

**“ARMY” AND SOCIAL MEDIA ECHO CHAMBERS: THE CASE OF
YOGYAKARTA-BASED BTS FANS’ SOCIAL DYNAMICS**



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Through this letter, I hereby state the following:

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Thus, I truly agree with this remark.

Yogyakarta, July 17th, 2026



Spica Fijriyani Sutrisno

MOTTO

عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ

"In Him I place my trust."
(Ar-Ra'd:30)

"Life is struggle when you are a muggle"
(Harry Potter)

"In order to love who you are, you must not hate the experience that shaped you"
(Letters From Rosie – Substack)

DEDICATION PAGE

To my parents, my siblings, my friends, and myself. Thank you for staying. Through all the delays, doubts, change of plans, and days that felt endless—
Thank you for staying long enough to see how the story ends.

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Walaikumussalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Yogyakarta, June 5, 2026



Spica Fijriyani Sutrisno

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ABSTRACT

Sutrisno, Spica Fijriyani (2026). “ARMY” and Social Media Echo Chambers: The Case of Yogyakarta-Based BTS Fans’ Social Dynamics, Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Cultural Science, Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2026

The ARMY fan community utilizes the X platform as a communication tool to foster solidarity and unity. However, this phenomenon facilitates a phenomenon that limits people in the community to other viewpoints. Users are more likely to connect with people of similar views when community cohesion is founded on shared interests. The purpose of this study is to investigate the construction and use of these small spaces in the social dynamics of Yogyakarta’s ARMY fandom. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach and thematic analysis. For this purpose, the informants consist of BTS fans (ARMY), who utilize X and are based in Yogyakarta. Based on their experiences, this study examines how echo chambers emerge and are constructed socially within the contexts of a fan group. There are five analytical themes as main findings, including Identity Formation, Digital Fandom Practices on X, Social Dynamics, Information Credibility, and Trending Topics Among the Community. Echo chambers are constructed through several characteristics, including a sense of belonging, the dominance of X platform use, discourse homogeneity, internal regulation, and efficient information verification. In Yogyakarta, ARMY members employ these mechanisms to shield the fandom from external criticism or negative narratives that might harm the group. Furthermore, participants reinforce these boundaries to create a controlled ecosystem to regulate the flow of information about their idols. The functioning of these echo chambers proves efficient, adaptive, and sustainable, which then brings solutions for coordinated collective action.

Keywords: Echo Chamber, Social Dynamics, Fandom, ARMY, X

ABSTRACT

Sutrisno, Spica Fijriyani (2026). “ARMY” dan Ruang Gema di Media Sosial: Studi Kasus Dinamika Sosial Penggemar BTS di Yogyakarta, Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Budaya, Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2026

ARMY menggunakan X sebagai media komunikasi untuk memperkuat solidaritas dan persatuan. Namun, hal ini memicu fenomena yang membatasi anggota komunitas terhadap sudut pandang lain. Pengguna cenderung lebih mudah terhubung dengan orang-orang yang memiliki pandangan serupa ketika kohesi komunitas didasarkan pada minat bersama. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki pembentukan dan penggunaan ruang-ruang kecil tersebut dalam dinamika sosial komunitas penggemar ARMY di Yogyakarta. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif serta analisis tematik. Untuk tujuan ini, informan terdiri dari penggemar BTS (ARMY) yang menggunakan X dan berdomisili di Yogyakarta. Berdasarkan pengalaman mereka, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana ruang gema muncul dan dibangun secara sosial dalam konteks kelompok penggemar. Terdapat lima tema analitis sebagai temuan utama, yaitu Pembentukan Identitas, Praktik Fandom Digital di X, Dinamika Sosial, Kredibilitas Informasi, dan Topik yang Sedang Tren di Kalangan Komunitas. Ruang gema dibangun melalui beberapa karakteristik, termasuk rasa memiliki, dominasi penggunaan platform X, homogenitas wacana, regulasi internal, dan verifikasi informasi yang efisien. Di Yogyakarta, anggota ARMY menerapkan mekanisme ini untuk melindungi fandom dari kritik eksternal atau narasi negatif yang mungkin merugikan kelompok. Selain itu, para peserta memperkuat batasan-batasan ini untuk menciptakan ekosistem yang terkendali guna mengatur aliran informasi.

Kata Kunci: *Echo Chamber, Ruang Gema, Dinamika Sosial, Fandom, ARMY, X*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Today the Internet has given a platform for people to communicate and interact across barriers. Social media helps this by enabling human interaction without barriers of distance and time. As Wira Saputri (2024) mentions, nowadays social media and technology developments enable the people of distant countries to get connected. Carr and Hayes (2015) define social media as internet-based channels that allow users to selectively present themselves and interact opportunistically, in real time and asynchronously. Dewing (2010) refines this by saying that social media are basically internet and mobile services that allow users to participate in online communities, to create user-generated content and to participate in online transactions. This link between social media and technology exposes users to new family structures, cultural values, and ways of thinking (Dey, 2007).

In this digital age, there is no doubt that people are dependent on social media. Social media has become a dominant space in the daily lives of people, not only as a means of communication but also as a field for the expression of identity, affiliation and community. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have the potential to connect people across geographical boundaries and to create a dynamic, real-time discursive space. These technological changes have transformed the traditional relationship between producers and consumers of popular culture. Jenkins (2006) and Baym (2018) suggest that fans are no longer passive audiences but participate in the creation and dissemination of meaning from the popular culture goods they consume. John Storey (2018) describes popular culture as forms of culture from the wider community, commercial and mass produced such as music, films, television, fashion and viral internet phenomena. In this context, the entertainment industry, market logic and media representations that turn into community meeting points are mechanisms through which popular culture acts. Fandom is a concrete way that popular culture functions as a social and cultural force that creates communities in the digital age. Fans consume and actively interpret cultural symbols, thereby creating collective identities and social relations. In this regard, Carter (2018) notes that, consequently, numerous online communities—both official and

informal—have emerged, uniting members through common passions and interests. Technology facilitates the formation of global groups of individuals with similar intentions, interests, and goals. Among these, fan communities, particularly those centered on K-Pop, are notably global and prevalent.

Regarding online fan communities, fandom functions as a space for individuals to express their admiration, support, and affection for their favorite celebrities. According to Fuschillo (2020), a fan is someone with a strong emotional connection to a famous figure, often expressing this through style or creativity. As a popular culture environment, fandom is able to foster and increase fan productivity (Fulamah, 2015). ARMY (Adorable Representative M.C for Youth) is a global community that supports BTS (Beyond The Scene), which is very global today. BTS's popularity grew alongside the Hallyu (Korean Wave) phenomenon, which refers to the promotion and growth of South Korean popular culture such as music, movies and dramas, food, and fashion (Putri, Liany, & Nuraeni, 2019). This is one of the many reasons why BTS has millions of loyal fans spread across the globe. Thus, the global ARMY community was formed due to the sophisticated digital revolution that allows fans to connect seamlessly, facilitated by social media.

The BTS phenomenon is known to create an overwhelming wave of fans who have formed a solid and dedicated community (Tebe, 2025). As reported by Indonesian media, Asia is BTS's home continent and naturally home to the majority of ARMY. Countries such as South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have a very large and active fan base. According to Media Indonesia (2025), Indonesia is the third-ranked country with a large population of BTS fans who are active on social media. Rizaty (2023), citing DataIndonesia (2022), reports approximately 38,453 BTS fans spread throughout Indonesia. This makes Indonesia a country with a high potential market for BTS. Yogyakarta stands up as an especially important location in Indonesia for studying fandom dynamics. Yogyakarta, which is well-known for being an academic city, is home to a large population of young, technologically advanced people that make up the majority of K-Pop fans. Strong local solidarity, frequent community events, and a well-organized presence on platform X are characteristics of Yogyakarta's ARMY community, which is particularly active and dense (Alimah, 2021).

Consequently, ARMY communities have emerged in various regions spread across Indonesia, such as Makassar, Surabaya, Bandung, and Yogyakarta (Ramadhani, 2019). This study focuses more on the interaction dynamics of the ARMY fandom community in Yogyakarta through social media platforms. Members of ARMY Yogyakarta frequently share overlapping social networks both online and offline, in contrast to fandom groups in bigger metropolitan centers. Yogyakarta is an intriguing and understudied location for investigating echo chamber development within fandom because of its combination of digital participation and local connectivity. The ARMY community utilizes X (formerly Twitter) as a primary platform to connect, demonstrate solidarity, and inspire collective action within the modern digital landscape. Since it launched in 2006, X has attracted a loyal community of users who exchange short messages.

Social media platform X is an effective way for fan communities to communicate with each other. The platform thus acts as a medium to organize fan activities, experiences and relationships fast. This is consistent with Kwek et al. (2010) who found that X provides fast and wide coordination and dissemination of information with features such as tweets, retweets, trending topics, and hashtags. Yuniasti and Kusumastuti (2021) observe that strong emotional attachments between fans and idols have led to the creation of fanbase accounts on X. With these accounts, users can share information about BTS, stream music or videos, and raise funds to help their idols' work. X has developed into an interaction platform that links fans closer to each other from different cultures and countries, further reinforcing the ARMY community's position as digital cultural agents that have the ability to represent and mobilize themselves in online public spaces.

However, within that context, there is a common phenomenon known as an echo chamber, where individuals are only exposed to information and views that align with their beliefs. Du & Gregory (2016) state, when similarity is based on interests or opinions, users tend to be more connected with others who share their interests and isolated from those who have different interests or opposing viewpoints. Sunstein (2001) supports this view, attributing the echo chamber phenomenon to algorithms that customize content to user preferences, limiting exposure to various points of view. Song et al. (2024) note that echo chambers are characterized

by selective content (selection of content that matches user preferences) and homophily (similarity of user characteristics), as well as the interaction patterns between these factors. On platform X, people can actively create homogeneous information environments through tools like retweets, hashtags, and following lists, while algorithmic filtering curates timelines based on engagement patterns. These mechanisms produce strong feedback loops that restrict exposure to opposing viewpoints when paired with the psychological tendency of homophily, which is the propensity to interact with people who share similar values and interests (McPherson et al., 2001). Within the BTS fandom community, known as ARMY, echo chambers can strengthen members' loyalty and opinions towards the group, with members discussing and sharing content that is more aligned (Boulianne, 2015). On the other hand, McPherson et al. (2001) state that echo chambers have the potential to cause polarization and reduce tolerance towards dissenting views. In this ideologically homogeneous environment, digital interactions can produce a closed collective mindset, where any differences are seen as a threat to community solidarity.

The echo chamber phenomenon needs to be studied regionally, especially in Yogyakarta. Known as an academic hub with a substantial youth population, Yogyakarta hosts a dense and active ARMY fanbase. Members of this community interact frequently in both digital and offline spheres. ARMY Yogyakarta is unique because it has a strong sense of local solidarity, with various offline activities and interactions. In Yogyakarta, physical social proximity is considered to increase trust among members during interactions on the X platform. BTS ARMY Yogyakarta created the BTS Jogja exhibition, held a BTS documentary film screening, and also celebrated the birthdays of idol members, all of which have been well-received by ARMY Yogyakarta (Ramadhani, 2019). Thus, the echo chamber effect is strengthened by the tangible support from fellow community members in the same region. As a result, the process of collective narrative formation in information management is far more organized compared to groups without local ties.

Most prior research on echo chambers has predominantly focused on political communication and ideological polarization. In contrast, there is relatively limited qualitative discussion on the role of echo chambers within regional fandom communities. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how ARMY Yogyakarta creates echo chambers on the X platform to manage information flow and shape collective narratives among its members. Consequently, the

research seeks to deepen understanding of how echo chambers function in digital fandom spaces, especially in influencing communication patterns and reinforcing group identity within local communities like Yogyakarta.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research begins with the general question of how X, as a digital media platform, constructs closed communication spaces (echo chambers) within the ARMY fandom and influences interpersonal dynamics between members of the fandom community. Thus, this research poses the following research questions:

1. How are echo chambers constructed and characterized within the ARMY fandom community in Yogyakarta on the social media platform X?
2. How does the ARMY fandom community in Yogyakarta use echo chambers on the X platform to manage information flow and shape collective narratives?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Based on the problems outlined above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the construction and characteristics of the echo chamber formed within the ARMY Yogyakarta fandom community on the social media platform X.
2. To examine how the ARMY fandom community in the Yogyakarta area utilizes echo chambers on the X platform to manage information flow and shape collective narratives.

1.4 BENEFIT OF RESEARCH

1.4.1 Theoretical Benefits

This study aims to contribute to the development of communication science, particularly regarding youth communication, social media, and fan culture. Furthermore, it seeks to provide

new insights into how echo chambers function in the dynamics of the ARMY fandom community, specifically within a local context. By exploring these relationships, this research provides an understanding of the echo chamber phenomenon formed on the formation of interactions and viewpoints within the fan community, thereby serving as a foundation for further research in related fields.

1.4.2 Practical Benefits

The results of this study are expected to be a reference for academics, media practitioners, and fan communities seeking a deeper understanding of the formation of echo chambers and social community interactions on the X platform. Additionally, this research aims to provide relevant information for readers so as to increase the awareness of ARMY fandom community members about the echo chamber phenomenon and its impact on the dynamics of social interaction.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Numerous studies have examined fandoms, social media, and the effects of echo chambers in different contexts. Four studies analyzing the interplay between the echo chamber, collective identity, and the processes of interaction in a digital space are as follows:

The study titled “K-Pop Fans: From Fun to Self-Actualization (A Study of the K-Pop Fan Community ARMY in Yogyakarta)” by Annisa Nur Alimah (2021), a Social Development and Welfare student at Gadjah Mada University, explores the ARMY fandom community in Yogyakarta. It highlights that K-Pop fandom activities extend beyond entertainment, serving as a space for identity formation, self-actualization, and emotional as well as interpersonal growth among fans. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with in-depth interviews, the study involved administrators and members of the ARMY Yogyakarta community, selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that the ARMY community in Yogyakarta has fostered a “new force” that helps transform negative stereotypes about K-Pop fans into a more positive and constructive image. While the study does not specifically address digital interaction patterns

or closed communication dynamics like echo chambers, it offers valuable local context for the present research.

In another more technical approach, Sinambela (2024) in her study "Membongkar Algoritma: Studi Kualitatif Tentang Kesadaran Pengguna Terhadap Filter Bubble dan Echo Chambers" discusses how the social media audience perceives the algorithm mechanisms that affect the content they use. The goal of this study is to investigate the effect of personalized algorithms on users' behavior regarding filter bubbles and echo chambers. Sinambela explains that most users are not aware of how algorithms create filter bubbles, using a qualitative approach and semi-structured approach. These bubbles contribute to echo chambers that often reinforce, rather than reduce, confirmation bias. Even though this study does not directly examine fandom communities or collective identities, Sinambela emphasizes the importance of digital awareness generally to identify the negative effects of media use.

Meanwhile, a 2020 study titled "The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media" was carried out by Matteo Cinelli, Gianmarco De Francisci Morales, Alessandro Galeazzi, Walter Quattrociocchi, and Michele Starnini. This study focuses on how popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit affect the way information spreads and how echo chambers are created. Cinelli et al. performed network analysis and big data-based quantitative analysis on these platforms. The findings demonstrate how social media exacerbates polarization by fostering echo chambers, online communities where users are more likely to engage with people who share their opinions, thereby reinforcing preconceptions, and avoiding opposing viewpoints. This study is highly relevant for the current research because it explains the algorithmic mechanisms and social behavior of digital media users. However, the study does not address fandom communities or the specific dynamics that arise in fan communities such as ARMY.

Saputri (2024), in her article "Exploring the BTS ARMY Fandom: A Comprehensive Review", examines the ARMY fandom in a global context. The research covers online fandom hierarchies, modes of participation, and the contributions of ARMY fans to politics and social issues via social media. The study comprises a literature review and content analysis of ARMY's activities on Twitter (X), TikTok, and YouTube. Saputri underscores that fans, known as has

developed an effective communication network, mobilizing support and addressing BTS through online campaigns. However, the internal communication perspective of the ARMY community and the potential for echo chambers within the local context of Yogyakarta remain underexplored.

1.5.1 Research Gap Analysis

The reviewed studies indicate that fandom has been studied in general, including the formation of fan identity and the engagement of ARMY communities around the world. However, several critical gaps distinguish the current study from existing literature. First, there is a focus on the integration between the echo chamber and fan culture. No research has yet studied how fandom communities like ARMY use social media to produce echo chambers. Second, the element of locality, specifically the way this dynamic plays out in the Yogyakarta ARMY community, has received limited attention, despite the city having an active fandom base. While Alimah (2021) discusses aspects of the ARMY community in Yogyakarta, the study does not address digital phenomena such as echo chambers. Third, studies on the fandom community's awareness of algorithms and digital polarization have not been conducted. Unlike Alimah (2021) that discusses aspects of the ARMY community, which has a strong socio-cultural structure, Sinambela's (2024) research focuses on the general public. Lastly, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative approaches exploring fandom members' experiences in closed digital spaces. Most previous studies see echo chambers as a structural or theoretical phenomenon rather than a social experience internalized by the community.

1.5.2 Relevance of Previous Research

Alimah (2021) and Sinambela (2024) used a qualitative approach with interviews, which is effective for exploring the subjective experiences of fandom community members. Cinelli et al. (2020) used a quantitative method based on big data analysis, which is suitable for identifying systemic patterns in social media communication. Saputri (2024) used literature study and digital content analysis methods to understand the structure and activities of the ARMY community.

This research uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews to find out the communication dynamics and perceptions of ARMY members in Yogyakarta towards the information disseminated in their community. This approach is regarded as the most relevant as it enables researcher to understand in a contextual and deep manner the influence of echo chambers on the interaction and the social structure of fandoms in local areas that have not been covered by previous studies.

