

A Bibliometric Research Trends in Korean Popular Music

Wihda Qorri'Ain & Filosa Gita Sukmono

Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Bantul, Indonesia

w.qorriain.isip24@mail.umy.ac.id

filosa@umy.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Starting as a local music genre, popular culture, particularly K-Pop, has evolved into a global phenomenon that defines social dynamics, collective identity, and cultural diplomacy in the 21st century. In addition to boosting the economy, K-Pop also influences the psychosocial health of fans through trans-parasocial interactions and cross-cultural communication on digital platforms. Academic attention to K-Pop continues to increase as it evolves into its fifth generation, covering aspects of sociology, semiotics, and global media studies. However, to understand how this literature has developed, a comprehensive mapping is needed. The purpose of this study is to conduct a bibliometric analysis to find publication patterns, identify the most significant authors, and describe shifts in thematic focus in international academic discourse from year to year. The results of this study are expected to help other researchers understand K-Pop's position as a global cultural force.

Keyword: Pop Culture, K-pop, bibliometric, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

Pop culture is the culture of the common people. The term pop culture itself in Latin literally refers to the culture of the people (the culture of the people or the culture of society). Perhaps that is why many cultural observers see pop culture as a living culture and a series of cultural artifacts that can be found in the daily lives of ordinary people. From a sociological perspective, pop culture is not only understood as entertainment artifacts, but also as representations of social practices that reflect collective values, norms, and identities. This culture grows in the daily lives of society and often reflects ongoing social dynamics. Pop culture also comes and goes quickly.

K-Pop, short for Korean popular music, is a genre that has grown into a global phenomenon in recent decades, influencing not only the international music scene, but also social and cultural issues that transcend the boundaries of the music industry. (Alexandri, 2022). South Korean pop culture, K-pop, is a culture that is currently very popular with many people, with its captivating visuals, extraordinary vocal abilities, eye-catching dance moves, and active engagement on social media. K-pop has also evolved. It has come a long way, transforming from a local Korean music genre into a global phenomenon that defines world

popular culture. As of January 2026, this evolution is generally divided into five waves or generations. Currently, there are five generations in the world of K-pop.

Korean pop culture, also known as K-Pop, has fans all over the world. In total, 1,477 K-Pop fans from 92 Western countries participated in a comprehensive online survey to measure their level of fandom and psychosocial outcomes (happiness, self-esteem, and social connection) (Laffan, 2021). Interactions within K-pop fan communities such as BTS Cypher ARMY Malang have now reached the trans-parasocial stage due to developments in media research. At this point, the relationship between artists and fans has evolved into a more tangible two-way interaction. Fans can now actively participate in digital platforms in various ways, from receiving emotional support to participating in sociological issues, which shows a new dynamic in modern cultural sociology (Kanto et al., 2025)

In addition to its emotional impact, K-pop also plays an important role in overcoming social differences and strengthening group identity on the internet. Analysis of non Asian fans shows that the intention to communicate across cultures on social media is influenced by how much someone accepts foreign cultures and perceives artistic similarities between Western popular music and K-pop. This indicates that entertainment content has become a highly effective tool for communicating with people from diverse cultures (Lin et al., 2024). The music genre originating from South Korea, K-pop, has gained tremendous popularity among young Muslims around the world, including in Indonesia and other Muslim countries. The focus of academic and public debate on this topic is the increased interest among young Muslims and how this impacts their religious and cultural lives. Some people see K-pop as a cultural threat that will weaken local values through cultural imperialism, while others argue that the popularity of K-pop is a logical result of rapid globalization (Fuad et al., 2024)

The unexpected explosion of K-pop and Korean pop culture, especially in the United States, has sparked greater interest in fandom studies. These studies increasingly document the complex awareness of K-pop fans and their ability to transcend cultural differences. This study analyzes the gender perspectives of American K-pop fans on the masculinity displayed by male K-pop idols, contributing to the development of Hallyu literature (Kim & Son, 2025). The acceptance of K-pop in international markets, such as France, marks a turning point in global media studies. The tangible impact of the K-pop phenomenon on diplomacy and global cultural representation is a shift from media criticism that considers K-pop too commercial to recognition of its artistic value. This transformation in perception shows that K-pop has

overcome linguistic and sociocultural challenges to become an important cultural force in the 21st century (Park, 2025).

