old Mahshid all expressed how they draw inspiration from the challenging backgrounds of the BTS group members.



- "Have these messages in BTS songs had an effect on you?

I have come to a point where I love myself more now. I wouldn't attribute it solely to BTS songs. Other content I came across on social media also played a big role in influencing me. However, I do acknowledge that BTS has had a meaningful impact on my self-love journey, and let's say their dedication and hard work ethic have inspired me as well."

- "How do the group members motivate you?

Through their words, actions, music, and their endeavors. I remember the first days of joining the BTS army<sup>1</sup>, a friend sent me a video of them in which boys were begging people in the streets Korea, asking them to watch their performance. Despite being ignored by many the time, they continued to push forward. Take a closer look at these seven boys and how they managed to defy all odds to the point where they now aspire to inspire others. They have become the beacon of hope and motivation for individuals across Asia, Europe, and America. Their progress has been so remarkable that they have been called upon to address the United Nations as representatives of Korea. When I witness their hard work and success, I am inspired and remind myself that with effort comes success. More often when I didn't feel well, watched a clip of them, and instantly felt better. Their words often leave me impressed and watching their live stream really made my day. They really leave a lasting impression. I'm not exaggerating when I say that I am alive because of these boys. Here's why."

- "What was the special about the BTS group that caught your attention?

Look, there are some distinct differences between the music of our country and K-pop that have contributed to the growing number of fans for this genre. Here are a few reasons for this trend. Their lyrics often focus on such as self-love, goal seeking, not being disappointed and not giving up; and this form of meaningfulness and positive energy are what attracts many fans.

The second point is that differences are inherently attractive. K-pop combines' music song, and dance, that has caught the attention people around the world. If you follow the history of music, any form of innovation or has always been appealing and gain a base of fans.

BTS is renowned for their unwavering determination and belief that nothing is impossible for them and this is a shared thing between all groups. They

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<sup>1</sup> ARMY, in its original meaning, refers to an army or a group of soldiers, but today in popular culture and in the virtual space, the word ARMY is considered as the name for the fanbase of the music group BTS, which also means BTS's legion

fight tirelessly and do hard work to achieve their goals, they also heavily maneuver on this and teach it to their fans.... They maneuver on 2 things, one is self-love which they prioritize. They believe that if we love ourselves we can obtain any goal, so we can outshine others. And there is nothing in the world more valuable than ourselves, we should never give up in any circumstances and we shouldn't give up when we fail...

Having a goal and fighting for it, no matter the obstacles, you do not give up and relentlessly pursue it, these two things are very prominent themes in this group. The theme of their poems is mostly the same, to have hope, to cultivate hope, love yourself, think positively and don't change yourself for the sake of others and do not without succumbing to external pressures. Don't be lazy, don't make excuses for the features you don't have, for example, if I had the money, I would get there, if I had some external supports, I would get to something, these are all excuses. You didn't want it, so it didn't happen.

For example, a few years ago they made a campaign called Love Yourself and gave an album with the same title. This campaign became bigger and bigger and they promoted this to every country they went to and they promoted this in their songs until UNICEF invited them, they had a speech there, their speech was very good and attractive, since then every year even in During Covid pandemic, they continued to convey their message through video messages or attended in UNICEF in person, and just a few months ago, they had the opportunity to address the United Nations as a representative of the Asian continent. In their speech they talked about the problems that exist in Asia and about this racial discrimination and the differences between Asia, Europe and America."



On another level, the individuals interviewed emphasized that they found profound motivation to address their personal challenges through the meaningful lyrics of BTS songs.

During interviews, 13-year-old Sarina and Negin, as well as 20-year-old Baran, pointed out the impact of the themes founded in the BTS songs on their lives and confirmed that the music has played a significant role in their day-to-day living.

- "You said that BTS often incorporates the theme of self-love in their songs, how this has influenced your own life and self-love?

Not too much overwhelming, but it's highly hopeful and it has a 70% influence in my life, and Whenever I am feeling down or disappointed, I listen to them and it works wonders."

- "What emotions have the formation of a girl group sparked in the audience?

Honestly, I don't know, but what I do know is that when BTS eventually disbands, it is certain that many ARMYs will experience a sense depression. For instance, some of my friends and I are so deeply connected to the group, that If someday we hear that this group is not going to exist anymore, it would feel as though life had lost its meaning to us. (When she was talking, her worries and anxieties about it were apparent in her words and demeanor).

- What roles do they play in your life and in what aspects?

It varies based on what everyone learns from BTS' message. Personally, I need to hear from others that I am beautiful or any other compliment to believe that I am so. I am not that kind of person who loves herself, but BTS became famous with promoting a hashtag like "Love Yourself", and after that, their fans increased steadily.