Table 1.1 Comparison of Previous Research and Current Research

No	Research Title	Research Focus	Methodology	Main Findings	Limitations / Gaps	Relevance to Current Research
1.	<i>Penggemar K-Pop: Dari Hura-hura Menuju Aktualisasi Diri (Studi Komunitas Penggemar K-Pop ARMY di Yogyakarta)</i> (Alimah, 2021)	Identity and self-actualization of ARMY community members in Yogyakarta	Qualitative (interview)	ARMY is a place for self-expression and social identity formation among teenagers.	The study does not discuss digital interaction or the echo chamber phenomenon	Provides a local foundation context for the ARMY community in Yogyakarta
2.	<i>Membongkar Algoritma: Studi Kualitatif Tentang Kesadaran Pengguna Terhadap Filter Bubble dan Echo Chamber</i> (Sinambela, 2024)	User awareness of algorithms and closed information spaces	Qualitative (interview)	Many users are unaware that social media filters content according to their preferences	The study does not focus on fandom communities or collective, identity-based interactions	This is relevant when looking at user perceptions of algorithms on social media
3.	<i>The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media</i> (Cinelli et al., 2020)	Algorithmic structure of social media and the resulting echo chamber effect can lead to	Quantitative analysis (big data and social network analysis)	Social media reinforces homogenous interactions and limits exposure to different perspectives	It does not address fan communities or local context	It provides a theoretical and technical basis for understanding the mechanisms of echo chambers

		opinion polarization				
4.	<i>Exploring the BTS ARMY Fandom: A Comprehensive Review</i> (Saputri, 2024)	The global structure of the ARMY fandom and its digital forms of participation	Literature review and content analysis	ARMY is active in digital campaigns and has a solid global network	It does not address internal conflicts or closed communication dynamics	It provides general context about ARMY as a global fandom

With an emphasis on ARMY Yogyakarta as the research locus, this study aims to investigate how a community creates and uses an echo chamber within their group dynamics in light of the lack of research addressing restricted spaces in group dynamics through social media, particularly within fandom communities. One of the main novelties of this study is the combination of three fundamental elements: fandom (ARMY), regional locus (Yogyakarta), and digital communication mechanisms (echo chamber on platform X). This is considering that most fandom-focused research does not address how their group dynamics, especially in Yogyakarta, give rise to a closed information space and how that space is used in managing and processing information.

The geographical location of this study is Yogyakarta, a city known for its thriving community culture and dense academic population, especially with connection to fan events and community gatherings. This study asserts that local context is important, in contrast to research that views the Indonesian ARMY as a homogeneous national group. Yogyakarta is a special and understudied location for studying echo chamber dynamics on X because of its strong community infrastructure, which influences how its ARMY members interact online. This study uses color coding as part of its theme analysis method, according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for analytical rigor. During the coding process, each theme is given a unique color to improve data consistency, traceability, and transparency. Although color coding itself is not a new invention, its thoughtful and methodical application here enhances the validity and auditability of qualitative analysis—a method that is still ignored in Indonesian communication studies research.

This study adds a fresh thematic perspective to the literature on echo chambers in addition to context and methodology. The majority of research on echo chambers has been done in political contexts, looking at electoral behavior, partisan media consumption, and ideological polarization (Sunstein, 2001; Bail et al., 2018; Cinelli et al., 2021). By investigating echo chamber development inside a K-Pop fandom community—an intense, identity-driven field that has gotten little academic consideration via this specific lens—this study goes beyond that prevailing setting. Furthermore, this study contradicts the literature's largely negative picture of echo chambers. Although misinformation, polarization, and democratic harm are frequently linked to echo chambers (Pariser, 2011; Cinelli et al., 2021), Jamieson and Cappella (2008) suggested that echo chambers can also have positive purposes. The ARMY Yogyakarta echo chamber serves as an adaptive ecosystem that promotes solidarity, emotional support, and collaborative information management rather than just repeating a harmful polarization, as this study empirically supports.

This study investigates the active communication strategies used by ARMY Yogyakarta in constructing and using their closed information environment on platform X, going beyond merely discovering the existence of echo chambers. As a result, it is claimed that this study significantly advances communication research on fandom dynamics in the new media era. The following table provides additional examples of this study's uniqueness and positioning with the context of earlier research.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The majority of current study on echo chambers is focused on political communication, which leaves out important aspects of how fan groups develop and engage. This study creates a framework that is more appropriate for that situation. Thus, Echo Chamber Theory (Sunstein, 2001; Jamieson & Cappella, 2009; Cinelli et al., 2021) is positioned as the core theory to explain the broad phenomenon of emotional and social isolation. However, in addition to their relevance to digital communication, the four following complementary frameworks are chosen considering

that they can explain the identity-driven and community-based dynamics that define ARMY Yogyakarta's presence on platform X.

Based on the conceptual question posed by each of these four theories answers, they are arranged into two categories. The first category addresses the issue of decision and identity: Participatory Culture describes how that identity is embodied through collective behaviors, whereas Social Identity Theory explains how in-group borders are formed. The issue of interpersonal reinforcement is covered in the second category: Fans' willingness to connect with like-minded people is explained by Homophily, whereas the affective connection to idols that keeps them involved is explained by Para-social Relationships. Together, these two categories provide the process by which a fandom becomes vulnerable to the conditions of an echo chamber and serve as the basis for the original contribution of this work. The first cluster explains why a fan community arises, while the second explains how its boundaries are maintained: the Participatory Echo Chamber model.

1.6.1 Popular Culture and Fan Culture

Understanding the cultural environment in which ARMY Yogyakarta works is essential. As the fundamental framework for comprehending fandom as a social and communicative phenomenon, the following section explores the ideas of popular culture and fan culture, including how Participatory Culture Theory explains the active role of fans as producers and circulators of meaning. According to Storey (2018), the term “popular culture” refers to the type of culture that is accepted and consumed by the general population, often through mass media. This includes music, movies, television, fashion, and emerging trends. Hills (2002) offers another definition, describing popular culture as a broad form of culture that exists in people's daily lives, often related to media consumption. Hills identifies key characteristics of popular culture, including diversity, an appreciation of certain media and cultural texts, and a dynamic relationship between cultural products and consumers. Jenkins (2006) highlights several key characteristics: accessibility, which makes popular culture easily accessible to various groups of people; dynamism, which indicates that popular culture evolves and changes with the times and trends; emotional engagement, which is able to elicit emotions and attachments in response from

fans; and the role of globalization, which allows the spread of popular culture around the world, across geographical and cultural borders. Storey (2021) agrees, stating that accessibility and the capacity of mass media to reach vast audiences are the defining characteristics of popular culture.

Despite being commercially produced, K-pop's meaning is heavily influenced by its audience, especially through fandom. In addition to being a component of popular culture, fandom is one of its most active practices, allowing viewers to turn commercial goods into a common social identity. One of the best examples of this is K-pop.

Fandom, on the other hand, refers to a community or group of individuals who share a common interest and attraction to a cultural object, such as movies, music, books, or celebrities (Jenkins, 1992). According to Lisa (2023), fan domination (fandom) is the pillar of popular culture studies that highlight young adults and the popular culture itself. Fandoms constitute unique subcultures composed of individuals who share the same interests and celebrate those interests. Fan relationships are based not only on musical preferences but also on emotional commitment, shared social identity, and involvement in collective projects that increase group cohesion (Click, Lee, & Holladay, 2013). Lisa (2023) notes that fandom is characterized by feelings of closeness and similarity. Fandom includes social interaction, information sharing, and participation in activities related to an object of their love. Tajfel and Turner also make it clear that identity for individuals is constructed through social affiliation and this includes within the fandom community.

According to Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory, which was put out in 1979, a person's self-identity is influenced by their social affiliations. "In-groups" (one's own group) and "out-groups" (other groups) are separate. Evaluation and differentiation are involved in this distinction: individuals have a tendency to favor and think highly of their own group. These judgments are reinforced and fans are given a stable social identity through everyday comparisons, such as those that occur within the K-pop community between fans of different groups or between fans and those who are suspicious of K-pop. On social media, this group divide is obvious. In addition to using common labels, like "ARMY" for BTS supporters, fans also utilize particular language and symbols to set themselves apart from non-fans or fans of

other groups. This idea explains the Yogyakarta ARMY's view of themselves as a community rather than just BTS fans. Additionally, it affects their behavior, including the people they follow, the posts they interact with, and the information they accept. Put another way, because they engage with other members of the group more often than with outsiders, identifying as an ARMY indirectly influences the kind of information they receive.

Fan culture views fans as an active part of popular culture, rather than as passive consumers. The theory of fan culture that is relevant to the context of this research was developed by Henry Jenkins (1992), who also refers to this phenomenon as participatory culture, where in this kind of culture, fans are actively involved in the production and circulation of content, thereby blurring the boundaries between producers and consumers. By demonstrating that fan identity is practiced rather than just felt, Participatory Culture expands on the preceding concept. According to Jenkins, a participatory culture is one that facilitates easy interaction and communication, encourages individuals to produce and share their own work, and has an unofficial guidance structure where seasoned members assist beginners. Because planning, producing, and sharing group activities validates a fan's identity to the community and to themselves, participation is a crucial component of fandom itself. Events like producing and disseminating content (translations, edits, news threads, etc.) and planning group events (streaming projects, hashtag campaigns, voting, etc.) are examples of this behavior in the fangirling community. This aligns with McKee's (2007) findings that fans create their own works, create groups, and engage in a variety of activities that help them feel more like fans, in addition to reading and appreciating theoretical works.

In this instance, fandom participation culture and fandom identity are closely linked. Combining these two theories can provide a basis for comprehending how the dynamics of the ARMY fandom create echo chambers. Fans' perception of themselves as a group with a common goal and vision can be explained by social identity theory. The culture of participation, on the other hand, explains how fandoms contribute to the dissemination of popular culture through their involvement in events, social media campaigns, and goods (Hills, 2002). This is how the way fans engage, communicate, and build social bonds within a community is influenced by fan culture. These two components are interconnected since a shared identity will remain static in the absence of concrete activities. When the two are combined, a cohesive community is created that

can support identity development and promote high levels of involvement. For instance, the term "ARMY," which refers to BTS supporters, has gained international recognition. Through their social media solidarity, ARMY not only advocates social causes but also spreads K-pop music. Fans view BTS as a global symbol of self-expression, community, and solidarity in addition to being artists, creating a complicated identity dynamic.

1.6.2 Social Media, Idols, and Fans

The formation and expression of fan identities through social media activity was covered in the preceding subsection. This segment also examines the ways in which relationships are progressively maintained and built between fans and their idols.

Social media is a collection of digital platforms that allow users to share, distribute and interactively consume content in real time. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that allow people to create, share and exchange content and ideas online. Therefore, social media is not only a medium of communication, but also a cultural space that affects the way people think, interact and act with each other. Social media platforms allow the formation of social networks that extend across regions and cultures. Thus, the use of social media leads to the formation of new forms of cultural participation, especially in the field of popular culture (Miller et al., 2016). Fans utilize social media sites like X, Instagram, and TikTok to engage with other fans, support their favorites, and exchange relevant content, creating a vibrant community around the celebrities they adore.

According to homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), people tend to form social bonds with those who have similar interests, values, and backgrounds when using social media in the realm of followers and idols. The idea is straightforward: people tend to connect with people who are similar rather than those who are different since similarities make interactions far more comfortable and trustworthy. This trend is even more pronounced on social media because sites such as X provide users the ability to select who they follow and ignore. In contrast, real-world interactions are frequently unplanned. ARMY members' tendency to follow, engage with, and form connections with other BTS fans—especially those who have similar

viewpoints or fandom expressions—is explained by homophily. By interacting more with other fans who share their interests, fans create social networks. But this inclination also has repercussions. Fans acquire more information and viewpoints from within the group than from outside it as their network of peers expands.

In popular culture, idols—such as musicians, actresses, painters, or other celebrities—serve as the focal point of the fanbase system. Hills (2002) asserts that they play an important part in forming fan identities and goals, serving as symbols of the values and identities of their followers. Fans can be influenced by idols in a variety of ways, including through their works, such as music and movies, as well as their interactions on social media (Fiske, 1991). According to Horton & Wohl (1956), a parasocial relationship in this context is a unique phenomena that involves a one-way emotional bond between a fan or audience member and a public person, despite the absence of direct or reciprocal interaction. Fans get the impression that they know their idols personally through continuous exposure to them through media, including videos, social media posts, interviews, and live streaming. Although the relationship is not truly reciprocal—idols usually do not personally know their fans—fans see this intimacy as genuine.

In actuality, parasocial relationships are strongly linked to interpersonal communication since it enables two parties to comprehend and respond to information that is communicated or received, whether through verbal or nonverbal means (Sarmiati, 2019). In actuality, though, interpersonal communication entails mutual engagement between the communicator and the recipient. The parasocial interaction process, however, does not. Reciprocity seldom happens in these parasocial interactions since media personalities are oblivious to their audience or supporters (Prameswari, 2024). Social media further promotes this situation. Thanks to supposedly intimate exchanges like responding to comments, holding live streams, or providing glimpses into their idols' everyday lives, fans believe their relationship is closer and more intimate than it has ever been. For ARMY, the reason they have followed, supported, and actively interacted with BTS over time can be explained by parasocial interactions. They stay in the fandom because of this emotional connection rather than just a passing interest in BTS's work.

Social media allows fans and idols to interact with one another in ways that were previously unachievable. Through messages, comments, and even live streams, fans may strengthen their bond with and support for their favorites. Social media fans actively participate in conversations, campaigns, and activities that support their idols in addition to passively doing so. A wider fanbase community and greater awareness of the idols are the outcomes of all of this (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

1.6.3 Echo Chamber

The echo chamber theory, introduced by Cass R. Sunstein in 2001, explains how people often find themselves surrounded only by information and opinions that match their own beliefs. These views get stronger because they keep being shared and repeated within a closed group. With social media, this effect has grown even more, as people tend to connect mostly with others who think like them. Algorithms and personal preferences also play a big role by showing content that fits what users already believe. Overall, social connections, individual choices, and algorithm-driven content filtering are the main reasons echo chambers thrive on social media (Sunstein, 2001; Cinelli et al., 2021). This can happen on social media where people engage with those who have similar views, reinforcing their personal and collective views. Evidence that contradicts the group's beliefs is often ignored, rejected, or simply not found in these spaces. In such an environment, the diversity of perspectives is limited, and the individuals involved tend to maintain their existing perspectives. As a result, “ideological repetition” occurs, leading to negative outcomes such as radicalization of opinions and reinforcement of collective biases. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) agree, stating that this phenomenon can involve reinforcing stereotypes and blocking out different perspectives.

The Echo Chamber theory was initially put up to explain a political communication phenomena. Sunstein (2001) was the first to claim that rather than increasing people's knowledge, the internet polarizes ideological groups by enabling people to select information based on their political beliefs. This explanation is further explained by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella's (2008) case study of conservative media in the United States, which demonstrates how audiences with similar political views reinforce each other's opinions by

consuming the same media. They claim that the interaction of a message (text), context, and audience can create an "echo chamber," which serves as a "self-protective enclave." In other words, an echo chamber can develop in any field as long as there is a convincing message (text), a supporting environment (context), and an audience looking for validation. The viewpoint of Jamieson and Cappella is different from those who concentrate only on technical algorithms. They are more concerned in the communication and psychological aspects of how people actively look for confirmation of their ideas.

Jamieson and Cappella (2008) identify three main mechanisms underlying the construction of a community:

1. *Reinforcing Spirals*: Audiences seek information that only confirms their beliefs and avoid opposing views, thereby reinforcing their identity.
2. *Inoculation*: Media in the echo chamber provides arguments and evidence that "vaccinates" the audience against external perceptions.
3. *Emotional and Identity Support*: Echo chambers function as safe spaces that provide a sense of belonging to their members and protect their identities from negative stigma from outside.

Furthermore, Jamieson and Cappella argue echo chambers are not always viewed negatively. They characterize echo chambers as having both negative and positive dimensions. Despite the risks of information isolation, there are benefits that support the strengthening of the community within. Jamieson and Cappella believe that the flow within echo chambers can increase member engagement in group dynamics. Furthermore, echo chambers can also help members understand complex issues through a consistent framework of thinking. Echo chambers can also create a sense of belonging among members who share similar views. Thus, echo chambers are not merely passive spaces; rather, they are a means of supporting social cohesion and empowering collective identity.

However, unlike Sunstein, Jamieson, and Cappella, Cinelli et al. (2021) provide an explanation of the echo chamber. By examining 100 million pieces of content from four social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Gab), they were able to measure this empirically. They took into account two factors: the degree to which users interact with others

who have similar viewpoints (homophily) and the degree to which the information they share tends to reach like-minded users. One of their main conclusions demonstrates that Facebook and Twitter are the platforms where users are most frequently grouped into clusters with similar opinions; even on the same topics, Facebook shows greater viewpoint segregation than Reddit. This implies that the structure and design of the platforms themselves, in addition to people's tendency to look for similarities, dictate the echo chamber's effectiveness.

According to Cinelli et al., echo chambers are not just the product of deliberate information selection but also the structure of the social networks in which individuals engage. This result is essential to the study's justification. Understanding ARMY Yogyakarta is crucial because it shows that fan echo chambers cannot be explained by personal identity and motive alone, as social identity and social connection theories imply. It is also noteworthy that the degree of homogeneity in the information that fandom members receive is determined by the homophily-shaped structure of friendship networks on the X platform.

Echo chambers can be created by digital platform algorithms, social affiliation tendencies, and cognitive motivation to avoid information dissonance (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016). Social media platforms like X serve to filter preferred content and suppress opposing content by controlling the flow of information depending on user behavior. Users also actively choose to follow accounts that align with their views and build social networks that support similar perspectives. Together these two factors create a biased, polarized and closed space of communication, resistant to difference. Echo chambers can have a big impact on community group relationships and cohesiveness. Dissenting opinions are often considered deviations when the majority of members dominate a particular narrative (e.g., about loyalty to BTS or interpretations of group members' actions). This can reinforce collective norms that are not always inclusive, reduce tolerance for criticism, and create a social environment that discourages diversity. Echo chambers can also increase fandom gatekeeping, which is the informal process of determining who is considered a “true fan” and who is not (Click, Lee, & Holladay, 2013).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

1.7.1 Method

This study employs a qualitative approach to describe and examine a phenomenon in detail and depth, and considers informants' experiences as the primary data source. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. An interview is a direct communication process in which a researcher asks research subjects questions and receives responses. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of participants' ideas, experiences, and viewpoints (Iba & Wardhana, 2024). Thematic analysis is used to organize qualitative data into main themes that reflect the experiences of the research subjects (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through field data collection, this method emphasizes understanding meaning from the informants' perspective, which includes the use of digital platforms for observation and interviews (Doyle et al., 2020). This methodology is suitable for exploring the experiences of research subjects through data obtained verbally and visually in a digital context. The study focuses on group social identity, online interactions, collective norms, fan rituals, and the closed spaces that are formed.

To maintain data trustworthiness, the researcher conducted non-participatory observation on the social media platform X. Additionally, informants' interactions in the echo chamber occurred naturally without the influence of the researcher's presence. This research covers the digital space of platform X, focusing on users geographically located in Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta was chosen based on the large ARMY fanbase in the region, which allows for many interactions. This is a unique way to see how local identity drives the formation of echo chambers on social media.

The researcher chose qualitative methods in order to gain a deeper understanding of certain concepts related to specific phenomena, which would be difficult to obtain from closed and limited research surveys. This approach allowed for an exploration of participants' subjective experiences, free from the constraints of predefined answer choices, thereby yielding more in-depth and specific responses regarding echo chambers and the social dynamics of the ARMY fandom community.

