



The Interest UNICEF on Involvement of K-Pop Artists in Humanitarian Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes why UNICEF collaborates with K-Pop companies in conducting campaigns. Before the Korean Wave phenomenon hit the global stage, UNICEF had involved several non-state actors, the majority of whom were artists, as international or regional ambassadors. Only when K-pop has global fans is UNICEF interested in attracting several K-pop artists, such as BTS, Super Junior, and Everglow. This is one of the reasons UNICEF chose K-pop idols as ambassadors. Furthermore, K-pop fans have high loyalty and fanaticism toward their idols. They unconsciously make their idol's behavior, habits, and mindset an identity norm. They will also be aggressive towards outside groups who insult their idols. Seeing such characteristics benefits UNICEF because when K-pop artists become UNICEF ambassadors and spread human values, their fans will follow their idols and help the struggles of the K-pop artists they follow. Finally, there is a shared vision between K-pop idols and UNICEF. Having a shared vision will make it easier for both parties to plan actions and run campaigns.

Keywords: Humanitarian Campaign, K-Pop, Political Interest, UNICEF

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini menganalisis alasan UNICEF bekerja sama dengan perusahaan K-pop dalam melakukan kampanye. Sebelum fenomena Korean Wave mendunia, UNICEF telah melibatkan beberapa aktor non-negara yang mayoritas adalah artis sebagai duta internasional maupun regional. Baru ketika K-pop memiliki penggemar global, UNICEF tertarik menggaet sejumlah artis K-pop, seperti BTS, Super Junior, dan Everglow. Hal ini menjadi salah satu alasan UNICEF memilih idola K-pop sebagai duta. Selain itu, penggemar K-pop memiliki loyalitas dan fanatisme yang tinggi terhadap idolanya. Tanpa disadari, mereka menjadikan perilaku, kebiasaan, dan pola pikir idolanya sebagai norma identitas. Mereka juga akan bersikap agresif terhadap kelompok luar yang menghina idolanya. Melihat karakteristik tersebut, UNICEF diuntungkan karena ketika artis K-pop menjadi duta UNICEF dan menyebarkan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan, penggemarnya akan mengikuti idolanya dan membantu perjuangan artis K-pop yang mereka ikuti. Terakhir, ada visi bersama antara idola K-pop dan UNICEF. Dengan adanya visi bersama, kedua belah pihak akan lebih mudah merencanakan aksi dan menjalankan kampanye.

Kata Kunci: Kampanye Kemanusiaan, K-Pop, Kepentingan Politik, UNICEF

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes why UNICEF, as global governance, involves non-state actors (K-pop Entertainment Companies) in its programs. Since the increasing popularity of the Korean Wave in the worldwide music market, UNICEF has begun collaborating with K-pop artists as international ambassadors. One that attracts attention is BTS from the HYBE LABELS company as UNICEF

ambassadors by creating the "Love Myself" campaign, which aims to motivate young people to keep trying to live their best lives. Together with UNICEF, they also conducted the "Love Yourself" world tour in 2018-2019 and spread messages for transnational fans always to do good and choose to be good (Wirawan, 2021). In addition, there are still many K-pop artists who are UNICEF international ambassadors, such as Siwon "Super Junior" and Jaemin "NCT" from SM Entertainment Company, who are actively involved in the field as volunteers. SM Entertainment Company collaborates with UNICEF in the Smile for U campaign. The latest is the girl band from Stone Music Entertainment Company, "Everglow," with the UNICEF Promise Campaign.

The UNICEF ambassadors are in two categories. First, Goodwill Ambassadors are UNICEF ambassadors from internationally renowned people dedicated to helping UNICEF raise awareness and support and reach out to underprivileged children. They include figures who dominate the world of art, film, music, and sports. The first UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador was Danny Kaye in 1945, followed by Audrey Hepburn and Sir Roger Moore. Until now, Goodwill Ambassadors have been represented by Millie Bobby Brown, Liliy Singh, Katy Perry, Muzoon Almellehen, Lionel Messi, and others (UNICEF). The second category is Regional and National Ambassadors. They are UNICEF ambassadors focused on specific countries or regions and consist of important people in various fields. The regions that UNICEF represents are East Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Gulf Region, Latin America and the Caribbean, and finally, the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, there are 104 countries with UNICEF national ambassadors spread across all continents (UNICEF). K-Pop idols are included in the ranks of UNICEF ambassadors and helped the campaign in the 2010s, but received many publications on the official website. For example, the keyword BTS has 15 articles during their time as part of UNICEF for 4 years, and 32 articles have the keyword, Siwon Choi, with 3 years as a regional ambassador. In comparison, Goodwill Ambassador Lionel Messi only has nine publications about him. Alternatively, Katy Perry has been a Goodwill Ambassador since 2013, but the number of articles on the website is 32. The author argues that there are three reasons why UNICEF chose to involve K-pop idols in its international programs. First, consumers of the K-pop industry almost dominate globally. K-pop entertainment enthusiasts are also mostly the younger generation, and they have high fanaticism towards their idols. Finally, the characteristics of K-pop are considered to break through Eastern values and promote global issues.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research that focuses on finding the meaning of the research subject. The desired result is the addition of a perspective from a theory or concept in international relations. Therefore, this study looks at the actions of UNICEF as a research subject related to its reasons for involving the K-Pop industry in a humanitarian campaign. Ultimately, the answers will contribute to the formula of the concept of global governance. Various official documents from UNICEF and previous research became the primary sources of the research. The website also has news related to the research issue as supporting data. All of them were managed to find answers to research questions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Spread of Global K-Pop Fans