- Do the words in the poems fill you with motivation and strength?

Yes".

- "Can you please recite the lyrics of your favorite song and explain what feeling you have about it?

Kookie's "Still With You" and Jimin's "With You" songs, along with "Magic Shop" and "Bulletproof". Kookie covered two songs that I listen when I am very sad; one is "Falling" of Harry Styles and other one is "2 U" of Justin

Bieber<sup>1</sup>. The Zero O'Clock holds significant importance to me, and I will share you the lyric. Please ensure that to include it in my interview. I like it very much, because it implies this message that "one can always begin again".

I believe that the song "Life Goes On," released during the COVID, aimed to provide a better feeling for all. It has an excellent lyric, consider this as a part of my talks. "

Several participants have highlighted that upon internalizing the direct messages conveyed by their favorite idols, they have made efforts to align their actions accordingly, resulting in both minor and significant transformations in their daily lives:

"...but it seems that BTS truly worked hard to reach what they want. And every day they tell their fans to improve each day more than the day before. This was one of their messages. That this we strive to show the best version of ourselves, and improve more than yesterday, or as they put it to be 1% better than they were yesterday. They tried to capture this concept a song like "Not Today." Overall, their songs are in this context, and I like their mood and the messages they convey."



Turn it up! (Turn it up!)  
burn it up! (burn it up!)

VICTORIALUVISH

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<sup>1</sup> David Guetta feat Justin Bieber - 2U

- "Don't you think that being a BTS fan may have consumed too much of your time that could have been allocated to more important priorities?"

No, because I managed to control my time. It wasn't like that to allocate all my time to them in way that ignore my work and life responsibilities. In fact, my involvement with BTS had some positive impacts on my studies. For example I wasn't interested in math at all. But when Namjoon emphasized the importance of studying math, I gained some motivation."

- " What are the concerns they talk about in their poems?"

In a general sense, the concept of their poems is proper and their themes often center on the everyday living and social realities that exist in many societies.

- Can you please give an example about it?

Sure, for example, in some of their poems, they speak about the theme of elders interfering in the decisions that should be taken by youth, imposing their willing, pressuring juniors to choose a future path that may not align with their true passions but are based on their desires. And lastly it says that individuals should follow their own desires and others shouldn't dictate what you don't like. Or, the concept of self-confidence [is also highlighted], or another lyric [theme] is the idea of enjoying of journey towards a goal rather than focusing just on the end result, or that the life goes on

- Can you please elaborate on these three aspects, I mean self-confidence, continuing to live and enjoying the path to reach the goal, similar to the previous concept?

In several of their songs, they have talked about self-confidence the most famous of which is Love Yourself, which says that you should love yourself, despite the diverse range of the differences between individuals, for example, one is fat, one is thin, one is tall or one is short, well, all of these characteristics, good or bad, should be accepted and we should love ourselves.

Life Goes On also implies that despite the challenges and difficulties we face, life has its own inherent beauty and it is important to enjoy the moments as much as possible."

Field investigations have revealed that fans being inspired by the hard work ethic demonstrated by the members of the BTS boys. Fans often draw motivation from the themes explored in their songs and the direct messages conveyed by the group members. The impact of this influence varies depending

on the individual fan's interest and engagement level, ranging from low to moderate effectiveness to deeply transformative effects.

During their interviews, 15-year-old Shadi, 16-year-old Sana, and 21-year-old Narges shared how the BTS group has moderately motivated them in various ways.

- "You said you know their dance, right?

Yes perfectly

- How did you learned it?

I learned from their clips. I watch them a lot.

- How long did it take you to learn it?

Almost one or two months, but I was watching a lot.

- How much time you spend watching their videos?

I can say, 5 hours a day.

- What about their language?

To some extent, but it is very difficult (laughs). It is similar to Chinese, but not the same; Chinese is more difficult.

- Do you know how to write in Korean?

No, just listening, I know how to speak it too."

"... I was really feeling aloof, and the kids didn't talk me much; they underestimated me. I discovered an application called Lingbe. Using it one can talk with people from different nationalities. I started calling and conversing individuals in English in front of our family, leaving them speechless. They asked me how you have learned English."

- What's the connection between learning English and BTS?

I said that I plan to go to Korea to pursue my education. One needs to know both English and Korean, I had to learn both. With a little background, I attended language classes and now my language skills are great.

- Well, what does this have to do with BTS??

I learned about Korea through BTS, then during my research, I discovered that Korean universities require proficiency in English and Korean languages. So I improved my English skills with hard work."