1.7.2 Research Subject

This research was initially conducted on the social media platform X (Twitter), specifically in communities and accounts with hashtags relevant to the ARMY fandom community in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The subjects of this research include:

1. Local and national fanbase accounts,
2. Users who interact within the ARMY community and via hashtags,
3. Key informants for in-depth interviews.

To obtain informants, the researcher used snowballing sampling, which involves setting specific criteria for potential informants. This technique was used to determine the research sample by considering certain factors (Sugiyono, 2016). In this technique, the research required the following criteria for informants:

1. Individuals who have identified themselves as ARMY for at least 2 years.
2. Those who have lived in Yogyakarta for more than 3 years.
3. Actively use social media, especially X (Twitter), every day to interact with fandom content.
4. Have a network of friends on X that mainly consists of fellow BTS fans to ensure exposure to the echo chamber phenomenon.

Table 1.6 Informant Composition

Type of ARMY	Level of Engagement	Ideal Number
Members of the ARMY Jogja Community (active online & offline)	Frequently participate in events, fan projects, and gatherings	2 Informants
ARMY active online (not part of a formal community)	Active on X, participants in fandom trends & discussions	2 Informants
Casual ARMY or fandom observers	Rarely active but have reflective views	2 Informants

1.7.3 Types and Sources of Data

The data sources used in this study are:

1. Primary

The main source of data in this study was the transcripts that were gathered from in-depth interviews with six members of the ARMY community who are active online and willing to be interviewed. An interview is a method of gathering information that involves direct interaction with subjects to obtain comprehensive information (Iba & Wardhana, 2024). In-depth interviews can be used to obtain consistent information and are an effective tool. This method provides relevant insights into the experiences and views of ARMY regarding the formation of echo chambers in digital media and how they construct them. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis as a supporting technique. Additionally, the researcher conducted limited observations of the activities of ARMY Yogyakarta accounts on X to verify the interview findings. Subsequently, data were collected by documenting screenshots of tweets, threads, interaction archives, and hashtag records. The final stage was to record reflective observations and interview transcripts.

2. Secondary

Secondary data refers to additional sources used to reinforce or support the primary data. The secondary sources used in this study are journals, previous studies, and articles that are still related to the title of the researcher's research or thesis.

1.7.4 Data Collection

This data collection technique is a systematic process of searching for and compiling information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In this study, the data collection process involved the following stages:

1. Interview

At this stage, the researcher had determined the informant's criteria and prepared a list of questions to be asked. Before the search for informants began, the researcher drafted questions related to the identity and collective solidarity of fans, patterns of online interaction, and the potential for echo chambers formation, deliberately avoiding the specific term 'echo chamber' to prevent response bias. In this case, the study on the construction of echo chambers in the dynamics of ARMY identified six informants who are BTS fans residing in Yogyakarta who actively use X for fandom interaction, ensuring the collection of in-depth, high-quality data. The researcher used a list of questions to guide the interviews. The questions were divided into five categories, covering informant profiles, community interaction patterns, group identity and solidarity, informant perceptions, the potential for echo chambers, and personal reflections (Appendix 1). A total of 31 questions were asked. Subsequently, the researcher conducted the interviews in accordance with the terms and agreements with the prospective informants. The informants' responses were transcribed verbatim and organized for analysis.

2. Digital Observation

The researcher added digital observations of the informants' X (previously Twitter) accounts after finishing the thematic analysis and classifying the interview transcripts into topics. This was done in order to gather further information and verify that the information from the interviews corresponded with the informants' real online behavior. Only those informants who trusted the researcher and consented to have their account activity, including posts and interactions, viewed participated in this step. Since the primary objective was to obtain further information and validate what the informants had stated, these observations were made after the interviews rather than before or during. In this way, the interview results could be compared with the informants' real online behavior, which helped make the data more reliable.

1.7.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted interactively throughout this study. According to Millie and Huberman's model, there are three stages of qualitative data analysis: data reduction, in which researcher sort interview results and screenshots of observations related to the research questions; presentation of data grouping results; and drawing conclusions. Therefore, the process used to analyze the data in this study was as follows:

1. The researcher collected all interview transcripts and coded data, summarizing key narratives to focus on elements relevant to the research questions.
2. Next, the researcher identified codes relevant to the research focus on the use of platform X. Subsequently, related codes were collated into potential themes representing dominant patterns.
3. The themes were defined and categorized based on different colors (color-coded) to be presented narratively and discussed further in the discussion in relation to supporting theory (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).
4. The researcher presented the data in descriptive narrative text, utilizing matrices to compare interview responses with observational data from X. Screenshots were included as supporting documentation.
5. The researcher interpreted the findings by drawing conclusions and verifications that answered the research questions regarding echo chamber construction, guided by the theories of Cass R. Sunstein (2001), Jamieson & Cappella (2008).

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH OBJECT

2.1 BTS (BEYOND THE SCENE)



Picture 2.1 All members of BTS

Source: Google Image

Understanding BTS as the band at the core of the fandom is essential before delving deeper into the ARMY community. Bangtan Sonyeondan (방탄소년단), often known as BTS, is a South Korean boy band that has garnered significant global attention. BTS has become a topic of conversation due to its numerous achievements, awards, and strong support from its fans. The group was formed by Big Hit Entertainment, which is now under the Hybe Labels umbrella, on June 13, 2013. The members of the group are RM (Kim Nam-Joon, leader), Jin (Kim Seok-Jin), Suga (Min Yoon-Gi), J-Hope (Jung Ho-Seok), Jimin (Park Ji-Min), V (Kim Tae-Hyung), and Jungkook (Jeon Jeong-Guk). Their debut began with the song “No More Dream” from the album *2 Cool 4 Skool*. In May 2017, BTS announced their new acronym, Beyond The Scene, signifying their new identity (Herman, 2017).

Originating from a small agency, BTS did not receive a positive reaction from K-Netz (Korean Netizens) from the start of their debut. Numerous charges were made against them, ranging from body shaming to plagiarism and chart manipulation to increase their fame. They also had to face numerous additional challenges, such as living in a tiny dorm, practicing in

temporary spaces, and playing concerts to small crowds. However, those obstacles did not deter the group. Following their 2014 performance at K-Con in Los Angeles with their third comeback album, “Boy In Luv”, BTS soon gained international recognition (Lisa, 2023). In the end, BTS's song "I Need You" won them their first award at SBS MTV's *The Show* on May 5, 2015 (Peters, 2022).

BTS actively participates in the production process of their own music, often addressing social issues in their lyrics. Their music is widely popular because of its deep social meaning, discussing issues such as the dreams of young people, the pressures experienced by the younger generation, and messages about self-love. Through these authentic narratives and musical concepts, BTS has successfully built a strong relationship with fans around the world through their original music concept and powerful narratives. Numerous records have been broken, and BTS has even surpassed many other musicians on the Billboard charts. BTS became an icon after becoming the first Korean musician to dominate the Billboard Hot 100 chart, which features the 100 best-selling songs in the United States. This achievement marked the beginning of BTS's soaring popularity worldwide. As a result, the synergy between BTS and ARMY has strengthened the global Hallyu fanbase. Due to the growth of the internet, this *Hallyu* or the so-called Korean Wave phenomenon has made BTS to global prominence (Liputan6, 2025). Through accessible digital platforms, BTS has amassed a fanbase in various countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Brazil, and even the US. Thus, BTS's global success is inseparable from their fans' efforts that are ongoing throughout the world.

2.2 THE ARMY COMMUNITY

Having established the background of BTS and the emergence of the ARMY fandom as a globally influential community, this section examines its development within global, national, and local context, particularly in Yogyakarta. First, however, it is necessary to know some important information about ARMY in general.

ARMY is a large community of fans of the idol group BTS, currently recognized as one of the most prominent K-Pop groups globally. Literally, the term “ARMY” carries the literal

meaning of “army” in English, which aligns with the group’s name, Bangtan Boys (Bangtan means bulletproof). This symbolism suggests that fans will always protect and support Bangtan Boys. ARMY is also an acronym for Adorable Representative M.C for Youth, reflecting the essence of BTS's music as a representation of passionate and enthusiastic young people (Merdeka, 2025). As reported by Republika (Republika, accessed on October 22, 2025), the name of the fandom has taken on a new meaning among fans and has been well-received by members. ARMY, which in French means “friend,” received a positive response for describing the relationship between the group and its fans.

This community was established soon after BTS made their debut, which they revealed on July 9, 2013, via a fancafe (an app for interacting with idols). This fandom is distinctive due to its active participation in digital media and its emphasis on fostering social unity. ARMY is well-known for their numerous social events and their fervent support of BTS. These include digital initiatives that tackle humanitarian concerns, charity events, and fundraising. The values of unity, inclusivity, and teamwork are among the traits that define the ARMY.

Also, BTS and ARMY have a unique two-way communication pattern. BTS members often interact directly with fans through social media platforms like Weverse, Twitter, and VLive, which helps to build an emotional connection with fans and increase fan loyalty. This dynamic also promotes the development of a digital fandom culture where BTS fans share thoughts, emotions, and support on social media platforms. Recognizing BTS as the symbolic nucleus of the fandom is critical to understanding how ARMY’s identity and solidarity are formed and sustained in this increasingly digital age.

2.2.1 ARMY as a Global Fandom

ARMY has now become one of the largest fandoms in the world, Billboard reports. The global fanbase of K-Pop is estimated to reach 150 million people by 2025 (Worldwide K-Pop, 2025). ARMY fans comprise 30-40% of this fandom, estimated at 40-60 million fans. Actually,

BTS alone has hit 70 million subscribers on YouTube. The total can also increase to as many as 100 million followers when combined with followers on other digital media like Instagram, X and TikTok. These figures illustrate the group's massive popularity.

U.S. media outlets have frequently highlighted ARMY's prominence, citing its central role in the contemporary music industry. Astriana (2025) identifies several reasons why ARMY is called the best fandom. First, ARMY is united and loyal to BTS, as evidenced by the fact that they received a nomination for Top Social Artist at the BBMAs and ARMY supported them by generating 213 million tweets. Second, ARMY helped BTS enter the music charts, as demonstrated by the sales of BTS's *Wings* album, which became the best-selling album of all time according to the Gaon chart. Finally, ARMY helped BTS get invited back to the 2017 BBMAs, again because ARMY worked together to retweet the Billboard account. This shows that ARMY has an organized network through various fanbase accounts, cross-border collaborative projects, and digital activities such as streaming parties and hashtag campaigns. ARMY uses social media to build an international communication system, illustrating how fandom can function as a collective identity around the world.

To date, ARMY has launched numerous digital initiatives from all around the world. To date, ARMY has completed over 360 humanitarian missions worldwide. Fahmianita (2022), citing *One In An ARMY* (2018), notes that OIAA was the first major ARMY project that was started with the goal of aiding Syrian refugees. Through this charitable endeavor, \$2,673 USD was raised for the Malaysian-based International Medical Team (IMT), which at the time was helping Syrian refugees impacted by wars and natural catastrophes. Another social activity carried out was the fans' initiative to launch the #MatchAMillion campaign in June 2020, where they successfully raised more than one million USD for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the United States. This project was a form of support for George Floyd, a victim of anti-Black violence discrimination (Soyeon, Blair, Nicole, & Jihan, 2021). Furthermore, ARMY has initiated numerous other large-scale projects for the common good.

The ARMY fandom itself is inspired by the social campaigns of their idol celebrities. Every year, ARMY often carries out local and international activities in collaboration with various organizations to address social issues in various fields. This fandom is usually active

online through social media such as Twitter, the fandom also actively participates in offline initiatives. As demonstrated by ARMY, fans play a very important role in their activities, as demonstrated by ARMY, the BTS fandom. Consequently, ARMY maintains a high level of social activism in their various fandom events around the world.

2.2.2 ARMY in Indonesia

This fandom has quickly expanded in Indonesia. When BTS's songs became a worldwide hit in the 2017s, ARMY Indonesia surged to prominence. Hit singles such as “DNA,” “Fake Love,” “Mic Drop,” and “Boy With Luv” significantly contributed to this growth. Since then, Indonesia has emerged as one of the nations with the greatest concentration of BTS fans globally. Many regional social media networks, including Bangtan Indonesia fandom and BTS ARMY Indonesia, have thousands of active fandom profiles on Twitter, Instagram, and other online platforms, demonstrating this widespread engagement (Pertiwi et al., 2023). Aditya (2025) claims that, based on data from the 2020 BTS ARMY census, Indonesia has the largest fan base in the world.



Picture 2.2 Infographic of ARMY Globally

Source: Goodstats website

Census data indicates that Indonesia has the highest number of BTS fans, or ARMY members worldwide. This makes Indonesia the country that has the largest number of BTS fans. Surveys indicate that 20% of ARMY members are from Indonesia, followed by 10.6% from Mexico, 8.4% from the US, 5.12% from Peru, and 4.5% from the Philippines. Thus, Indonesia has the largest number of BTS fans in the world, and the majority of them are women. Women constitute approximately 86.34% of the total fans (Tizzard, 2021).

In addition to focusing on supporting their idols, ARMY engages in diverse social and creative activities (Setiawan, 2022). This community is known for streaming parties, fundraising, social campaigns, and even charitable activities inspired by their idols. They participate in public awareness campaigns and fundraising efforts for natural disasters. These actions show devotion to idols as well as how, in the digital era, fandom has evolved into a vehicle for social expression and cultural engagement. Additionally, ARMY Indonesia is well-known for aggressively using Twitter to foster unity and promote constructive discussions regarding BTS worldwide. Agatha & Utami (2023) claim that the Indonesian ARMY fandom promotes social cooperation and humanitarian ideals in addition to providing a forum for expression. Social media hashtags like #LoveMyself and #BTSforCharity, which are motivated by the uplifting themes of BTS's work, serve as examples of this.

Other characteristics of the Indonesian ARMY include its decentralization and inclusivity. BTS's values of hope, resilience, and self-love unite its many subcommunities, including birthday initiatives, art projects, streaming fanbases, and even charitable organizations. Consequently, ARMY Indonesia is a complex social phenomena that combines digital networks, popular cultural identity, and worldwide emotional commitment.

2.2.3 Yogyakarta-Based ARMY

The ARMY community exhibits several fascinating and distinctive social dynamics that are worth seeing, particularly in Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta is a culturally vibrant student city with a free-spirited, cooperative, and innovative social scene. According to Rahman and Vebriyanti (2023), Yogyakarta's ARMY community has a reasonably robust consumption culture. Their great involvement in offline events, watch parties, and charitable endeavors as previously mentioned, as well as their substantial participation in goods purchases and digital support, serve as indicators of this. In this sense, social media and the internet play a critical role in sustaining these community activities. Social media plays a significant role in shaping the self-identity of ARMY Jogja community members, as their identity as BTS fans becomes part of the social identity they present online.

The ARMY Yogyakarta community is a small part of an international fandom network that operates within the context of local culture in Indonesia. They uphold Yogyakarta's social values, such as mutual cooperation and togetherness, while simultaneously building solidarity through social media. An example of this is the *takjil* distribution project located in Tugu Jogja, a collaboration between ARMY Jogja and Dompot Dhuafa Yogyakarta on March 12, 2025. As reported by kbknews, this social activity is not the first of its kind but rather an annual agenda for ARMY Jogja. The purpose of this activity aligns with the character and culture deeply rooted in Yogyakarta City, namely mutual cooperation and instilling a sense of care for the broader community (kbknews, 2025). This proves that K-Pop fans, especially ARMY, can evolve from mere entertainment into a tool for self-actualization and social empowerment (Alimah, 2021).



Picture 2.2.2 ARMY Yogyakarta shares takjil with Dompot Dhuafa

Source: Google Image, Dompot Dhuafa

The ARMY Yogyakarta community was selected as the study's focus for two primary reasons. First, this community exemplifies a trend of active online fandom that is also based on actual community events. Second, Yogyakarta's multicultural and globally open social context makes it an ideal environment for observing social interaction phenomena in digital spaces, particularly in the context of fandom echo chamber construction and utilization.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM: X

Following a study of BTS's status as a global cultural symbol and an identification of the traits of the ARMY fandom as a global community, the conversation shifted to social media, namely Twitter, which serves as their primary platform for engagement. Twitter, a social media platform centered on microblogging and distinguished by brief communications in the form of text, photos, or videos, formally changed its name to "X" in 2023. Previously limited to 140 characters, the character limit for each post—also referred to as a Tweet or Cuitan—has been raised to 280 characters. The site was established in 2006 to provide real-time, brief status updates. This is one of X's primary features, allowing users to submit brief information in real

time and directly monitor trends, viewpoints, or the most recent news (Rizqi & Heriyanto, 2023). Because of its user-friendliness, X has emerged as the main venue for fan communities to support their idols, plan events or initiatives, distribute information, and promote them extensively. Features like hashtags and retweets allow information about fan communities or idols to circulate effectively and rapidly. X has emerged as the main online community tool for ARMY in Yogyakarta to communicate and coordinate (Indriani, 2022).

Among various digital platforms, X is crucial in shaping the ARMY's echo chamber dynamics, collective identity, and communication strategy. This platform serves as a vital forum for expressing feelings, fostering connection, and reinforcing the collective fan identity in addition to providing information regarding BTS events. As a result, Hudayu & Asmara (2025) claim that X has evolved into a crucial instrument for facilitating dynamic fanbase management, enhancing community ties, and boosting idol support. Through posts, retweets, comments, and discussions in online forums that serve as platforms for symbolic exchange, each fandom member generates meaning (Sumardiono, 2022). Thus, according to [Magdalene.co](#) (2021), this has led the ARMY community in Yogyakarta to participate in fan projects like FESTApورا, where thousands of people retweeted posts to support BTS and counter negative news.

Through these daily interactions, a closed space can potentially be formed gradually through confirmation bias, where ARMY usually only likes and shares content that is in line with BTS. Furthermore, the X algorithm presents uniform narratives in user feeds by filtering out different points of view (Binus, 2025). The Indonesian K-Pop fandom's use of X shows that the platform's capabilities not only satisfy information requirements but also produce information homogeneity through controlled retweets and mention patterns, as illustrated by Hudayu and Asmara (2025). This result forecasts the behavior of the filtered pro-BTS ARMY Yogyakarta echo chamber. This kind of group has closed communication patterns, where discussions and activities take place more among fandom members than with the wider public, suggesting the creation of an exclusive communication area.