Compared to its neighboring countries in East Asia, the J-Pop industry has a relatively large global scale of consumers. Japan has been trying to build an entertainment industry since the 1990s as a soft power. They have similarities to China, which builds cultural soft power with traditional cultural traditions but is one step ahead with modernization and industrialization. The popularity of Japanese culture dominates almost all countries, with Jpop, Manga, and Anime products enjoyed by young people (Sohn, 2011). The popularity of modern Japanese culture has even become a new modification of the relationship between culture and soft power that was previously ignored by International Relations studies.

In addition, modern Japanese culture's influence has shifted American culture's dominance in the Asian region. In Otmazgin's research, citing the opinion of the Marubeni Economic Research Institute, the value of Japanese cultural exports, including media, fashion, manga publishing, copyright, and entertainment, increased threefold in 2003 compared to the early 1990s. The benefits that Japan gets from the popularity of its modern culture are JPY 10.5 trillion, more than manufacturing exports, which increased 20 percent to 52 trillion within a longer period than Japanese cultural exports. Another report cited by Otmazgin from the Japan Digital Content Association in 2005 showed that Japan in 2003 became the second largest cultural producer in the world with a percentage of 9.5 above China's 1.6 percent and South Korea's 1.2 percent (Otmazgin N. K., 2008). South Korea only entered the modern cultural competition through the K-Pop industry in the 2000s, very late with Japan and China, which had already dominated the global market (Culture and the Arts: Hallyu (Korean Wave), n.d.). South Korean culture has gained popularity in the global market since the 2010s when it beat the popularity of Japan and China with the entry of Nobody's song "Wonder Girl" in the Billboard Hot 100 chat. Unlike Japan and China, which rely on traditional culture as a soft power asset, South Korea produces a culture that adapts the style of American culture in contrast to their traditional norms. This can be seen in K-pop, which is dominated by hip-hop and RnB music styles typical of American music (Romano, 2018).

This uniqueness has implications for the interest of world music consumers. Data from Wonkyu Shin's research (2016) shows that sales of K-pop export-import commodities continued to increase by around 11 to 12 percent from 2006 to 2013. This means that K-pop has contributed to three times the growth of Korea's GDP in 8 years. The use of YouTube, which can be accessed for free, is the key to the internationalization of K-pop in the United States, Japan, and France. The internet in these three countries is dominated by the keyword K-pop Idol compared to English-speaking singers or artists. K-pop dominance also occurred in Mexico, as explained by Han Woo Park (2014); the country began to have an interest in K-pop music when Psy's Song titled Gangnam Style was uploaded on YouTube in September 2012. Since then, Gangnam Style has become a popular topic on SNS, with 102,000 keywords (in the form of flashmobs, parodies, and others) as of 2013.

Furthermore, the discussion from Marinescu and Balica (2013) provides information on how K-Pop entered Romania and impacted the views of society in the country regarding hybridization and globalism between Asian and Eastern European cultures. This process began with the entry of the K-Drama "Daejanggeum" on national television in 2009, followed by K-pop music from group BOA in 2011. In 2012, K-Pop consumers in other countries experienced an increase in Europe, such as Brazil, Colombia, England, France, Sweden, Finland, and Algeria. Meanwhile, in the American continent, there are Canada, Peru, and Chile. K-pop has also entered the Australian continent. This data is based

on research by Leung (2012), who conducted a comparative survey of K-pop song viewers with American Pop on YouTube.

Moving on to Asia, starting with East Asia. First, the K-pop fandom from China, which has been formed since 1992, was the normalization of Korea-China relations. The number of K-Pop consumers has increased with the digitalization in 2008. K-pop in China in 2010 was even more popular when SM Entertainment recruited EXO and Super Junior members from that country (Zhang & Negus, 2020). K-pop is also quite famous in Taiwan, according to the results of a Capistrano survey (2018), which stated that out of 1100 people, 951 (86.45%) were K-pop fans. This is supported by the large number of K-pop idols from China, and several Korean idols deliberately learn Mandarin to make it easier to interact with Taiwanese fans.