K-pop and other popular cultures combined with global trade have created new consumption patterns for audiences around the world. This study emphasizes the role of K-pop as a mediator that connects idol love with the desire to buy South Korean products through psychological mediation mechanisms. Compared to total viewing duration, the frequency of content exposure has a more consistent influence on positive attitudes toward Korean brands, according to viewing habit analysis. This phenomenon confirms the role of K-pop as a key pillar of cultural marketing that can influence customer perceptions and behaviors worldwide (Zhang et al., 2020).

The dominance of K-pop in global popular culture has given rise to a new social structure based on unlimited connectivity. For fan groups such as NCTzen and Carats, social media is not merely a communication tool, but rather an arena for constructing a social reality centered on their favorite idols.

Previous literature has made significant contributions to understanding K-pop as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and a digital phenomenon. However, the ever-evolving dynamics of scientific publications require a systematic roadmap to see the extent to which these issues have been discussed by the global academic community. This study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis to reveal publication patterns, the most influential authors, and shifts in thematic focus from year to year. Through this approach, it is hoped that a stronger framework of understanding can be created regarding the position of K-pop in the current international academic discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This type of research is quantitative descriptive using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. SLR is a method that establishes a series of steps to organize the review methodically. Literature review is an important first step in research to understand current developments and identify gaps and challenges in the field (Carrera-Rivera et al., 2022)

Systematic Literature Review synthesizes previous research to strengthen the knowledge base on a particular topic and provide a broad overview of the literature related to the research question. Systematic Literature Review research was chosen because it maintains the concepts of transparency and bias reduction (Williams et al., 2021). Systematic Literature Review uses a rigorous and verifiable methodology (Nguyen & Singh, 2023).

At this eligibility criteria stage, researchers conducted a literature review of all articles published in Scopus-indexed journals/books/book chapters. One of the considerations in selecting articles was the year of publication. Researchers reviewed articles published in the last 15 years, from 2009 to 2024.

The researchers began by entering the keywords Pop Culture and K-pop in the Search field on Scopus. Next, they filtered the database to limit the literature search to the period from 2009 to 2024. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select articles found through the search. There were 229 studies that met the criteria set based on the systematic article search stage. These studies came from international journals that had been published. Data that fell into the inclusion category was exported to the BibTex extension. Data recorded in BibTex format was processed with the Bibloshiny application in R Language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis conducted by Biblioshiny show the distribution of articles taken from the last 15 years, namely from 2009 to 2024, where the number of articles analyzed was 299 documents from 143 sources with a total of 426 authors. There were 131 articles written by a single author. Of these, 17.73% were identified as international authors. For further details, see Figure 1



Figure 1. Key Information on the Data Analyzed

Based on the data in Figure 1, an analysis was conducted on the journal names, authors, and clustering of articles with K-pop themes by linking other relevant variables. The development of the number of articles published in Scopus per year can be seen in Figure 2.