This phenomenon certainly shows the aspects and potential for the emergence of echo chambers in digital communication theory. In this echo chamber, social interactions are dominated by individuals with similar views, resulting in homogeneous information, opinions,

and emotional responses. This is explained by Sunstein (2017) and reinforced by Fajarini et al.'s (2025) idea that social media algorithms reinforce this pattern by presenting content that matches users' preferences and emotional attachments. The use of Twitter in this study can illustrate the ARMY community on X, where community members are likely to hold one opinion and share the same perspective, increasing their belief in BTS, due to its closed nature. This is where the echo chamber is formed.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the general description of the informants and the research context, synthesizing findings from in-depth interviews with six informants who met the research criteria and online observations. These findings are described based on the main themes found during the thematic data analysis process, which are divided into the following five subchapters: the first subchapter will review the Formation of Identity, Community, and Emotional Support of ARMY, including the beginning and duration of being ARMY, how they identify themselves as ARMY, the meaning of being ARMY, shared values, and local solidarity that unites them. This sequence is important to provide an initial foundation for how informants position themselves and how they are categorized within existing ARMY typologies. It is also important to understand the informants' backgrounds because their personal experiences influence how they interact with the media.

The second subchapter discusses Digital Fandom Practices on X, how informants interact on X social media, ranging from how often the X platform is used to obtain information, the flow of information, to online interactions that occur on X, as well as offline interactions that occur within the community. These findings support the third subchapter, which explains Social Dynamics and Echo Chambers. This section discusses the dynamics of relationships and interactions among ARMY members, the sense of security within their own circle, algorithms that filter content, and the potential for echo chambers to form through the circulation of opinions, the filtering of different voices, and bubble awareness. This section is important for examining the boundaries of echo chambers, exploring the defense mechanisms and collective actions of informants when exposed to negative opinions or criticism of their idols or communities. It also reviews the perceptions of those who have truly formed an echo chamber and are isolated from outside reality, or those for whom there is still room for different information. The stronger the group identity and solidarity, the greater the tendency for informants or members to reject information that is considered to be disruptive to the harmony of the community.

The fourth subchapter, ‘Credibility and Trustworthiness of Information,’ analyzes how informants construct notions of “truth” within the fandom. This subchapter covers who is considered the most valid source of information, the validation process, and information bias in order to detect confirmation bias. This analysis is critical for determining whether informants selectively accept information aligning with their loyalty to BTS while ignoring contradictory information. This subchapter is supported by the next subchapter, which discusses Trending Topics Among the Community. This section refers to the types of narratives, topics, or issues that are hotly discussed in interactions between fans, such as BTS idol activities, comeback moments, and controversial issues. This subchapter is significant in showing how echo chambers work by revealing the mechanisms of meaning production and explaining the power relations of information.

The researcher provides an overview of the informants and the research context before methodically elaborating on the five sub-themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. This facilitates reader comprehension of informant characteristics and credibility of the data presented.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF INFORMANTS AND RESEARCH CONTEXTS

The researcher involved a number of BTS fans (ARMY) residing in Yogyakarta as informants for this study. Informants were selected based on their status as active or formerly active members of the ARMY fandom on social media X (formerly Twitter), utilizing the platform for interaction, information exchange, and fandom participation. Each informant has a different and quite varied perspective. These perspectives stem from differences in background, experience, and the length of time they have been ARMY, which can influence informants in interpreting a message. In the context of this study, each informant has their own point of view regarding activities among fans, such as building mutual relationships, following fanbase accounts, receiving and forming information, and participating in collective campaigns on social media X. This context is used as the basis for analyzing the following subchapters by understanding the characteristics of the informants and the information space used. The

researcher selected six fans residing in Yogyakarta who are students from several universities and workers.

Table 3.1 Identity and Implementation of Interviews with Informants

No	Informant Name	Age	Gender	Type of ARMY	Occupation	Date of Interview
1.	Zahra Hasna A.	21 years old	Female	Active online ARMY	Student of Gadjah Mada University	Friday, October 31, 2025
2.	Apri Sabila Rahmaniar	22 years old	Female	Casual ARMY / fandom observer	Student of University of Islam Indonesia	Friday, October 31, 2025
3.	Lintang Karunia Ayuningtyas	22 years old	Female	Casual ARMY / fandom observer	Student of the Veteran National Development University	Tuesday, December 2, 2025
4.	Nadia Ananda	25 years old	Female	Active online ARMY	Private Company Employee	Tuesday, December 23, 2025
5.	Inanda	31 years old	Female	Founder of local ARMY community in Yogyakarta “Purple Ocean Jogja”	Private Company Employee	Wednesday, January 7, 2026
6.	Amanda	25 years old	Female	Co-Founder of local ARMY community in Yogyakarta “Purple Ocean Jogja”	Freelancer & Private Company Employee	Wednesday, January 21, 2026

The researcher conducted interviews ranging from general to specific questions. General questions included the informants' identities and how they became part of ARMY. The interview process then moved on to specific questions about interaction patterns within the community on X, followed by group identity and solidarity, their perceptions of information, and the potential for echo chambers to form. The findings were presented comparatively, descriptively, and interpretatively to show the dynamics of digital interaction, the formation of fandom identity, and the style of echo chamber reinforcement that was formed on social media X. During the interview process, almost all informants showed interest and enthusiastically shared their experiences and views. Each informant provided detailed, in-depth responses regarding their idols.

The general description of the informants above provides context regarding the individuals behind the research data. However, to fully comprehend the ARMY phenomenon completely, we must look beyond demographic information and examine its psychological and societal components. Therefore, the following discussion addresses the processes of identity development, the power of community, and the vital function of emotional support found in the field.

3.2 FORMATION OF IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT OF THE ARMY

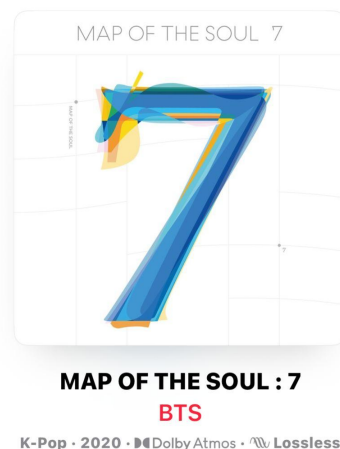
3.2.1 The Initial Process of Becoming an ARMY

This subchapter explains how the informants began to build their identities as BTS fans, known as ARMY. This process did not happen overnight, but began with information gathering and curiosity. The informants began to learn about BTS's work and messages through various online media platforms. Their interest in BTS then grew stronger. In addition to discussing the initial stages of their interest, this section highlights how they connected with one another and formed an ARMY community bond. Therefore, this information can be used as a basis for

understanding their behavior. In this way, the study seeks to identify the patterns of personal interaction and communication that can influence how they interact on social media.

The initial questions were preliminary questions, such as how informants first became familiar with BTS and identified themselves as ARMY. Fans expressed their love for their idols due to various personal motivations and histories. For example, Zahra admitted that she fell in love with BTS a few years after they became famous, since the group released the album *Map of The Soul: Persona* and its title track “Boy With Luv” around the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Zahra added that she was just bored when she found out about BTS and then followed the trend of stalking—searching for information about BTS members. For Zahra, simply liking BTS in the popular K-pop world is enough.

“I became an ARMY around late 2019 or early 2020, during the *Map of the Soul: Persona* and *Map of the Soul: 7* era. At first, I was just ‘*gabut*’, then I wanted to join the K-pop hype that was going viral. I started by stalking each member individually, watching the first MV for *Boy With Luv*, and then watching YouTube content like funny moments, *Try Not to Laugh*, and so on. Before I knew it, I was stalking them constantly, listening to their songs all the time, and eventually, without even realizing it, I found myself calling myself an ARMY.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).



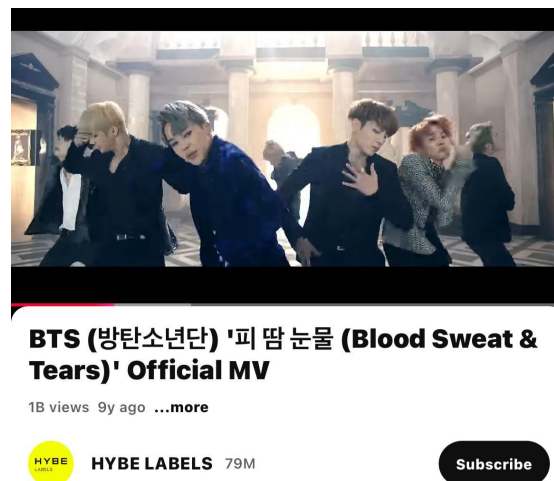
Picture 3.2.1 BTS’s Album: MAP OF THE SOUL : 7

Source: BTS Apple Music

In contrast to Zahra, Apri described herself as a multifandom—a term for a fan who supports or idolizes more than one group, artist, or work at the same time—before finally getting to know BTS. Apri’s interest in BTS began with the influence of her peers in junior high school.

She came across one of their song promotions—“Blood, Sweat, and Tears”—which caught her attention from a social media advertisement. From there, Apri began to adore the famous group and has consistently been a member of their fandom ever since.

“So, initially, when I was offline in junior high school, I just started learning about K-pop. At first, it wasn't the group BTS. Then I found one of BTS's songs on Instagram, if I'm not mistaken, and it went straight to YouTube. Then it turned out that one of my friends, whose initials are V, liked BTS. I only found out when I was in 8th grade in junior high school. After that, we talked a lot about BTS. That's how it went.” (Apri, 22-yo, Female, University Student)



Picture 3.2.2 BTS’s Music Video: Blood, Sweat, & Tears

Source: Youtube HYBE LABELS

Lintang, like Apri, started learning about South Korean popular culture when she was in junior high school. Lintang was an EXO-L (EXO fan) before she fell in love with BTS and decided to become an ARMY. She stated that her initial exposure to BTS came from watching the BTS episode of Weekly Idol on the Weekly Idol YouTube channel. As an active expression of her identity, Lintang engaged in participatory culture through dance cover activities at school events. This demonstrates that her passion extends beyond mere media consumption; it also involves physical expression, which forms the foundation of her loyalty as a fan to this day.

“The first time was when I was in junior high school. Either in 7th or 8th grade. I had a friend who suddenly became really into K-pop. What year was that? Junior high school was around 2016–2017. Anyway, at first I knew EXO. But not long after that, BTS appeared. Since I already knew BTS, I ended up focusing on BTS, and forgot about EXO.

Before BTS and EXO, I already knew about K-pop, but not very deeply. Then I started watching Weekly Idol, that variety show. From there, I started learning about the members, who I liked, and who my bias was. After that, since I had friends in middle school, we started doing dance covers. We even performed at our seniors' graduation ceremony. From there, it just kept going until now.” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.2.3 BTS at Weekly Idol 2016

Source: Youtube ALL THE K-POP



Picture 3.2.4 Lintang Dance Cover to MIC DROP

Source: Lintang's Photo Memories

Similar to Lintang, Nadia also admitted that she first became familiar with BTS and became an ARMY when she was in middle school. For Nadia, this process began with direct social interaction in the classroom, where her classmates watched BTS content and became her

entry point to further interest. The shared experiences of Nadia, Apri, and Lintang demonstrate that the school friendship environment serves as the primary space for socialization and helps facilitate the transition from being an accidental viewer to an active content consumer.

“I first became an ARMY when I was in junior high school, sis. Because some of my junior high school friends were ARMYs. Oh yeah, and I liked BTS, so after that I often watched them, exactly like that, sis. So I was like, wow, this is interesting, and then I started liking watching BTS.” (Nadia, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

In contrast, Inanda, who began learning about BTS and identified herself as an ARMY through cross-media exposure, namely the drama starring BTS's V, “Hwarang.” Although she was already familiar with BTS's work before watching the drama, Inanda's emotional connection grew stronger after the release of the album *Persona* in 2019, which marked a shift in her interest to become more intense. Inanda demonstrated more tangible loyalty by changing her identity; she was not only active in the digital world but also demonstrated it in real life by pioneering various offline community activities in Yogyakarta. This shows that each informant has a unique way of entering the fan community, whether through variety content, music, or acting.

“It all started with watching dramas. Then I watched *Hwarang*, starring Taehyung. I already knew the song *Fire*, but I didn't know who sang it. Then, I followed up on it and found out it was BTS. Oh, I see. My younger sister listened to *Boy With Love* every day when it was first released.

2019 (when I first got to know BTS). The *Persona* album. At first, I was only active on X. Then, I met some friends. So, in 2022, for *Permission To Dance*, we had a viewing party like that. And I'm still in ARMY now.” (Inanda, 31-yo, Female, Employee).



Picture 3.2.5 V BTS at *Hwarang* Drama 2016

Source: Google Image

Amanda's journey in getting to know BTS was not much different from that of other informants. Based on her story, at first, Amanda had no interest in BTS and was still on the verge

of becoming interested. Her interest in K-Pop began with EXO and Wanna One in 2016-2017. Amanda began to feel empty after Wanna One allegedly disbanded, so she looked for another K-Pop group. In that context, BTS came along to fill that void in 2018, when the group was at the height of its popularity. She admitted that her interest stemmed from BTS's performances and music on a YouTube channel that Amanda stumbled upon at the time. *"Yeah, more like their YouTube fan cam performances. For example, at MAMA or GDA, that's when I started to get interested in them. Oh, okay."* (Amanda, 2026). Then, around the end of 2018 and early 2019, Amanda began to establish her identity as an ARMY ahead of BTS's comeback, Map of the Soul: Persona.

"So before that, I was still undecided about being an ARMY. Then I got into K-pop because of EXO and Wanna One in 2017, 2016-2017. Then Wanna One disbanded, so I tried to find something else I liked within the K-pop realm. Then in 2018, BTS was really popular, right? At first, I just watched fan cams, and then I started to like their performances. I started researching who the members were, what their songs were like, and it turned out to be a good fit for me. I decided to join ARMY around the same time or early 2019. It was right before their comeback with 'Persona.'" (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).



Picture 3.2.6 BTS's Album: MAP OF THE SOUL: PERSONA

Source: BTS Apple Music

Summarizing the informants' answers, their initial interest in the famous boy band BTS developed gradually and was influenced by environmental factors and exposure to social media offering content about their idols. They had different starting points, such as Zahra, who admitted to knowing BTS before becoming a fan; Apri, Lintang, and Amanda, who followed other K-Pop

groups and were multifandom before getting to know BTS; and Nadia and Inanda, who were influenced by their friends' interactions and dramas. All of them were driven by curiosity that arise from exposure to content on social media. The informants described their interest in the visuals, music, and excitement brought by BTS in certain content. Thus, they consciously began to dig up a lot of information, started following their idols' updates, and then decided to idolize BTS by identifying themselves as fans, often referred to as ARMY.

Overall, the informants' experiences show that the formation of identity as ARMY is the result of dynamic interactions between social environmental influences and media exposure during their teenage years. Although triggered by various reasons and starting from different entry points, there is a process of internalizing fandom values that has a consistent pattern. In this context, fans have transformed from passive content consumers to active community members, such as supporting idols through joint activities, organizing offline activities like those done by Inanda and Amanda, and dance covers favored by Lintang. This is in line with Henri Tajfel and John Turner's (1979) view of social identity theory, that fans who initially got to know BTS through certain media exposure (social categorization) then began to identify themselves as fans (ARMY) through a sense of ownership and involvement in collective group activities. Fans participate in various activities that can enhance their identity as ARMY. Ultimately, this diversity of backgrounds is the result of the development of interest in music content, which then grew into social involvement, determining how each informant showed loyalty and built social networks on digital platforms.

Muslimah et al.'s (2023) research on "self-categorization" (I am ARMY) leading to in-group partiality, such as ARMY being a family, which is a requirement for the development of digital homophily, supports the findings and hypotheses employed in this subchapter. To determine how well they can communicate with other ARMYs, they must first identify as ARMY.

3.2.2 ARMY as Identity and Emotional Support

In addition to examining the origins of personal identity, this chapter explores how this identity is interpreted by ARMY members themselves, which is constructed through strong and significant mutual feelings among ARMY members. Informants in Yogyakarta consider the ARMY community as a source of mutual aid and emotional warmth. Simply put, ARMY functions as a social identity that offers togetherness and provides emotional support for its members. According to most informants, being part of ARMY has a positive influence on their lives. Informants consider BTS not just a group of fans with a hobby of watching seven idols who seem almost perfect, but as a “safe space” where they can get emotional support that they often don't get from people in their main social circles, such as family, college friends, or even coworkers.

From the interviews, several informants shared how their lives changed after getting to know BTS. For Zahra, getting to know BTS brought massive changes to her life. According to her, BTS is not only a group of singers who helped her when she was facing difficulties in life, but also became her savior when she had no money. Through BTS, Zahra got to know ARMY and eventually became a BTS merchandise seller. From there, transactional interactions often occurred between customers who were also fellow ARMY members. This is quite unique, considering not many fans take advantage of this opportunity. Zahra summarized her teenage years as an ARMY as the best phase of her life.

“...my teenage years were pretty much the best because I felt that it was one of the phases where I finally wasn't stressed out because of Covid. I wasn't stressed out because I was stuck at home, couldn't do anything, and wasn't allowed to do any fun activities. So, being an ARMY really helped me back then. And also because meeting those seven people, those idols, finally gave me a reason to keep chasing my dreams, to stay happy by listening to their great music, watching their live performances, or watching BTS content and other stuff—it was so much fun. So, that's why it was the best phase. I also used to sell albums and merchandise, and had a small order group. From that, I made money, so it also helped support my life because, first, I wasn't given any allowance, so I could fill my own wallet.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).

Not much different from Zahra, Lintang expressed the meaning of BTS in her life with a little more emotion and depth than the others. The presence of BTS in her life serves as a support system during times of stress and depression caused by the pressures of university life. Lintang shared that although she went through a phase of burnout or loss of interest due to her mental

health condition, she eventually found her way back to identifying as an ARMY as a form of self-resilience. Lintang admitted that BTS has had a significant influence in reigniting her passion for life.

“They are my support system. When I first started college, I was stressed and depressed, but there were times when I wasn't interested in them. To be honest, when I first started college, I was so depressed and stressed that I lost my appetite. But BTS helped me get back on my feet. If I had to rate their influence on a scale of 1 to 100, I would say it was about 70 percent.” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.2.7 Screenshot of Lintang’s comment on BTS’s X account

Source: Lintang’s X account

Ultimately, her emotional connection with BTS drew her deeper into the ARMY community. Lintang stated that she feels comfortable being an ARMY because of the sense of belonging she feels within the group. By interacting with fellow fans, Lintang reported that she no longer feels alone in facing life's challenges; instead, she feels she has a space where she can talk freely with others.

“It's like having friends who hype each other up. Yes, because when you have friends, you don't feel alone. Yes, there are people who drive each other crazy.” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.2.8 Lintang and her friend at J-HOPE’s cinema concert

Source: Lintang’s Camera roll

Apri stated that she considers BTS to be the color in her life. She described the meaning of being an ARMY as people who fill her life with color. Her comfort in being part of this fan community is due to the supportive and positive nature of its members. Throughout her time as a fan, she has never felt that anyone was trying to bring each other down, despite varying preferences for individual BTS members. She also stated that she does not open his heart to other groups as widely as she does to BTS. As an enthusiastic fan, Apri finds the lyrics of her idols' songs relatable to her personal experiences.