In Southeast Asia itself, many countries have quite a lot of K-pop fans. A survey was conducted by Kim and Park (2020) in 2014 with 431 respondents from Indonesia and 538 from Malaysia and Singapore, where they have different backgrounds. The results show that as many as 87.6% have experience and emotional ties with K-Pop products. They listen to K-Pop at least 5 to 6 times a week. In the Philippines, in 2012, the export of K-pop culture also resulted in a US \$ 3.4 billion profit. Exports of K-pop products then increased in 2015, reaching US \$ 4 billion in additional income for South Korea. This increase in profit is in line with the increasing number of K-pop fans in the Philippines and also indicates that the country is experiencing the Korean Wave (Capistrano, Understanding Filipino Korean Pop Music Fans, 2019).

K-pop has also entered Southwest Asia, such as in Israel and Palestine. Otmazgin and Lyan (2014) argue that the two countries have different backgrounds, where Israel is liberal and cosmopolitan, while Palestine is more conservative and religiously oriented. However, Korean popular music culture can be accepted by both because K-Pop offers two identities: East and West. Palestine they are attracted to the Orientalist depiction of East Asia in K-pop, and Israel accepts K-pop because it is not much different from American pop. Kpop is also expanding its market in Saudi Arabia, as found by Sarah Leung (Leung, 2012). Based on data released by Twitter regarding the countries with the most K-pop fans in 2021, Indonesia is in first place. Then followed by the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, the United States, Malaysia, Mexico, Brazil, India, Japan, Peru, Argentina, Vietnam, Turkey, Chile, Colombia, Singapore, France, Ecuador, and finally Canada (Herman, 2022).

This has changed when compared to research conducted by Leung (2012), in which K-pop music lovers in 2012 were dominated by China. The countries below are the United States, Japan, India, Brazil, Germany, Russia, England, France, Nigeria, South Korea, Turkey, Iran, Italy, Indonesia, the Philippines, Spain, Mexico, Canada and Vietnam. Some of the many K-pop idol groups stand out in several places. In North America and Europe, the most popular group is BTS, followed by Blackpink, Twice, and Exo. In Asia, it is dominated by fans of Blackpink, followed by BTS, Twice, Momoland, and Exo. If you look at it by country, BTS dominates in France, England, Germany, the United States, and Peru. Then Super Junior is in Mexico, Momoland is in Vietnam, Twice is in Japan, and Blackpink is in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines (Koreaboo, 2019). Of the five idol groups above, BTS has the most immense fandom globally. Even for Waqar (2021), ARMY (BTS Fandom) is considered to have ended Justin Bieber's glory days by winning the Top Social Artist at the Billboard Music Awards after receiving 300 million votes worldwide. Super Junior is also a popular idol in China, in second place with a percentage of 29% of all boy group fans (KBIZoom News, 2019). In 2021, the

emergence of the NCT group from SM Entertainment attracted worldwide attention. This is based on the tweets from K-pop artists where NCT's official account is the second largest globally (KoreaDispatch, 2021).

3.2. Kpop Fans Fanaticism

The interesting thing about the K-pop industry is their fandom's participatory value and loyalty. The total number of Korean Wave fans based on the Global Korean Wave 2016 from the Korea Foundation (Jang & Song, 2017) there are 1,652 communities with details of 59,390,000 members spread across 88 countries. The number of fans in Asia and the Pacific has doubled from 20,000,000 to 40,100,000. The Korea Foundation also revealed that the popularity of K-pop contributed to the expansion of the Korean Wave community. According to Jang and Song, the characteristics of the majority of K-pop fandoms themselves tend to be fanatical about their idols, so the behavior and perspective of K-pop idols become role models for them. Like the argument put forward by Jang and Song, the K-pop fandom has an attachment to their idol artists, and in extreme cases, they will make the idol an identity and value they must follow. This is the reason for creating power for the K-pop industry to lead public opinion, especially their fandom.

Swan (2018) agrees with Lang's argument that K-pop is able to influence the identity of its fan group. For Swan, this fan group has crossed national boundaries by utilizing online media to connect. They also determine norms among fandom members. Therefore, Swan defines the K-pop fan group as a transnational group.