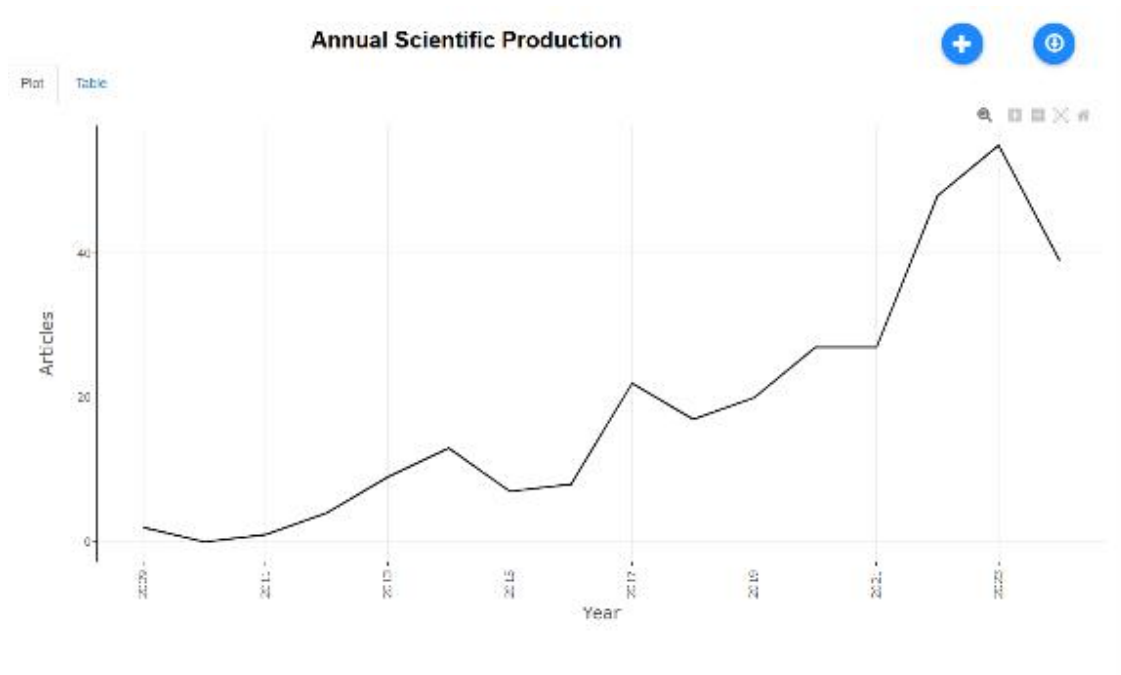


Figure 2 Articles Published in Scopus

Figure 2 shows that the number of articles related to K-pop performance continues to grow each year, although sometimes inconsistently. At least there are still articles every year. For further details, see Table 1

Table 1 Details Article Every Year

Year	Articles
2009	2
2010	0
2011	1
2012	4
2013	9
2014	13
2015	7
2016	8
2017	22
2018	17
2019	20
2020	27
2021	27
2022	48
2023	55
2024	39

K-pop has become a global phenomenon, significantly influencing the international music scene and cultural landscape. This widespread popularity has naturally led to increased academic interest and research. The peak year was 2023 with 55 articles, while in 2010 no articles on K-pop were published.

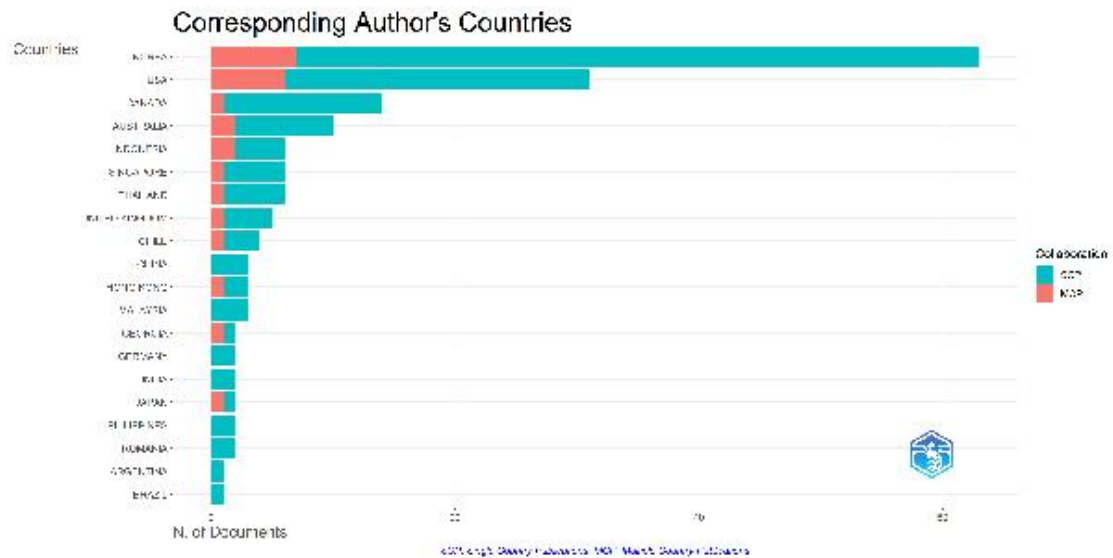


Figure 3. Authors from these countries

South Korea's dominance as the center of K-pop knowledge production will continue until the end of 2025, reflecting the efforts of national academics to understand the phenomenon from a native perspective. However, this data also shows strong research globalization, where Western countries such as the United States and Canada, as well as Southeast Asian regional powers such as Indonesia and Thailand, have considered K-pop as a subject of research. This shows that K-pop has evolved from a mere entertainment trend into an academic discourse that encompasses sociology, media, and international cultural diplomacy.

Self-published works from a single country (Single Country Publications) are still dominated by international collaboration, with the exception of South Korea and the United States, which are the most active in international collaboration. This is despite the fact that research has expanded geographically. This phenomenon indicates that K-pop research is currently more focused on the domestic context of each country. As a result, there are great opportunities for future researchers to collaborate with others around the world to produce more in-depth comparative analyses of how this cultural wave is changing and adapting in different social landscapes.