“I support them. Personally, I see it positively. So no one is putting each other down. Maybe, for example, I favor one member, but the others don't badmouth him or anything like that.”

"Then (BTS) is colorful, in my opinion, because I've never liked a group that really follows that. Plus, their songs aren't just something I listen to and then just play on repeat—the lyrics really resonate with me. There are some songs that feel like they're about my real life.” (Apri, 22-yo, Female, University Student).

Apri also added to the memorable experiences she had while being an ARMY. Even though it was only through social media, Apri showed how the ARMY community's online space functions as a supportive social environment for its members. As shown by the interactions she experienced when uploading song cover content, Apri felt a sense of security and emotional

satisfaction as a fan when she received support and helpful advice. Apri's experience shows that there is a strong culture of mutual support on social media within the community. This phenomenon shows that the community is not only a place to share interests, but also a place to be appreciated, which encourages its members to continue to be creative without worry and feel protected.

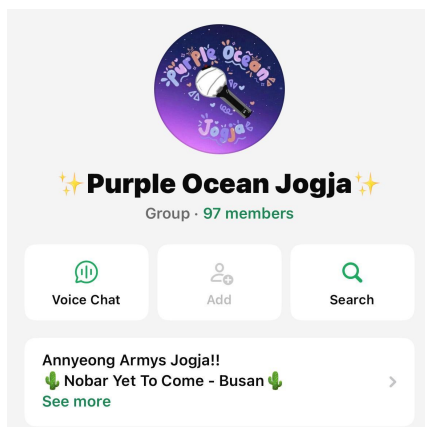
“I once covered a BTS song, and it might have appeared on the ARMY timeline, and some people liked and commented on it. They were very supportive, no one criticized me, so I was happy. In fact, I was given advice to learn more.” (Apri, 22-yo, Female, University Student).

Other informants, such as Nadia, Inanda, and Amanda, also conveyed similar points. According to them, ARMY has a function beyond simply sharing common interests; it also serves as a solid “family,” demonstrating consistent interaction that fosters trust within a group and remains even beyond geographical boundaries. In addition, Amanda revealed that being an ARMY significantly influenced her process of self-discovery. Since becoming an ARMY, Amanda stated that she feels more capable of understanding her sources of happiness and personal preferences. According to her, happiness comes in simple ways, such as enjoying BTS's music or seeing BTS's posts on social media. Furthermore, Amanda acknowledged that being an ARMY provided her with the emotional engagement she needed to survive during COVID-19. Amanda emphasized that BTS's content at that time helped her manage stress and enjoy life. The function of fandom in this case, aside from being a form of entertainment, is to provide emotional comfort. Amanda added that she associates her experience as an ARMY with a phase of maturation, where she considers BTS as an entity that accompanied her during her transition into adulthood.

“After becoming an ARMY, I really got to know what I like. I got to know what makes me happy. Then I also came to understand that happiness doesn't have to be something grand. Maybe it's as simple as listening to music, or as simple as seeing posts from BTS members, which is like healing. Because I went through COVID before, once I became an ARMY, I started enjoying life more and didn't get stressed easily. I just really enjoy life now. It fills my days. I also feel like becoming an ARMY has accompanied my journey into adulthood.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

In this case, Amanda has something in common with Inanda in that, as active members of the ARMY fandom, they are also participants as initiators of the ARMY community in Yogyakarta. This community is known as Purple Ocean Jogja, with the initial goal of being a

place to gather and watch concerts together. This eventually became a fandom space that was bound together by their responsibility as administrators. Additionally, Amanda is also involved in community activities related to BTS member J-Hope—alongside Inanda—in the lead-up to his concert. This demonstrates that ARMY functions as a space they have built to foster social connections, a sense of belonging, and a fandom identity shaped through active participation. *“Actually, Purple Ocean was formed because I helped create it. We were originally formed because we wanted to meet up for an online concert. I was one of the admins there. Then, when J-Hope was around, I joined that community.” (Amanda, 2026).*



Picture 3.2.9 Purple Ocean Jogja’s group and activities

Source: Amanda’s Camera roll

In sharing her memorable experiences, Amanda described ARMY as friends who always supported her, were harmonious, and had minimal conflict—much like the responses of other informants. What set Amanda apart was when she lost one of her closest ARMY friends, who was like family to her. The sense of loss was profound, she explained, because Amanda had made her K-Pop friends her source of joy, and there had never been any arguments. This demonstrates that fandom has strong social bonds, making the fandom community an important place for fans to form emotional connections with one another.

“It was quite painful (the death of Almh. Putri) because my K-pop friends are always happy. So when you feel abandoned, it's like a real loss, a real loss. Because we never fought, we never argued, and it was so sudden.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

The results of these findings show that the informants support Tajfel & Turner's (1979) concept of Social Identity as a form of attachment to a group that has a mutual sense of belonging. ARMY identity is formed by their social experiences, which create a sense of togetherness in showing their interest and enthusiasm for BTS. From there, SIT increases social cohesion by creating a sense of mutual belonging, which results in emotional support among ARMY members. For example, Zahra interprets ARMY as a center of stress relief in her life or a life changer because it is a zone that fulfills her financial needs and a safe zone from threats. Apri also makes ARMY a safe and comfortable place to work. The informants—Lintang, Nadia, and Inanda—see their relationships with their “mutual” friends, both on the X platform and in the real world, as an important source of support that helps them when they are under pressure and fills a social void. In addition, they use the emotional support they receive collectively in the community as a safe place to cope with the pressures of life. In this process, the social bond between fans and idols transforms into one between fellow fans.

This finding is in line with Horton & Wohl's (1956) view of emotional bonding. In short, Horton & Wohl explain that emotional bonding arises from repeated exposure to the media, where fans feel an illusory closeness that can trigger emotional dependence. This is in line with the phenomenon experienced by the informants in their respective stories, where the emotional bonding of each informant transitions from individual fans to a solid and positive community, full of emotional support. This activity also supports the X algorithm in expanding the echo chamber phenomenon, where dominant support is strengthened.

This is supported by the research of Aror et al. (2025), whose findings report that emotional bonding among fans triggers affective-predictor fanaticism, where the deeper the bond, the higher their fanaticism. Thus, the emotional bonding formed by ARMY creates high engagement in the collective activities they create, such as fan projects, mass voting actions, and many more. All of this happens because they consider ARMY to be a source of emotional support that is familial and communal.

3.3 DIGITAL FANDOM PRACTICES

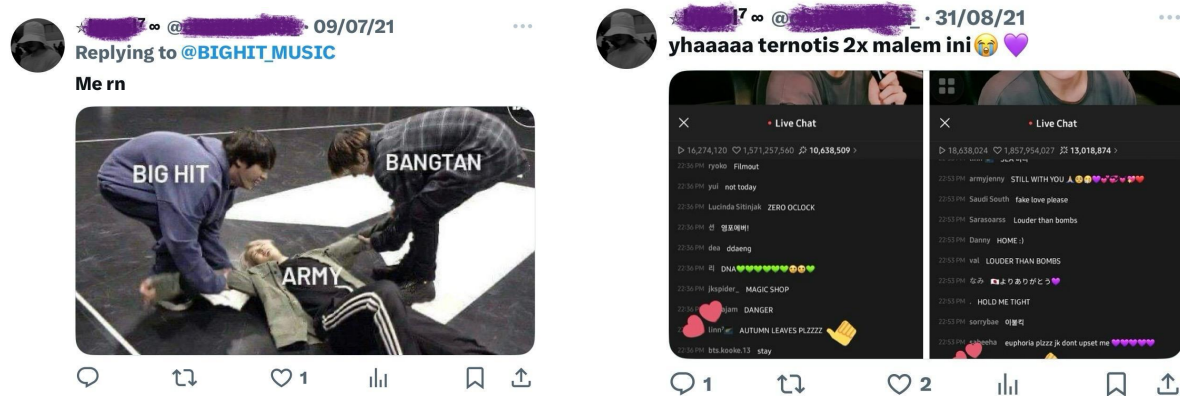
3.3.1 Platform X Preferences

Once a fan identifies themselves as a member of a fan community and feels connected, there will naturally be a lot of interaction with other members, both online and offline. It is important to see how important X is to them and how the X platform facilitates interaction between fans. Based on the interview results, informants described interactions between ARMYs on X as practical, responsive, and focused on group solidarity. All informants stated that social media X was the main platform they used to follow updates related to BTS, such as news, the latest content, and community discussions. Furthermore, according to several informants, the pattern of using X was also influenced by the ease of its highly relevant features. Some time ago, Zahra admitted that she used Twitter (now X) as the main platform to find information and meet friends in the community. Moreover, Zahra felt that the features on X made all fan group activities easier.

“It's very relevant, the features are easy to use, it supports fan interaction, group promotion, photo card sales, searching for idol posts, posting fan-made content, and functional community interaction. You can post freely because it's a single-type community.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).

Not only Zahra, Apri, Lintang, and Nadia admitted that they often use X as their main media platform, even though there are other platforms to get information about their idols. “Yes, *that's right. Even before I joined Weverse, I was more active on Twitter.*” (Apri, 2025).

“Yes. For interaction, it's mostly on Twitter. On Weverse, I just post, I don't interact. I rarely use Instagram too.” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.3.1 Screenshot of Lintang’s tweets on X

Source: Lintang’s X fan account

The experiences of Apri, Lintang, and Nadia show that community members tend to use selective exposure when choosing their interaction spaces. Although there are many platforms available for obtaining information about their idols, such as Weverse and Instagram, Lintang consciously chose Twitter (now X) as the main platform on which they interact. This is in line with Cass Sunstein's (2001) theory on individual behavior, namely the tendency to seek platforms that allow them to choose desired interaction partners and filter information.

Furthermore, Inanda also demonstrated media consumption behavior that focused on the X platform as her main source of information. According to Inanda, X served as a gateway to information compared to other platforms, such as Instagram or Weverse, which she only accessed if there was a trigger, in the form of information updates that she first found on X. This shows the hierarchy of application usage, with X occupying the top position in real-time information searches.

“Well, now it's mostly on X. I'm usually on X more because most of the information is on X, right? Then usually, like, oh, for example, if there's a post on Instagram or Weverse, then I'll go to that app.” (Inanda, 31-yo, Female, Employee).

In line with Amanda's statement that X serves as a gateway to a wider online fandom network. In early 2019, Amanda admitted that she used X passively and was only an observer. However, after she wanted to buy official BTS merchandise, her involvement in the platform

increased dramatically. During this process, Amanda came across an account called *@jajanhlabels* (now suspended) and made several group purchases. According to her, digital transactional interactions within this group occurred repeatedly with similar individuals.

“When I was in X, it was more... First of all, I joined X in 2019. At first, I was just monitoring it. Then I wanted to have the official merchandise, so I tried to find it there. Then I came across something called Jajan BH Labels. I don't know if it still exists now. After that, I started looking for group orders. Through those group orders, I met some online friends. You could say it's like a group, but it's always the same people. For example, there are a few stores, and the buyers and sellers are always the same people.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

Based on data findings from all informants, it can be concluded that platform X is not just a social media platform, but a digital hub for the ARMY community. The use of the X application ranks first compared to other applications. This phenomenon shows that the X platform is used to meet informational and social interaction needs, offering fast and continuous access to information in the context of fandom. As expressed by all informants, informational, social, and transactional (Group Order) needs increase their media habits with consistent and repetitive usage patterns. Additionally, the X platform provides ample space for interaction and real-time updates, supported by its relevant features, serving as the primary medium for fandom activities. Zahra feels that the superior features of X keep her using the platform, supported by Apri, Lintang, and Nadia. On the other hand, Inanda and Amanda use X as their primary platform for receiving information due to its real-time features.

The behavior of informants such as Zahra—choosing X because of its features, Apri, Lintang, and Nadia—choosing to use X in order to interact, Inanda, and Amanda—X being the primary choice because it is rich in information about fandom—who tend to be selective in choosing communication platforms such as X, reflects Cass Sunstein's (2001) theory of individual behavior, namely the tendency to seek platforms that allow them to choose desired interaction partners and filter information. User preferences in this context reflect the essence of Sunstein's selective exposure because they consciously choose X because its algorithms and community allow for exclusive interaction among ARMY members. This idea supports the echo chamber theory, in which users avoid differing views because they can use media in ways they like. This will be revisited in the next discussion on how echo chambers are formed and developed.

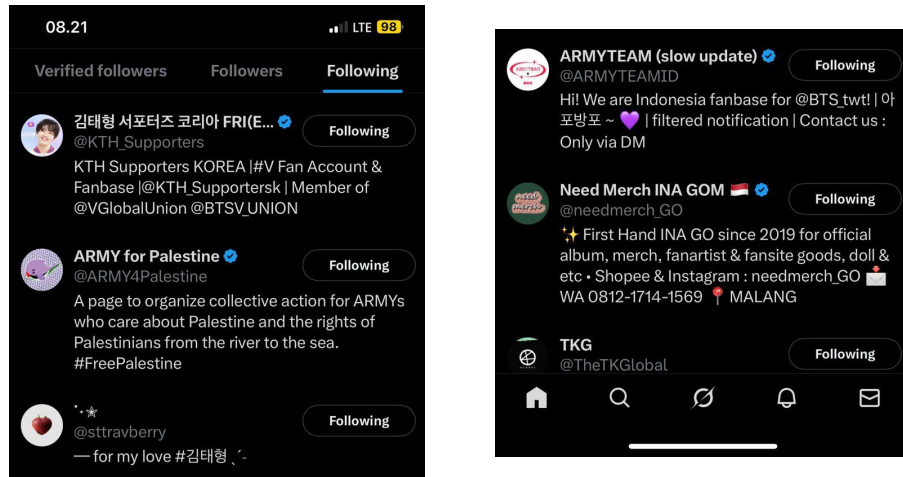
Nego's (2025) study confirms the preferences of ARMY Yogyakarta towards X, suggesting that the platform's algorithm can create an Indonesian political echo chamber through Sunstein's selective exposure. In line with the context of this study, fans consciously choose X because of its homogeneous timeline, which optimizes interactions based on in-group identity, distinguishing it from other platforms.

3.3.2 Digital Interaction Practices

Informants said that the most common forms of interaction were retweets, replies, and the use of hashtags. However, beyond that, informants described other activities that were still considered ways to stay connected, update information, and show support for their idols—BTS and fellow fandom members. Furthermore, digital interaction practices also serve to shape one's identity as an ARMY through active participation in a community. Most informants revealed that interactions are not only directed at BTS, but also at other ARMY members. This practice can create a sense of togetherness and collective identity within the fandom world.

Zahra admitted that the first thing she did when she created her X account was to follow BTS fanbase accounts. In addition, the most frequent activities she does in the X community are retweeting interesting content, leaving comments, and participating in online events, one of which is ARMY Selca Day along with the use of hashtags. Zahra's view is not much different from Apri, who revealed that she uses X as a medium to stay updated with the latest information about her idol. Apri also does the same thing as Zahra, namely liking posts and leaving comments.

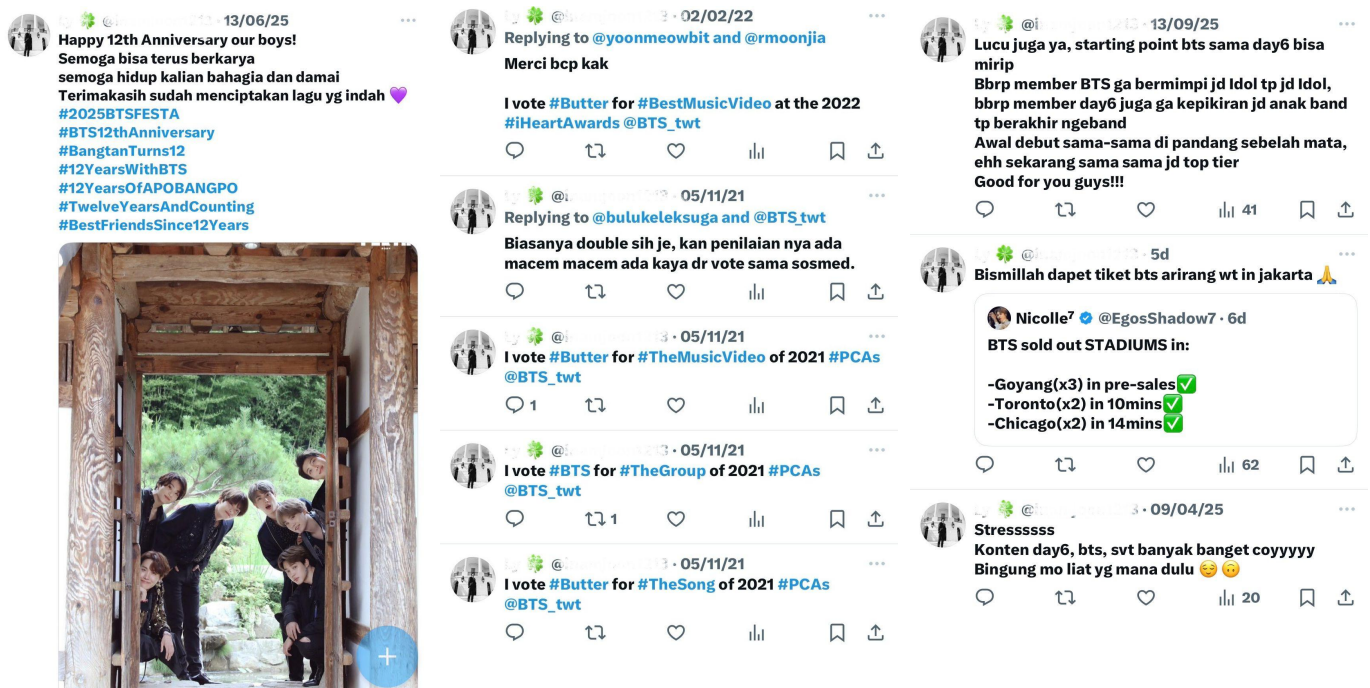
“I first created a Twitter account because I was following K-pop. I started looking for accounts, then followed fan sites, fan bases, and all sorts of things. Then I started interacting with others, like back in the day when we used to find friends on Menfess by sending messages, you know? From there, I started doing the usual fan activities like reposting, tweeting, and all sorts of things.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.3.3 Zahra's followings on her X account

Source: Zahra's X private account

Inanda also revealed something similar to Zahra and Apri regarding their activities on X. The difference is that Inanda tends to use X as a tool to translate BTS Live activities. In addition, another function of the X platform for her is as a source of information to retweet. *"Quite often (replies and retweets). If, for example, they are live streaming, and there are rarely any translations, then when someone translates it, it makes things easier, right? More like that, or like there is information in the live stream, in the retweet."* (Inanda, 2026).