BTS is known to have a fanatical fandom for its idols. ARMY (Adorable Representative MC for Youth), BTS's fan group in Sari's (2020) research, has played a role in bringing the boy group into the American entertainment industry. Their support through international voting also gives BTS the advantage to win several awards on the American stage. In addition, they also ensure that the values carried out in BTS songs can be spread to attract new fans. Furthermore, BTS's identity as an idol who cares about humanitarian issues is also inherent in ARMY's positive, like the argument from Park (2021), where the implicit value in BTS's song "Loving Yourself, Achieving Your Dreams and Struggle" influences ARMY's attitude towards social issues. One is ARMY's collaboration with the #MatchAMillion campaign to support Black Lives Matter. Super Junior fans are also known to have high loyalty to their idols. ELF (Ever Lasting Friend). According to Ayoe writing (2019), ELF Indonesia gave a gold medal worth 4 million to each member as a form of loyalty. Likewise, ELF gave Super Junior a pure gold plaque worth 900 million in China. In addition, they are also active in the humanitarian field, such as raising donations for forest conservation as a form of support for the Super Junior Forest project and building 16 schools in Africa as a gift for Super Junior's 10th anniversary. Finally, as a form of support for Super Junior to continue their career, they buy SM entertainment shares as much as 0.3% of the total shares.

3.3. Shared Vision between Kpop Idols and UNICEF

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The first K-pop artist to become a UNICEF ambassador was Siwon Choi, from the boy group Super Junior. Siwon was appointed the UNICEF Regional Ambassador for East Asia and the Pacific at a UNICEF event in Laos in 2019. UNICEF's consideration in making Siwon the Regional Ambassador was his four-year commitment as a representative of UNICEF Korea to UNICEF charity activities and supporting the #Stop Bullying campaign (Nazer, 2019). Another reason UNICEF appointed Siwon as the face of the East Asia and Pacific region is his influence as a member of Super Junior. According to the MTV page, Super Junior has a significant influence. He has been the primary foundation for establishing the K-pop industry in East Asia and other Asian regions since 2009 (Hodoyan-Gastelum, 2019).

In 2018, Siwon Choi and his junior in his company, SM Entertainment, Jaemin Na, participated in the UNICEF event celebrating World Children's Day in Vietnam. They both campaigned for children's rights in terms of education to the world through YouTube and Twitter (UNICEF, 2018). Jaemin Na also became a K-pop artist from SM Entertainment who participated in SM Entertainment's collaboration with UNICEF in the "Smile for U" campaign with other artists such as Red Velvet, Girls Generation, and Exo. From the involvement of SM Entertainment artists with the company, they did not take material benefits from UNICEF activities such as song sales or campaign souvenirs. After artists from SM Entertainment, in 2017, UNICEF also collaborated with BTS and Bighit Music to spread positive messages through the "Love Myself" campaign. They also invited fans and the international community to donate to UNICEF as a form of support for preventing violence against children. Their activities as UNICEF Ambassadors, such as conducting a World Tour and giving a speech at the UN General Assembly's opening, differed from SM Entertainment artists who went directly to the field. Through the Love Myself campaign, BTS raised \$3.6 million for

UNICEF (Haro, 2021). Before becoming UNICEF ambassadors, BTS was known as a boy group with different musical styles and concepts. They dare to use political themes, mental health, and women's empowerment in the songs they create (Sari, 2020). Lastly, the Stone Music Entertainment girl group Everglow collaborated with UNICEF in 2021. Everglow released the song "Promise" on August 25, 2021, as a form of their efforts to raise funds for the Promise Campaign, UNICEF. Through the Song Promise, Everglow created the TikTok dance challenge "Promise" to invite their fans to promote awareness of the human rights of underprivileged children worldwide (Donyayaya, 2021). Everglow has shown a girl group with a feminist theme since its debut.

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4. Conclusion

UNICEF involves several K-Pop artists because music consumers have spread globally. Even in several countries and in the United States, the popularity of K-Pop has replaced American singers or is considered to be on par with them. K-pop fan groups also have high fanaticism and loyalty to their idols, such as BTS and Super Junior, who have been selected as UNICEF ambassadors. The control of the global market and the fanaticism of the K-pop fandom have significant implications for how far and wide their idols carry specific values, such as protecting children's rights, which UNICEF fights for. However, UNICEF does not choose K-pop idols that have a significant influence on the entertainment market alone. The organization considers the similarity of vision between UNICEF and K-Pop idols. The involvement of K-Pop artists in UNICEF campaigns shows that they are recognized as having the quality as influential people in spreading the values of goodness and also representing Asia in international participation. However, this cannot be a reference for the future

when K-pop artists will dominate the list of UNICEF ambassadors. In addition, this phenomenon does not mean that K-pop has eclipsed the popularity of American Pop because, until now, UNICEF continues to collaborate with American singers who share the same vision.

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