Table 2 Most Relevant Sources

Sources	Articles
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION	11
KRITIKA KULTURA	7
INTER-ASIA CULTURAL STUDIES	6
EAST ASIAN JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE	5
JURNAL KOMUNIKASI: MALAYSIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION	5
KOREA JOURNAL	5
KOREA OBSERVER	4

MEDIA, CULTURE AND SOCIETY	4
POPULAR MUSIC AND SOCIETY	4
SEOUL JOURNAL OF KOREAN STUDIES	4

Publication data through the end of 2025 shows that research on K-pop has developed into an established interdisciplinary subject. Sustainability journals are the most popular, indicating researchers' strong focus on the socioeconomic effects of Hallyu and the sustainability aspects of the creative industry. Specialist journals such as the Journal of Fandom Studies and Global Media and China show that the dynamics of fan behavior and international communication remain a focus of research. On the other hand, leading journals such as Frontiers in Psychology and Plos One show that this phenomenon is currently being researched using rigorous scientific methodologies, ranging from macro data analysis to psychological approaches. Overall, the concentration of articles in these well-known sources provides strong academic evidence for the idea that K-pop is an important subject involving various disciplines, such as media and sociology, as well as global management in the digital age.

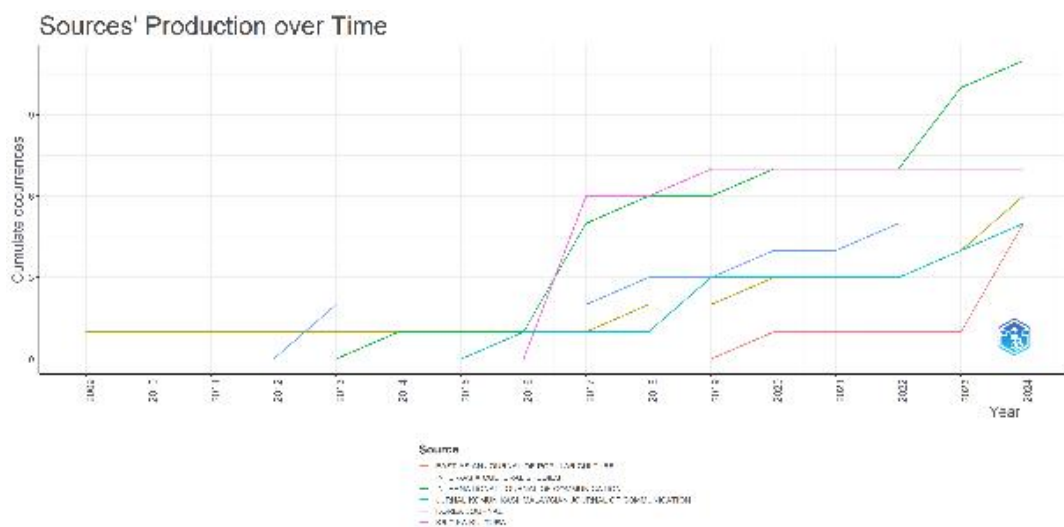


Figure 4 Sources production Over Time

K-pop, a niche genre appealing to certain audience segments in the global market, has now attracted mainstream attention of music industries and general audiences within and beyond Asia (Liu & Taneja, 2025). A bibliometric analysis of K-pop research publications up to 2024 shows a mature global scientific ecosystem, with South Korea as the main contributor, significantly supported by researchers from the United States, Canada, and Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia. In interdisciplinary academic discussions, this phenomenon has been widely recognized. This can be seen from the dominance of articles in leading journals such as Sustainability, which emphasizes the sustainability aspects of the creative industry, and specialized journals such as the Journal of Fandom Studies and

K-pop research up to 2024 has reached a high level of academic maturity, marked by the dominance of South Korea and significant contributions from the United States and Indonesia as representatives of research strength in Southeast Asia. Korean popular music, or K-pop, has become hugely popular around the world in recent years, and has had a significant impact on Korean youth culture and lifestyle. In particular, fashion has played a significant role in expanding the identities of K-pop stars and spreading Korean culture (Hur, 2023) . This phenomenon is supported by a stream of publications in globally reputable journals such as Sustainability, which highlights management and economic dimensions, and the Journal of Fandom Studies, which dissects sociocultural aspects. Although research is still dominated by domestic collaborations (SCP), the diversity of publication sources covering the fields of psychology and media communication proves that K-pop has established itself as a multidisciplinary scientific discourse that connects global audience behavior with creative industry strategies in the digital age.