Picture 3.3.4 Screenshot of Inanda's tweets and vote on her X fan account

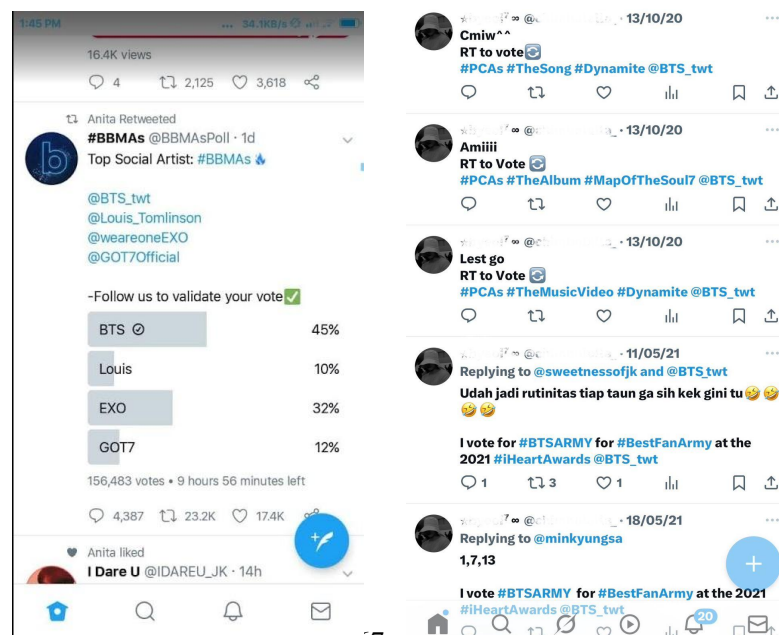
Source: Inanda's X fan account

In addition, Zahra also revealed that most of the online social interactions during the COVID period in 2019 were about sharing information regarding joint voting as a form of support for idols. For Zahra, the pandemic period, where people shifted entirely to the digital world, X became a bustling meeting place amid physical limitations. One of the most dominant activities was joint voting to support idols. This helped the community stay connected, have a common goal, and support each other amid the uncertain pandemic.

“...After that, social interactions usually involve sharing information about voting, about... mostly voting on things related to BTS itself. It used to be really exciting because at that time it was Covid, so there were a lot of online activities.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).

Unlike Lintang, who claims not to engage in activities such as leaving comments and retweeting. Lintang's experience on X is usually dominated by voting to support BTS in order to win awards. She revealed that dominating activities such as spam voting led to account suspension. Additionally, Lintang and other fans also communicate with each other through the Direct Message (DM) feature. The purpose is to gain access to links for illegal streams, allowing them to watch their idols' concerts without any cost.

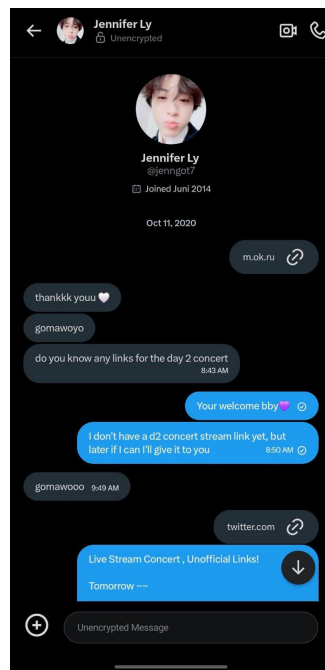
“Back in the day, I used to vote a lot, honestly. Because it was really hyped up. I voted thousands of times. Now I'm not as active. I used to vote so much that my account got suspended. Usually on Twitter. To vote.”



Picture 3.3.5 Screenshot of Lintang’s vote on then vs now X

Source: Lintang’s X fan account

“No (I don’t comment or reply often). I’m more into voting. Back then, I also often DM’d links to illegal streaming during online concerts, because there were streamers who could stream. So we DM’d each other.” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.3.6 Screenshot of Lintang’s DMing illegal streaming link

Source: Lintang’s X fan account

In an interview, Lintang admitted that ARMY has a special culture on the X platform that is closely related to trending hashtags. According to her, the hashtag feature on X dominates the type of interaction ARMY uses to show support for their idols. It is usually enlivened by calls from other ARMY members who encourage the hashtag to trend. *“So the culture emphasizes making hashtags trend. It makes them feel like they have power, especially since ARMY realizes that they are the top fandom.”* (Lintang, 2025).

“X has a hashtag. ARMY interactions are interspersed with hashtags to create hype. And that shows how much potential they have to create even more hype, to influence other people. Usually it's like “let's vote” first” (Lintang, 22-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.3.7 Screenshot of Lintang’s tweet asking for votes

Source: Lintang’s X fan account

Furthermore, Nadia also revealed the importance of support activities such as promoting hashtags to support BTS. She expressed her belief that such actions are part of the “demands of the times” that must be carried out in order for their idols to remain competitive. This is in line with what Lintang does in her use of the X platform. According to Nadia herself, the use of hashtags on X has a faster impact than other platforms, and also helps people become more aware of certain news or issues.

“In the past, I often participated because it was trendy, sis. Yes. That's how it should be, sis. Even though there are hashtags, sis. No, the influence is stronger that way, sis. Like that. So, to make the hashtag more popular, so that more people will know about it.” (Nadia, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

In the previous context, the selectivity mentioned by Cass Sunstein encourages cooperation and the dissemination of content or information on the X platform, thereby

transforming fans into active actors who fulfill their social information desires and needs. Fans demonstrate functional digital interaction patterns, such as searching for content translations and the latest updates, as done by Inanda. In addition, social-emotional interactions are created, such as retweeting, liking, and commenting, sending DMs (Direct Messages), and participating in an ARMY Selca Day activity by Zahra. There are also collective support activities to increase the visibility of idols through mass voting—done by all informants, collective hashtag management for trends—by Lintang and Nadia, to the distribution of illegal streaming links—done only by Lintang. Platform X is consciously used by informants as a medium for the same interests or goals with different forms of participation.

Overall, these findings indicate that the digital activities carried out by the informants demonstrate a participatory culture as described by Jenkins (2006), in which the audience's cultural pattern has changed from passive to active. In theory, participatory culture has four characteristics, namely affiliation, expression, collaboration, and circulation. According to the findings, there are three forms of participatory culture: affiliation—individuals who use X as a BTS fan account; circulation—the use of X to develop content and information, such as retweeting; and expression—involvement in commenting on fellow ARMY posts or BTS uploads and the use of hashtags to raise issues or coordinate groups, such as voting for ongoing collaboration without hierarchy.

These results show that ARMY's usage of X fosters a culture of active participation. The usage of retweet, comment, and hashtag features—which are more than just content but also potent tools of digital power—makes this clear. As a result, ARMY can show how powerful a fandom may be in the public eye. Research by Muthmainnah et al. (2024), which also addresses participatory culture, provides evidence for this. It highlights how FESTApora, which mobilizes X's social network and fosters group unity, is comparable to fandom activities like ARMY in digital behaviors on X, resulting in uniform content circulation.

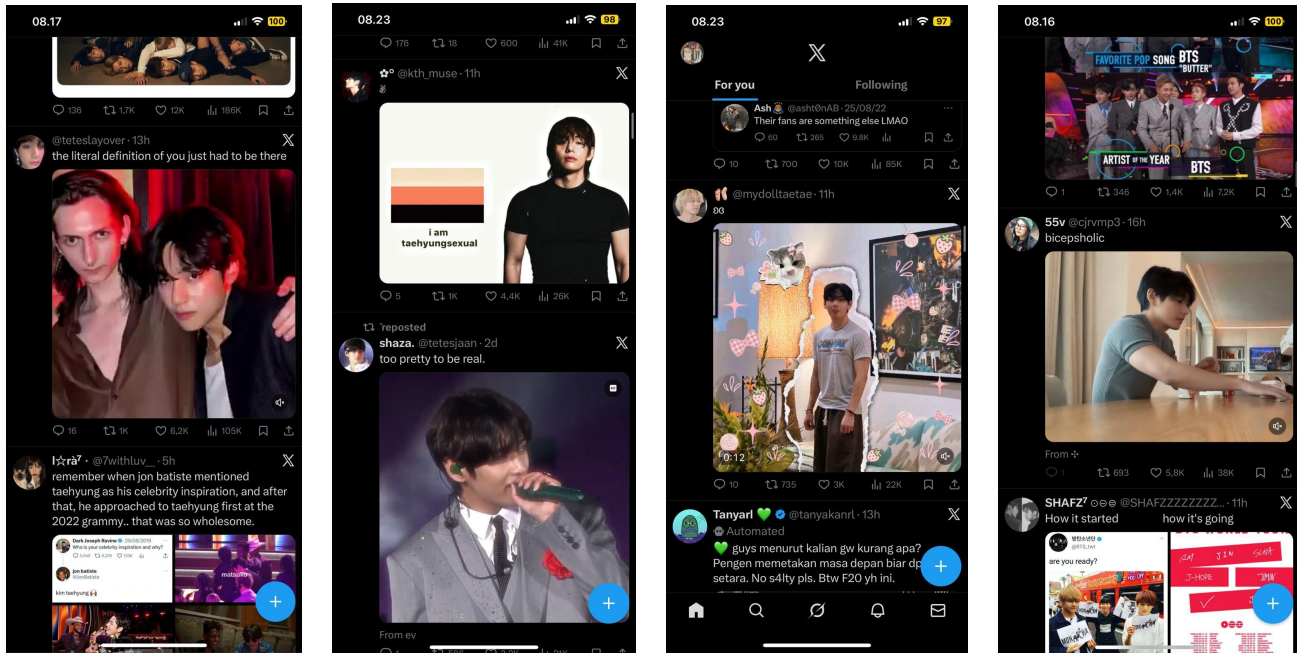
3.4 SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND ECHO CHAMBER

3.4.1 ARMY Social Circles on X

After reviewing various routines or digital practices carried out by fans on social media X in the previous chapter, this chapter examines the informants' responses to the dynamics of fan relationships and how algorithms work within their scope to construct a closed space called an echo chamber. Based on the interview results, most informants acknowledged that the ARMY social circle formed on X began with mutual and frequent interactions within the community. The informants admitted that they were more often connected to accounts that were in harmony, thereby strengthening the interest and sense of togetherness among members. As expressed by Zahra while interacting in a space filled with ARMYs, Zahra admitted that she always shared the same views and had minimal differences. The information, opinions, and topics of conversation that were discussed were not disputed by other members. *“Yes (one perspective), when it comes to sharing information or opinions, that's how it is.” (Zahra, 2025).*

In addition to feeling that she is always in the same layer of discourse, Zahra is also selective in choosing highly measured information on the X platform. She consciously focuses only on specific content and social relationships (in this case, Zahra can be considered a solo stan member). This activity creates a narrow space where Zahra's algorithm presents a uniform narrative that matches only her preferences.

“Yes, most of the content I consume is about Taehyung. I rarely like other content, so it's more like my solo stand. I follow fanbases and people who bias Taehyung. I never follow non-Army, except for multi-fandom who also fandom BTS.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).



Picture 3.4.1 Zahra’s timeline on her X private account

Source: Zahra’s X private account

On the other hand, Zahra also revealed that she is quite selective about her circle of friends. Initially, Zahra applied strict “filters” through friendship requirements in her profile bio, which served to form a circle of friends that was suitable for her. From there, Zahra tried to create a “safe” digital environment that was free from outside influences. *“Yes, I used to set criteria in my Twitter bio about who could follow me. Now it's free, there are no such rules anymore.”* (Zahra, 2025).

According to Apri, a social environment that supports her views provides emotional comfort. Apri admits that she feels more comfortable being in an environment where there is harmony. According to her, comfort is a major consideration in interacting with others. Apri describes differences of opinion as a form of “conflict” that has a negative impact on her, so she prefers to be in an environment where everyone agrees with her. *“Honestly, yes, because it's better. What else? If we agree, it's just more comfortable. First, it's comfortable. Because if we don't agree, it's like there's a conflict, and it feels bad in my heart too. So, I'm just comfortable with that.”* (Apri, 2025).

In addition, Nadia also explained that interactions on social media mostly occur between fellow ARMY members, while interactions between non-ARMY members are rare. *“Mostly fellow ARMYs, interactions with non-ARMYs are rare. Like idol updates, well, even though they're rare, there are seven of them. So we hype up the idols first, it's different.”* (Nadia, 2025).

This pattern shows that interactions tend to be homogeneous, with people communicating more actively with groups that share their interests and identities. The limitations of cross-group interactions indicate that social boundaries in digital spaces are formed through interaction preferences rather than explicit rejection.

During her experience using X, Amanda actively curated her social environment by only interacting with people she felt were on the same wavelength. She usually ignored provocative tweets or negative insults without responding. For her, maintaining a peaceful timeline was far more important than winning an argument, so her fandom experience remained a safe and enjoyable place that was free from contamination.

“Usually, if it's on X, it's because it's a bit selective, so my friends are on the same wavelength. So if it's just joking around like that, it's fine. For example, sometimes they tweet with the intention of mocking or saying something negative, but I usually don't bother replying.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

These findings indicate similarities in interests and preferences that shape the ARMY social circle on the digital media platform X. This is in line with the idea of homophily by McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook (2001), identifying two main dimensions that shape the ARMY social circle, namely, status homophily—describing the tendency of individuals to associate with people who have the same social status or values. In the context of fandom, informants tend to interact with fellow fans who share similar values and activities, thereby creating a special digital space that strengthens community cohesion. Zahra's experience of limiting her circle of friends to only ARMYs with certain characteristics; Apri and Amanda, who feel comfortable interacting only with those on the same wavelength or in the same chosen group; and Nadia, who generally only interacts with her mutual ARMYs, shows how small the environment they have created is in order to facilitate the exchange of information and keep it sterile. Therefore, the ARMY social circle on X is formed through relationship patterns based on shared interests and community, which enhances the solidarity of fandom members.

This finding is relevant to Indriani's (2022) thesis on ARMY social interactions on social media. Indriani reinforces McPherson et al.'s (2001) concept of homophily regarding the social circle of ARMY Yogyakarta on X. She found that associative interactions on Weverse are built based on the homophily value of collectively supporting BTS and the homophily status of being fellow fans. In practice, the community also uses a gatekeeping system by filtering out accounts that are not in line with this. This interaction pattern is reflected in practices on X as discussed above, according to the researcher's study, namely only following accounts or content about BTS and engaging in retweeting, commenting, and hashtag distribution. Furthermore, regarding the mechanisms of exclusion and self-protection carried out by informants.

3.4.2 Exclusion and Self-Protection Mechanisms

When engaging in digital media, the majority of informants tend to be homogeneous and limited to fellow ARMY friends. Consciously, informants select their social circles to protect and express themselves, such as limiting interactions with non-ARMY accounts or content they consider negative by refraining from arguing, unfollowing, or even leaving groups they consider dangerous. Informants also admitted to using technical features such as mute and block to create a communication pattern that remains safe and uniform or homogeneous when faced with conflicting narratives. This uniformity of perspective emerges in terms of interpreting issues, responding to criticism, and creating collective fandom narratives.

Like Zahra, who stated in her interview that she applies a “zero tolerance” policy towards toxic behavior. Zahra will not hesitate to withdraw from the group if she encounters hate speech about BTS or other negative comments. *“Sometimes when they start following others or hating too, I don't like it, so sometimes I leave the group, because I feel it's toxic.”* (Zahra, 2025).

Zahra shows a change in fandom culture towards maturity. They have abandoned their reactive defensive stance and taken a more rational and objective view of controversies, such as boycotts. Zahra feels that ARMY must be critical in supporting their idols so as not to go overboard and negatively impact the idol's reputation in the eyes of the public.

“I used to be more defensive, defending Bangtan. Because Bangtan was often attacked. When it comes to controversial issues, such as boycotting goods, I now have a more

reasonable and rational assessment. My defensiveness is more focused on new issues. Sometimes they defend their idols, but it doesn't make sense; sometimes it's over the top, so the idols end up looking worse. The arguments they put forward are ridiculous, which just makes things worse.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).

Zahra's views and activities are similar to Nadia's in dealing with conflict. Nadia also prioritizes energy efficiency and mental health by using technical features such as mute or block to avoid exposure to negative content. Whereas Nadia used to prefer to attack, now, like Zahra, she chooses to be more wise and critical in her use of social media by minimizing interaction. This change is driven by emotional realism, where she realizes that responding to provocation personally is an exhausting and futile act, so she chooses to protect her peace of mind.

“In the past, we used to attack them too. We would start a hashtag, but now we just attack by starting a hashtag, blocking, muting, and hating those who spread rumors about ARMY. If we respond, we'll just tire ourselves out.” (Nadia, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

Meanwhile, on the other hand, Apri felt that she was only playing the role of a passive internal observer. Instead of getting caught up in the flow of opinion, Apri prefers to reflect independently by observing and forming personal opinions in her head. Apri's attitude shows independence of thought, where she stays informed and has consistent and clear responses to issues, but keeps her thoughts to herself to avoid social involvement in the fandom crowd. *“No, I'm passive. I observe, observe more, then form my own opinion, then observe again.” (Apri, 2025).*

Lintang shares Apri's view when encountering sharp differences of opinion, where she feels it is enough to remain silent and not express her views in order to avoid conflict. This perspective shows strong self-control by maintaining internal peace. *“Sometimes, I don't express my opinion. I usually don't say anything. If I have a different opinion, I keep quiet.” (Lintang, 2025).*

Inanda is no different in responding to differences of opinion or heated debates. Inanda admits to avoiding conflict or war on social media because she is very cautious about her digital footprint and her long-term reputation. *“I try not to, because, you know, I'm really afraid of the virtual world. There's a digital footprint, right?” (Inanda, 2026).* As a multifandom, Inanda realizes that if she acts aggressively, it will definitely bring negative stigma to the fandom she

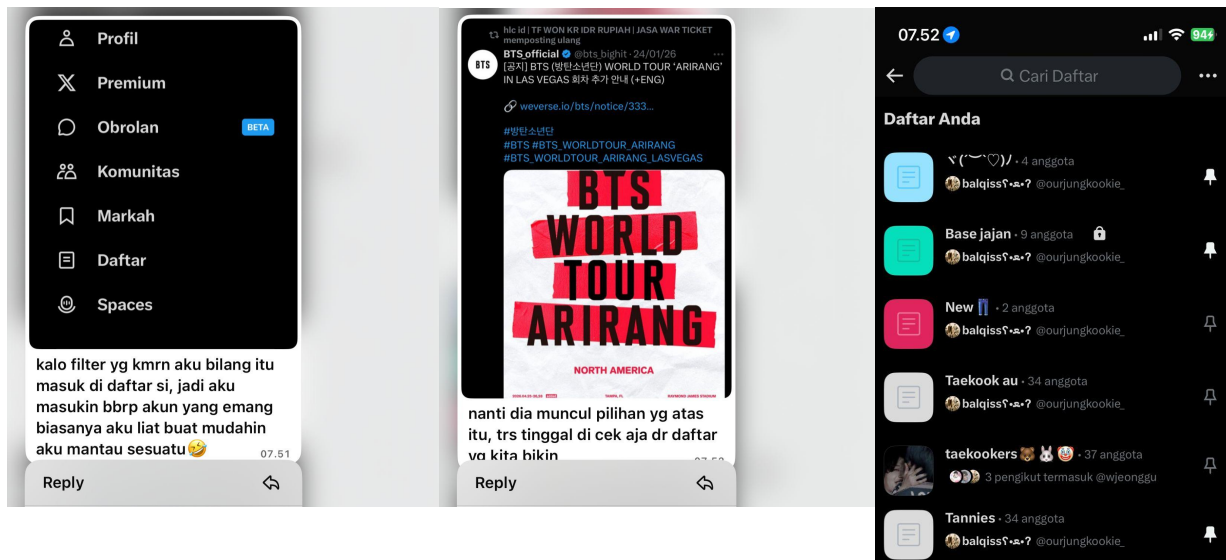
represents, especially ARMY. In this case, Inanda applies two forms of self-protection, namely keeping a clean track record and protecting the fandom from negative stereotypes.