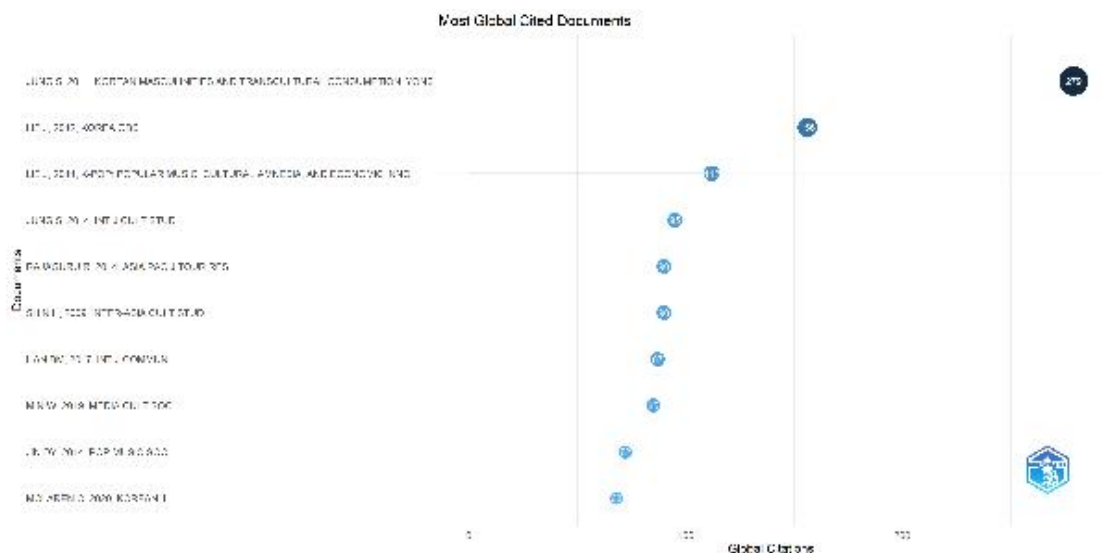


Figure 7 Most Cited Document

Data integration up to 2024 shows that K-pop research has reached academic maturity, with South Korean research dominating, followed significantly by researchers from the United States and Indonesia, demonstrating the strength of Asian research. Interdisciplinary journals such as Sustainability, which focuses on sustainability and business management aspects, and specialized journals such as the Journal of Fandom Studies, which examines audience communication dynamics and behavior, illustrate this global phenomenon. Although domestic publications (SCP) collaborate most frequently, various sources from global media to the field of psychology affirm K-pop's legitimacy as a cross-border scientific subject that connects creative industry strategies with significant sociocultural impacts in the digital age.

Data integration up to 2024 shows that K-pop research has reached academic maturity, with South Korean researchers leading the way, followed significantly by researchers from the United States and Indonesia, demonstrating the strength of research in Asia. Interdisciplinary journals such as *Sustainability*, which focuses on sustainability and business management aspects, and specialized journals such as the *Journal of Fandom Studies*, which examines audience communication dynamics and behavior, illustrate this global phenomenon. Domestic publications (SCP) still dominate international collaboration, but publications in leading psychology and media journals worldwide support K-pop as an international scientific subject that connects creative industry strategies with significant sociocultural impacts in the digital age.



Figure 10 WordCloud

Data integration up to 2024 shows that research on K-pop has reached academic maturity, with South Korean researchers leading the way, followed significantly by researchers from the United States and Indonesia as representatives of research strength in Asia. The world is witnessing this global phenomenon through the concentration of articles in leading journals such as the *International Journal of Communication* and *Kritika Kultura*, which place K-pop as a subject of transnational communication research and cultural criticism. Although domestic publications (SCP) still dominate international collaboration patterns, widespread distribution to specialist Asian studies journals and global media supports the legitimacy of K-pop as a global scientific subject that connects people.

CONCLUSION

This study found that academic literature on K-pop has increased significantly over the past 15 years (2009–2024). With a total of 299 documents indexed by Scopus in 2023, the

literature reached its peak. This study shows strong intellectual globalization, with major contributions from US researchers and the emergence of new researchers from Indonesia and Thailand in Southeast Asia, although South Korea's dominance as a center of knowledge production remains strong. Thematically, the debate on K-pop has evolved into a subject that spans various disciplines. It is no longer merely a study of popular music, but has entered the fields of creative industry management, fan sociology, and mass psychology. This has been documented in leading journals such as *Sustainability* and the *International Journal of Communication*. The shift in trends toward topics such as creative economic sustainability and digital cultural diplomacy indicates that K-pop has been recognized as a legitimate and complex global scientific subject in connecting local dynamics with global communication and economic flows, although the majority of publications are still independent within a single country (SCP).

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