“So I try not to get attached to the war, because I'm multifandom. Because if I join the war, people will be like, oh, this one used to be ARMY, or oh, this one is ARMY, no wonder, that kind of thing.” (Inanda, 31-yo, Female, Employee).

Unlike Amanda, who moved critical conversations to an internal group consisting of like-minded people. By doing so, she felt she had successfully changed her approach to K-Pop issues, becoming more relaxed and less preoccupied. Amanda felt free to express her opinions by narrowing her discussion space to a smaller, more private circle. *“So I discuss things in my own group, like what our opinions are. It's more because I don't want to get too involved in K-pop issues, so I just take it easy when I see problems like that.”* (Amanda, 2026).

In her interview, Amanda said that she is quite “aware” and feels the need to manage her digital space by utilizing content filtering features to keep it more under control. She consciously sorts through the flow of information by setting information topics, grouping the accounts she follows, and curating certain communities. This allows Amanda to be exposed only to relevant content. This means that Amanda has full control over the amount of information she consumes, ensuring that her timeline is organized and comfortable, and minimizing distracting and irrelevant content. In addition, Amanda also chooses to be firm by using the block feature directly to stop excessive information flow for the sake of her media hygiene.

“Honestly, no. Because on X, we can choose the content we want to see. It's like there's a filter, for example, if you want to see only general content, from accounts you follow, or from certain communities, you can set it yourself. So, in my opinion, X is more flexible in terms of managing what I want to consume. Usually, to avoid topics that come up repeatedly, I block them. More often than not, I block them immediately if they are extreme.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).



Picture 3.4.2 Amanda’s explanation of the X algorithm filter

Source: WhatsApp chat and Amanda’s X fan account

From the presentation of the findings above, this mechanism of exclusion and self-protection can be understood through Jamieson & Cappella's (2008) concept of “Self-Protective Enclave,” which reflects the informants' behavior to protect the boundaries of their group identity from what they perceive as threats coming from outside. This is in line with Zahra's active exclusionary behavior and her “zero tolerance” principle towards toxic environments that express hatred towards BTS. She has evolved from her previous defensive attitude to protect her social circle. Similarly, Nadia has gone from attacking to using mute or block methods to avoid provocation, realizing that emotional responses only exhaust her. Amanda also limits herself from negative exposure to out-groups by localizing her discussion groups and using the X filter feature to organize her timeline, ensuring that her content exposure is relevant. This reflects a fortress of personalization where self-expression remains safe without distractions. Meanwhile, Apri and Lintang chose passive protection by remaining silent and showing non-engagement to maintain internal calm. Inanda, as a multifandom, is cautious about her digital footprint and avoids conflict as much as possible to protect her reputation. With the

help of algorithms, the X platform becomes the eternal guardian of ARMY's identity, but it has the potential to reinforce social isolation.

The exclusion mechanism of informants as ARMY in Yogyakarta through mute/block/silence actions against harmful media exposure is in line with Jamieson & Cappella's (2008) self-protection enclave, supported by Banura's (2024) research. In this study, Banura found that 96% of ARMY-Blink fanwar interactions on X ended in mass blocking actions. This strategy is considered to protect the identity of the BTS fandom from the rival Blink fandom, which threatens the internal echo chamber narrative. The next subchapter explores the researcher's findings on the credibility of information and fan trust in the media to complement the above findings.

3.5 INFORMATION CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

Each informant explained their answers in a somewhat familiar manner. From the questions asked by researcher regarding informants' perceptions of the information they consume, most ARMYs showed a strong preference for internal community sources such as BTS's official accounts, large fanbase accounts, and sources considered to have high credibility compared to external media. All informants mentioned that they tend to be cautious in consuming information from external sources. However, this trust is not blind. The informants showed awareness and caution by conducting a validation process before accepting information as fact. This process includes monitoring the original source, comparing it with other sources, and seeking confirmation from people considered to be authorities within the community. This is in line with what Apri said in her interview, that she is quite selective about the information circulating about her idols. According to her, internal and local media from Korea are more trustworthy in avoiding hoaxes and invalid news.

“It's also a matter of selection. The thing is, major media outlets sometimes have their own context. But I usually check updates from the BTS fanbase, from ARMY first. From there, it becomes clear, and then usually the local Korean media outlets are already up first. Then the international media follows. Actually, international media should correlate

with local media. ... So I have to be selective because there's a risk of hoaxes and invalid news.” (Apri, 22-yo, Female, University Student).

From Apri's selectivity, it can be concluded that she is quite cautious and prioritizes confirmation from large fanbase accounts or verified and credible local Korean fanbase accounts. According to her, information from outside fanbase accounts or other media that is considered sensational is often questioned for its validity. Apri admits that sometimes the information conveyed about her idols is invalid, so she has to confirm it through the comments section. Like Apri, Nadia also admits that she cross-checks information that is reported. When faced with negative news, Nadia checks the validity of the information before finally responding.

“I usually look at it first and read it first, to see if the news is true or not. Because there are so many media outlets, it depends on the case. If the news is negative, I check first whether it is valid or not, filter it first, like seeing if fanbases are discussing it or not. Then I also look for the source. So I don't just believe it or accept it at face value, but seek clarification first before responding.” (Nadia, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

In addition, Zahra also revealed that the closeness among ARMY members greatly influences the level of trust in information sources. According to Zahra, media originating from ARMY, such as fanbases, show collective support for BTS and are more easily trusted. *“I trust media outlets that have our own fanbase, ARMY itself, more than outside news sources. Several times, I have found that outside news sources tend to be wrong or deliberately controversial. But when it comes to the fandom itself, I tend to trust them more, because they support their idols just like I do, without any hidden agenda.”* (Zahra, 2025).

Zahra's experience in finding external news reports that were considered incorrect and controversial made her more selective and cautious. Unlike Apri, who takes the initiative to leave comments to verify a news story, Zahra chooses to only accept information from her own fandom media. From her experience, Zahra has built trust through her relationship with ARMY, so she only considers information to be factual if it comes from accounts she is familiar with.

“In the past, most accounts were CNN or Korean media accounts that were translated into Indonesian. Sometimes they were deliberately twisted or mistranslated, so people could misunderstand. That's why I trust the media from the fandom itself more.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student)

Lintang also expressed a similar sentiment, saying that the fanbase is the main source of information that she trusts the most. Not only that, Lintang also said that she does not accept

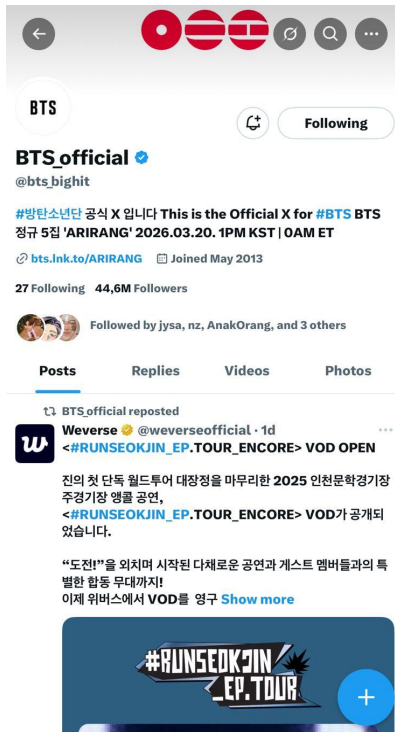
information at face value, but rather validates it through other sources unrelated to BTS or ARMY. *“If I prioritize trusting the fanbase, then the validation isn't just about BTS. If they differ, well, we'll just have to wait and see how the truth unfolds.”* (Lintang, 2025). She did not immediately jump to conclusions based on the conflicting information, but instead chose to wait for further developments. This also demonstrates caution and awareness in dealing with conflicting information.

Similar to Inanda, who explained that official sources from BTS are the initial reference for assessing the accuracy of information. After that, Inanda examines the credibility of the accounts that disseminate information, including their track records. According to her, every media outlet has certain tendencies or perspectives. Therefore, it is important to check the credibility of sources before trusting the information.

“Personally, I would probably start with the official sources. Then, I would look at the accounts to see how trustworthy they are. Then, I would look at the media and see what it's like. Because everywhere has its own biases. Just check the credibility. That's how I would do it.” (Inanda, 31-yo, Female, Employee).

In line with other informants, Amanda also showed caution in trusting information circulating about BTS. The difference is that Amanda considers official statements from HYBE or BIGHIT's official accounts to be more reliable sources than other sources. Amanda admitted that she does not always trust fanbase accounts or other large accounts. This shows that Amanda has a hierarchy of trust in information sources.

“Actually, I'm kind of on the fence about that, because I trust official statements more. So if it's from fanbases or external accounts, I'm still 50-50—sometimes I believe it, sometimes I don't. But if there's one thing I really trust, it's definitely from HYBE or BIGHIT.” (Amanda, 25-yo, Female, Employee).



Picture 3.5.1 BTS X Official Account

Source: BTS X account

In this regard, the above findings reflect that the ARMY community has a unique information credibility mechanism, which works through Jenkins' (2006) collective gatekeeping culture of Participatory Culture. This can form a structured internal information echo chamber. This is in line with the reactions of all informants who consciously built a hierarchy of sources considered credible based on participatory contributions by placing their trust in the official BIGHIT account in the first place. Then there are large verified fanbase accounts in second place, followed by active local fanbase accounts in third place, and external media accounts in last place. Based on the findings, Nadia, Inanda, and Amanda validated the information by cross-checking other reliable primary sources. According to Jenkins (2006), this collective gatekeeping mechanism filters out information that is considered not credible, thereby forming a closed, homogeneous, and structured internal information space or echo chamber. In this case, collective gatekeeping protects the echo chamber layer from information pollution.

According to these findings, collective gatekeeping is identified as a more adaptive participatory mechanism than algorithmic echo chambers because it can be adjusted and regulated independently depending on its users (Sinambela, 2024; Cinelli et al., 2020). This demonstrates the collective intelligence of informants because they are able to regulate the flow of information in their digital ecosystem. ARMY consciously builds a collective verification system to distinguish themselves from general users who are trapped in passive personalization (Irwansyah & Lestari, 2020). It can be concluded that trust in information within the ARMY fandom is shaped by a strict self-validation process and the reputation of reliable primary sources. This process helps community members protect themselves from misinformation and remain within the same sphere.

3.6 DOMINANT DISCOURSE AND TRENDING TOPICS

In a special discussion room, there are ideas or topics that are often exchanged between fandom members. These usually cover many things related to BTS or ARMY collective activities. The interview results show that discussions within the ARMY community on X relate to the idol's activities, such as comebacks, due to the approaching BTS comeback after mandatory military service, concerts, a number of awards, and a few issues related to the members' personal lives. These topics then develop into a collective narrative through repeated interactions between members and the massive exchange of content. As Zahra emphasized in her interview, the dominant topics of conversation within the community include theoretical interpretations, albums, visual codes, and Greek mythology. Zahra admitted that the focus of discussion is on BTS's professional aspects, while group conversations about their personal lives are relatively rare.

“The most frequently discussed topics are album theories, comeback dates, Hjjyh, sometimes shipping, songs, merchandise, and random things about idols. Personal life is rarely discussed, it's more about the idols themselves. Many agree, because people are good at interpreting theories, visuals, codes, Greek myths, and so on.” (Zahra, 21-yo, Female, University Student).

Meanwhile, Apri also talked about the professional aspects of idols, such as BTS's achievements and works. Specifically, he mentioned the contributions of BTS members to

songwriting at KOMCA and the awards that inspire fans. According to Apri, this topic is very important because it is informative and shows how BTS's success has had an emotional impact that motivates fans.

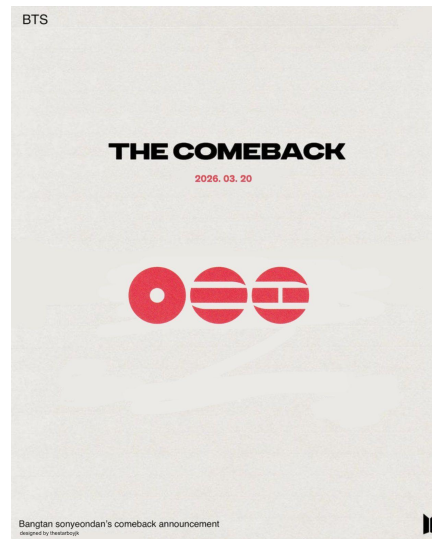
“Regarding BTS, it's about their achievements, like how they are songwriters and producers. There's KOMCHA, if I'm not mistaken, and I look at which member creates the most songs and works, or what awards they've won. And I often see many ARMYs being helped by that.” (Apri, 22-yo, Female, University Student)

On the other hand, Lintang said that one of the most frequent discussions was comparing BTS with other groups. As a participant in the discussion, Lintang said that rivalry with EXO had been a major topic, with an emphasis on comparing stage performances, member visuals, and vocals. However, this debate was considered to be stronger at certain times and was not always the main topic. *“Usually, they compare one group to another. Back then, the biggest rival was EXO. Comparing performances, visuals, vocals.” (Lintang, 2025).*

Nadia revealed that outside of discussions related to K-Pop, there is discourse that arises from conversations between fans. She mentioned that a frequently discussed topic is environmental issues and the natural disasters that recently occurred in Sumatra. Nadia heard this information directly from a victim who is an ARMY. This shows that, depending on the relationships between community members, ARMY discussions can also cover real social issues.

“Lately, the discussion has been more about the environment. There is an issue that is also being discussed by my online friends. I happen to have a mutual friend who lives in Sumatra, so we talked about the natural disaster that is happening there, what the conditions are like there, and whether it is safe or not. This is because there are indeed those who are directly affected.” (Nadia, 25-yo, Female, Employee).

Meanwhile, Inanda and Amanda both emphasized their enthusiasm for BTS's comeback and world tour after their hiatus. Inanda highlighted the speculation among ARMY about the meaning of the comeback logo. *“Lately, since they're planning a comeback, it's obviously about that. Then yesterday that logo appeared, the comeback logo. Many people speculated that it meant something like the sun.” (Inanda, 2026).*



Picture 3.5.2 BTS Upcoming Album's Logo

Source: @thestarboyjk on X

On the other hand, Amanda said that in addition to the comeback, there were also discussions about the possibility of a world tour, especially since BTS had just returned from a long hiatus after completing their mandatory military service. Amanda also said that non-K-Pop issues related to ARMY, such as cyberbullying, had arisen but were ignored. *“Yeah, but when it comes to non-K-pop stuff that touches on ARMY, it's usually just teasing or bullying, nothing more than that.”* (Amanda, 2026).

This relates to two primary theories that have been proposed by researcher, namely that the ARMY's study focuses on the Echo Chamber (Sunstein, 2001) in Participatory Culture (Jenkins, 2006). As an example, the analysis of every piece of information about dominating and trending topics, along with their theoretical classification, can be summarized as follows:

Table 3.6 Mapping of dominant discussions among informants and theory classification

Informant	Dominant Discourse	Classification of Theory	
		Participatory Culture (Jenkins, 2006)	Echo Chamber (Sustein, 2001; Cinelli, 2020)

Zahra	Album theory, visual symbols, Greek myths, and BL shipping	Collective symbolic interpretation by producing content via symbol decoding	Homogeneous towards BTS symbol narratives Focus on internal idol interpretation
Apri	BTS's achievements, productivity, member contributions, awards	Participatory narrative of success, affiliation & mobilization voting	Pro-BTS bias talent Reinforcement of success narratives
Lintang	Rivalry with EXO, competition in performance, visuals, and vocals between EXO and BTS	Fanwar as a form of participation, competitive content production	In-group vs out-group Internal competitive K-Pop chamber
Nadia	Environmental issues and natural disasters in Sumatera (status quo)	Social philanthropy engagement via network	Flexible but BTS-related Chamber expansion remains pro-idol
Inanda	Comeback and speculation about a new symbolic logo	Collaborative speculation, mass speculation content	High engagement peak Massive echo of comeback narratives
Amanda	Comeback, world tour, bullying (minor)	Global trending mobilization, collective anticipation	Idol priority > external issues External issues are not dominant

This shows how informants describe the ARMY community as a rich discussion environment, where the culture of participation (Jenkins, 2006) demonstrates collective intelligence through various discussion activities among its members. This situation is characterized by a wealth of knowledge spread among many people connected on a digital platform, rather than being specific to one person.

“When we think about collective intelligence, we imagine widespread knowledge, where the answer does not lie with one person, but emerges from the collaboration of many people with different expertise.” (Jenkins in Convergence Culture (2006, p. 134)).

In this regard, Jenkins (2009) defines four characteristics of participatory culture as prerequisites for the formation of collective intelligence and perfectly supports Sunstein's (2001) echo chamber, which is reflected in the circulation of ARMY. Like Zahra and her friends, who often discuss album theories, Greek symbols, and many random things about BTS without any barriers to participation by anyone through the ease of the platform (sharing) offered. In the case

of Apri, when discussing BTS's credits at KOMCA (Korean Music Copyright Association), she then shared a narrative or extensive information about BTS as a group that creates its own work. Meanwhile, Inanda and Amanda discuss speculation about BTS's return to the music world, demonstrating individual contributions to the group's shared understanding. Lintang also engages in competitive fandom wars, while Nadia demonstrates a participatory culture through discussions about environmental issues that have recently become a hot topic in various circles, including the fandom community. Overall, this process generates collective intelligence, where the various perspectives of the informants ultimately converge into a single narrative that supports BTS.

Structurally, all of these discussions form a homogeneous echo chamber centered on BTS (Sunstein, 2001 & Cinelli et al., 2020). This is because the overall focus is on the idols' work, achievements, internal K-Pop rivalries, and BTS's social expansion, demonstrating strong narrative homophily. The boundaries of topics considered safe are stronger because even external issues, such as bullying, as mentioned by Amanda, do not dominate the discussion topics, and direct conversations about BTS members' personal lives are deliberately avoided. These two theories work together to create an adaptive "participatory echo chamber" where structural uniformity maintains fandom identification but variety of opinion fosters group creativity. These results corroborate Alimah's (2021) conclusion that ARMY Yogyakarta has transitioned from entertainment to self-actualization; there, in-depth conversations serve as a means of fostering community within a structured echo chamber setting.

In addition to Alimah, Driessen (2024) analyzes participatory echo chambers using supporting research, confirming that Jenkins' four traits—low barriers, sharing, mentorship, and meaning—perform best in the homogeneity of echo chambers, producing collective intelligence like Inanda's logo speculation. This is why Jenkins claims that the elements of participatory culture function effectively in the ARMY echo chamber, allowing the six different kinds of conversations that the informants brought to the table to be integrated into a type of collective intelligence that can generate narratives that center on and favor BTS.

3.7 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND THEMATIC RELEVANCE

This section conducts a thematic synthesis to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the ARMY community. It explains how emotional identity and digital practices ultimately lead to the formation of a dominant and homogeneous echo chamber that is then utilized by the community itself. This synthesis addresses the research questions regarding echo chamber formation, information selection, and narrative reinforcement within the community. The following synthesis table answers the research questions:

Table 3.7 Synthesis table of five thematic findings of the researcher

Context	Supporting Theme	Key Findings	Research Theory	Analysis
How echo chambers are identified and constructed	Formation of ARMY Identity	The process of becoming an ARMY through friends/social media content, sense of belonging, and the emotional attachment of ARMY’s who are like family	Echo Chamber (Sunstein; Cinelli, et al.; Jamieson & Cappella) Social Identity (Tajfel)	Construction: Identity formed → emotional bonding (as the basis for social circles according to the third theme) → X infrastructure as a platform → protective social dynamics (formation of echo chambers according to the third theme) Characterization: Homogeneous BTS-centric information and narratives, self-protection, and adaptability
	Digital Practices on X	The dominance of the X platform and the use of RT (retweet), reply, hashtag, and mass voting features	Homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook)	
	Social Dynamics & Echo Chamber	Interaction between ARMY’s and the process of protecting oneself from external threats by using the mute/blocks or silent features		
How ARMY uses echo chambers to manage information flow and shape collective narratives on X	Information Credibility	Cross-referencing with fanbase, trust in official media, and media scepticism	Gatekeeping Collective & Participatory Culture (Jenkins)	Manage Information: Check credibility → cross-check other news sources → filter news
	Trending Topics	Discussions about idols such as comeback,	Echo Chamber (Sustein)	Shape Narratives: Narrative discourse →

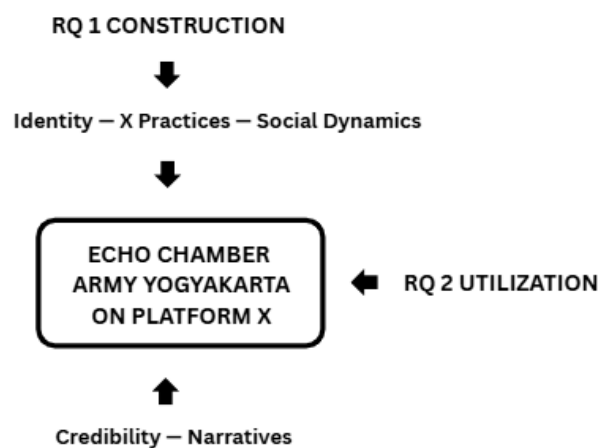
		world tours, album theories, and pro-BTS narratives		trending pro-BTS narratives
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Thus, this study synthesizes five themes of ARMY behavior on the X platform in an adaptive participatory echo chamber cycle. The synthesis mapping of these five themes systematically answers the two research questions. Findings indicate that the ARMY echo chamber in Yogyakarta is constructed through three integrated layers. First, identity and community formation, grounded in Social Identity Theory, involves identification via peers and social media, fostering belonging and a familial conceptualization of ARMY. This social in-group identity shows strong potential that becomes a prerequisite for homophily, as found by Cinelli et al. (2020), who measured homophily in their quantitative research with a score of 0.85 on Twitter (X) through selective following. Homophily underpins the third theme, namely the social dynamics of ARMY and the potential for echo chambers to form within it. Second, the digital infrastructure (theme 2) supported by Participatory Culture, explains X's dominance. Its ecosystem—featuring real-time tools like retweets, comments, hashtags, and voting—facilitates direct monitoring, social interaction between community members, and campaign selection. Thus, retweets and hashtags function as the echo chamber infrastructure.

The third theme addresses limited and protective social dynamics. Through internal agreements that create the echo chamber itself, this topic explains the functioning of the Echo Chamber and Self-Protective Enclave, including interactions between ARMY members, self-defense techniques like blocking or muting, and "safe spaces." Strongly held identities and emotional bonds significantly influence how they utilize their platforms for communication, interaction, and self-restraint, making them components that contribute to the echo chamber's layers. Network segregation was studied by Cinelli et al. (2020) using homogenous group interactions, which restricted 90% of informants' interactions with other members of the ARMY.

Thus, the echo chamber that is formed has several characteristics, namely (1) homogeneity of discourse that only focuses on BTS (BTS-centric); (2) internal regulation that is homogeneous and dominant; (3) enhanced adaptive ability in certain situations, especially when

BTS makes a comeback; (4) high efficiency in verifying information. Thus, ARMY in Yogyakarta forms a participatory echo chamber consciously and collectively through three layers, namely: identity with SIT as its foundation, infrastructure (Participatory Culture), and protection (Self-Enclave). This differs from Cinelli's findings, which rely on a recommendation system. This aligns with Sinambela (2024), who describes online communities as “network communities” with social boundaries. Interestingly, most ARMY engage in homophily by muting or blocking, and all mutual ARMY are more active and effective than conventional echo chambers.



Picture 3.7 Conceptual model graph of the ARMY echo chamber in Yogyakarta

Source: Researcher’s analysis, 2026

The two main mechanisms shown in the fourth and fifth themes allow ARMY in Yogyakarta to take advantage of the echo chamber. As a result, the X platform functions as a self-filtered information ecosystem. The fourth theme concerns the credibility of information, which shows collective gatekeeping, where there is cross-checking by the supporting fanbase, media skepticism, and trust based on participation. This section explains how information can enter the echo chamber through user selectivity and be used to process media truth. From there, their trusted sources of information have a hierarchical structure, starting from the official BTS account, the large BTS fanbase, to external media in the last position. Also, skepticism towards the media can limit information exposure, thereby strengthening the use of the echo chamber.

The good news is that the use of echo chambers in selecting information can lead them to factual and credible news, thereby protecting the community's communication circle. This makes echo chambers a solution for fandom, not just a matter of negative and toxic polarization.

The fifth theme concerns the collective narratives. In the chamber, the manifestation of Participatory Culture consists of diverse collective discussions: album theory and symbolic interpretation (Zahra), speculation about trending comeback logos (Inanda and Amanda), BTS's achievements (Apri), competitive rivalry (Lintang), environmental issues (Nadia). Despite this diversity, these interactions contribute to an overall homogeneous, pro-BTS narrative. From the findings, the use of echo chambers in this context led them to flow into heated discussions produced by their groups. Thus, the positive impact is that X features can help frame and unify various discourses into cohesive narratives. In conclusion, informants utilize the echo chambers constructed on their respective X pages to manage the flow of information based on high credibility and conduct specialized discussions based on their respective topic preferences in a focused manner.

CHAPTER IV

CLOSING

4.1 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, this study demonstrates how the echo chamber in the dynamics of the ARMY fandom, especially those residing in Yogyakarta, was constructed through conscious interactions rooted in the collective identities of fans. Based on the experiences of each informant, they developed their identities as BTS fans with different beginnings that touched them emotionally and bound them together, a sense of belonging emerged. This sense of belonging spurred active digital engagement, including activities to support idols that took place in the digital space, as done by the informants. The findings indicate that individual interest in BTS can grow into collective social involvement that is constructive and has a positive, sustainable impact.

Informants are encouraged to communicate via media that may effectively and instantly connect them since they are bonded by common emotional ties rather than just status. Driven by reasons that differ from informant to informant, X has evolved into a platform that they constantly use for fandom activities and amusement. Despite having different objectives, their usage habits are generally similar and stem from the same objective—supporting their idols. They create a social circle as a result of their shared interests and similarities. These preferences encourage informants to remain on the same page because they are always exposed to things they like or want. This leads to self-protection against perceived external threats through active measures like muting or blocking. However, quite a few informants also respond maturely by staying silent. Therefore, media coverage of BTS will increasingly dominate the informants' views. They do this consciously.

The echo chamber mechanism in the dynamics of ARMY relationships, especially in Yogyakarta, is divided into two, namely collective gatekeeping and participatory narrative production. Through the gatekeeping process, information is structured and carefully digested. Most informants apply a hierarchical system based on their trust in media sources, with some admitting that they do not trust any media other than BTS's official media. This also strengthens

the echo chamber wall, which informants then use as an ecosystem to regulate the flow of information about their idols. This is supported by dominant conversational themes on informants' timelines, which guide the flow of information. The way the echo chamber works in this discovery is efficient, adaptive, and sustainable, which then brings solutions for coordinated collective action.

4.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The researcher acknowledges several limitations in this study, which present opportunities for future study. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered for future researcher, particularly those related to the dynamics of a fandom and the formation of echo chambers in digital spaces, such as:

1. This study initially focused on informants with ARMY identities regardless of gender. However, the researcher found that all of the informants were female, which meant that this study was unable to capture how male informants or fanboys construct their identities on the X platform. This resulted in gender homogeneity, where only a strong feminine perspective was present without involving different perspectives from males. Therefore, it is recommended that future research involve male informants to examine potential differences in how they validate information or use features on the X platform.
2. The geographical focus of this study is limited to ARMY members residing in Yogyakarta. Although the fan base in Yogyakarta is quite large, the social and cultural dynamics of ARMY in other areas, such as big cities, may be different. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a broader geographical scope as a different research background in order to find new research insights.
3. With a total of six informants, this study focuses on the dynamics of a single platform, namely X (Twitter). However, there are many other ARMY digital ecosystems, such as Weverse, TikTok, or Instagram, which certainly have different algorithms and interaction styles in forming filter bubbles. Thus, the researcher hopes that further research can use a

cross-platform approach to see how information is disseminated and how echo chambers work.

4. In order to comprehend the development of echo chambers within the ARMY Yogyakarta community, this study mainly depends on the subjective viewpoints and experiences of informants. Because of this, the results may not accurately reflect the complexity of information transmission within the larger fandom network and instead represent participants' views of their communication habits. Therefore, in order to provide a more thorough knowledge of echo chamber dynamics in digital fandom communities, future study may use other methodological approaches or integrate data from diverse sources.

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Appendix 1

List of Interview Questions (English Version)
Table 1.2 Interview Guide

No	Questions	Purpose
A. Informant Background		
1.	How did you first learn about and join the ARMY community, both online and offline in Yogyakarta?	To explore the duration and emotional attachment
2.	Can you tell us about your activities in the fandom, especially on the X (Twitter) platform?	To identify the entry point into the fandom ecosystem
3.	How active are you on X compared to other platforms (Instagram, TikTok, etc.)?	To understand platform preference and activity level
B. Community Interaction Patterns		
4.	How do you usually interact with other ARMY members on X? (reply, retweet, DM, space, fan war, etc.)	To map dominant interaction form
5.	In your opinion, what topics or issues are most frequently discussed in ARMY X?	To identify dominant narratives
6.	Have you ever participated in long discussions or debates on X? What was the atmosphere like?	To explore discourse dynamics & conflicts
7.	Do you tend to follow accounts that share your opinions? Why?	To identify homophily tendencies
8.	Have you ever felt that your opinions were not accepted or differed from the majority of other ARMY members?	To explore dissent tolerance
C. Group Identity & Solidarity		
9.	What makes you feel “comfortable” being part of the ARMY community on X?	To identify ingroup attraction factors?
10.	In your opinion, what distinguishes ARMY from other fandoms on social media?	To understand unique identity construction
11.	How important do you think it is to support certain narratives or hashtags created by ARMY?	To assess the role of digital activism
12.	What does being an ARMY mean to you, especially for those of you living in Yogyakarta?	To investigate the identification of localized fans

13.	What are the main topics or narratives that are often discussed in your community?	To find recurrent themes
14.	How does the fandom react when there are issues or controversies involving BTS or ARMY on social media?	To monitor collective behavior and crisis response
15.	Are there any “unwritten rules” about what can or cannot be discussed in your community?	To investigate unofficial boundaries and norms
Probing Questions:		
16.	Can you share an example of a situation where the ARMY community came together to support or defend something?	To identify collective solidarity behaviors
17.	How do you express your support for BTS (e.g., through content, fan projects, donations, etc.)?	To explore fan-based participation forms
18.	Have you ever seen differences of opinion that caused division or “attacks” against each other?	To observe internal conflict and factionalism
D. Information Perception		
19.	How do you find or get the latest information about BTS on X?	To identify sources of information
20.	Do you trust information from ARMY accounts or from outside media more? Why?	To examine source bias
21.	Have you ever found information that is different or contradictory to what ARMY discusses? How did you respond to it?	To see reactions to dissonance
E. Echo Chamber Potential		
22.	In your opinion, does ARMY on X interact more often with fellow ARMY members or with outsiders?	To assess information isolated level
23.	How does the community usually respond to criticism of BTS?	To observe narrative defense mechanisms
24.	Do you feel that conversations on ARMY X tend to have a single viewpoint or a variety of viewpoints? Why?	To measure discourse homogeneity
25.	Do you feel that the content that appears on your feed reflects the general views of ARMY or just your circle?	To assess algorithmic filtering effects
26.	In your opinion, how does the X platform influence interactions between ARMY members?	To evaluate platform affordance effects
E. Personal Reflection		

27.	What has been your most memorable experience while being active in ARMY X?	To explore peak identity & cohesion moments
28.	How does the community usually respond to criticism of BTS?	To assess openness potential
29.	Do you feel that conversations on ARMY X tend to have a single viewpoint or a variety of viewpoints? Why?	To measure echo chamber effects
30.	Do you feel that the content that appears on your feed reflects the general views of ARMY or just your circle?	To analyze personalized echo chamber experiences
31.	In your opinion, how does the X platform influence interactions between ARMY members?	To understand platform influence on group behavior

Appendix 2

List of Interview Questions (Indonesian Version)

A. Latar Belakang Informan

1. Bagaimana awal kamu mengenal dan bergabung dalam komunitas ARMY, baik online maupun offline di Yogyakarta?
2. Bisa ceritakan aktivitasmu di fandom, khususnya di platform X (Twitter)?
3. Seberapa aktif kamu di X dibanding platform lain (Instagram, TikTok, dll)?

B. Pola Interaksi di Komunitas

1. Bagaimana biasanya kamu berinteraksi dengan ARMY lain di X? (reply, retweet, DM, space, fan war, dll)
2. Menurut kamu, topik atau isu apa yang paling sering dibicarakan di ARMY X?
3. Pernahkah kamu ikut diskusi panjang atau debat di X? Bagaimana suasanaanya?
4. Apakah kamu lebih sering mengikuti akun yang sependapat denganmu? Mengapa?
5. Pernahkah kamu merasa pendapatmu tidak diterima atau berbeda dengan mayoritas ARMY lain?

C. Identitas dan Solidaritas Kelompok

1. Apa yang membuat kamu merasa “nyaman” berada di komunitas ARMY di X?
2. Menurut kamu, apa yang membedakan ARMY dengan fandom lain di media sosial?
3. Seberapa penting menurut kamu untuk mendukung narasi atau hashtag tertentu yang dibuat ARMY?
4. Menurut kamu, apa arti menjadi seorang ARMY, khususnya bagi kamu yang tinggal di Yogyakarta?
5. Apa hal-hal yang biasanya menjadi topik utama atau narasi yang sering dibahas dalam komunitasmu?
6. Bagaimana reaksi fandom ketika ada isu atau kontroversi yang melibatkan BTS atau ARMY di media sosial?
7. Apakah ada “aturan tidak tertulis” tentang apa yang boleh atau tidak boleh dibicarakan di komunitasmu?

Probing Questions:

- Bisa ceritakan contoh situasi ketika komunitas ARMY bersatu untuk mendukung atau membela sesuatu?
- Bagaimana kamu mengekspresikan dukungan terhadap BTS (misalnya lewat konten, fan project, donasi, dll)?
- Pernahkah kamu melihat adanya perbedaan pendapat yang menyebabkan perpecahan atau “saling menyerang”?

D. Persepsi terhadap Informasi

1. Bagaimana kamu menemukan atau mendapatkan informasi terbaru tentang BTS di X?
2. Apakah kamu lebih percaya informasi dari akun ARMY atau dari media luar? Mengapa?
3. Pernahkah kamu menemukan informasi yang berbeda atau bertentangan dengan yang dibicarakan ARMY? Bagaimana kamu meresponsnya?

E. Potensi Echo Chamber (tanpa menyebut istilahnya)

1. Menurut kamu, apakah ARMY di X lebih sering berinteraksi dengan sesama ARMY atau dengan orang luar?
2. Bagaimana biasanya komunitas merespons jika ada kritik terhadap BTS?
3. Apakah kamu merasa pembicaraan di ARMY X cenderung punya satu pandangan yang sama atau beragam? Mengapa?
4. Apakah kamu merasa konten yang muncul di berandamu mencerminkan pandangan ARMY secara umum atau hanya lingkaranmu saja?
5. Menurut kamu, bagaimana platform X memengaruhi interaksi antar-ARMY?

F. Refleksi Pribadi

1. Apa pengalaman paling berkesan kamu selama aktif di komunitas ARMY X?
2. Menurut kamu, apakah media sosial seperti X membuat fandom ARMY di Yogyakarta semakin solid atau justru terpecah?
3. Pernahkah kamu merasa algoritma X “menutup” kamu dari pandangan berbeda?
4. Apakah kamu mengikuti akun non-ARMY? Jika iya, bagaimana pengalamanmu?
5. Bagaimana kamu menilai pengaruh platform ini terhadap budaya fandom secara umum di Yogyakarta?
6. Menurut kamu, apa pengaruh komunitas ARMY di X terhadap cara kamu melihat BTS dan isu-isu yang mereka hadapi?.