

## The Phenomenon of Social Disintegration Through Fanwar Between K-Popers Among College Students (A Case Study at Students Who is K-Pop Fans on Twitter)

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**Abstract**— *At present, social media has become a place for people around the world to interact with each other. It is also applied to K-Pop fans (K-Popers), in which they use social media to interact with their idols or their fellow fandoms (a group of fans). However, it is common when two or more people from different fandoms have an argument because of different opinions or known as fanwar. In this research, the main subject is Indonesia K-Popers students in college who do fanwars on Twitter. The purpose is to find out the reasons why college students are involved in fanwar and its effects, one of them is social disintegration. This research used a qualitative approach with case study method. The results showed that, the positive effects of fanwar are increasing their thinking skills to become more critical and increasing their debate skills. Meanwhile, for negative effects, fanwar can cause problems in friendship, especially with different fandoms, that is why a friendship in K-Popers becomes compartmentalized. Thirdly, social disintegration between K-Popers on Twitter appears on fans with different fandoms, that is because they support different idols and consider them as the best of the best. However, if there is an external factor that attacks them, they will reunite and attack it together.*

**Keywords**— *fanwar, social disintegration, k-popers, k-pop, college students*

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Hallyu or the Korean Wave is a phenomenon that sends Korean cultural products, such as drama, music, films, and food to boom. In Indonesia, Korean pop music or K-Pop has an increasing number of fans. Not only do teenagers know this culture, but adults also are well aware of it. K-Pop fans are commonly called as K-Popers which stands for K-Pop Lovers.

This phenomenon not only has positive effects but also has negative effects, one of them is how K-Popers love their idols. If it needs to be described, the first is how K-Popers waste their money to be able to watch their idol's concerts or buy their merchandises. As stated in a research by Andina (2019, p. 47), she concluded that K-Popers are willing to buy items related to their idols, such as albums, because they feel proud if their idols top the music charts and win the year-end award as Best

Album. They are even willing to torture themselves, which is not buying food, because they prefer to spend their money to buy something related to their idol more. Then, the second negative impact is that they are too excessive in defending their idols.

Basically, besides admiring their idols, fans also support them by participating in idol activities and attending music concerts (for singers) or watching dramas and movies (for actors/actresses). They want to show their fanaticism towards their idols (Widiarti, 2012) without deliberating whether they will be responded by their idols or not. However, not all fans love every idol, there are also fans who hate certain idols (also known as haters). Tinalaga (2018, p. 4) also stated that fans not only support their idol music and highlight their success, but also insult or even directly attack idols or fandoms just because difference interests and beliefs. This kind of fans is someone who always think that their idols are invincible and are the greatest among other idols. In order to show their existence as fans and get recognition from their idols or recognition from the public about their idols, they will do anything, even if they have to fight with other fans.

Usually, fanwar does not need face-to-face interaction, but through social media, such as Twitter or Instagram, because on social media, people are free to write anything, whether it's a criticism, blasphemy, comments, and so on. Social media is the right way to express opinions without having to show the real identity of people. Username, display picture, even bio, can be manipulated by using other people's faces. Fans who do fanwar usually use their idol's face, which is why the identity of fanwar actors is not easy to find.

If this continues, the conflicts between fans will never be resolved. According to Mitchell (1981, p. 1), conflict itself is a relationship between two or more parties who think that they do not have the same goal. Each fans who wants to defend their idol has different purposes and interests, that's why the conflict between them happens. This can lead

to social disintegration among them. In KBBI, disintegration is a condition of not being united or divided; loss of wholeness or unity; split. Literally, disintegration is understood as the splitting of a nation into separate parts. While according to Soekanto (2017, p. 289), disintegration or disorganization is a condition where there is no harmony in the parts of an unanimity. This means that fanwar can cause disintegration because there is no harmony between fans who think that each of their idols is the greatest that makes social disintegration in K-Popers arises. All parties have their own opinions and when those opinions do not click, fanwar makes its way between them.

People who do fanwars are usually teenagers or children. Unfortunately, that does not stop the fact that college students also do fanwar. In several previous studies, one of them was a research by Lastriani (2018, p. 95), revealed that some college students and workers still get involved in fanwar activities on social media. They do fanwar because they want to straighten out things that are not true. They are even willing to use harsh words if other people do not conform to what they believe. Research by Apriliani and Setiawan (2019, p. 116) also revealed that college students who are K-Pop music fans always respond spontaneously to other people who judge themselves as fans of K-Pop music or insult their favorite idols. The responses are usually by insulting their opponent back or denying what the opponent said about their idols. Moreover, they even do a war of opinions (fanwar) on social media. If this continues to happen, the college students who are in charge of social control and moral force will not do their duties properly. Social control itself is to focus on techniques and strategies that regulate human behavior and lead it to adaptability or conformity to the rules of society (Amni et al., 2020, p. 366). Meanwhile, moral force is that college students are moral builders in a society. A college student should be a good role model for society so that when he/she still gets involved in fanwar activities, the community tends to do the same thing, especially teenagers who still don't know what is wrong and what is

right. Then, college students who are supposed to be good examples for teenagers, end up do the opposite, which is getting involved in fanwar.

Unstable adolescents and college students that are incapable of becoming a good example can lead to disintegration if it occurs on a large scale, considering how many K-Pop fans in Indonesia.

## B. METHOD

According to the problem, this research used qualitative approach. Creswell (2009, p. 4) explains that “...*qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.*” Thus, it can be stated that the main point of qualitative research lies in the purpose of exploring and understanding the data more deeply. Data in this context relates to the meaning of each expression regarding the research problem implied directly by the informants, especially key informants. Researchers used a qualitative approach because this approach examines individuals in their natural setting. This of course involves researchers going to the study field, gaining access, and obtaining material, which allows researchers to observe the fanwar process between K-Popers on Twitter directly, and find out its causes and impacts.

This research is aimed to analyze a case study of fanwar among students who are also K-Pop fans on Twitter, so the case study method is used for this research. Thomas (in Sarosa, 2012, p. 115) said that a case study is about how the researcher conducts an intensive analysis on one unit of analysis (case). A case can change an individual, an organization, an event, a decision, a decision, or a system that can be studied thoroughly and holistically (in Sarosa, 2012, p. 115). In other words, a case study is not merely answering questions about 'what' (what) is the object that is studied, but also more thoroughly and comprehensively about 'how' (how) and 'why' (why) the object occurs and is formed as and can be seen as a case. Through this method, the researcher tries to find out the factors that cause fanwar to

happen and the phenomenon of social disintegration in it. The use of this case study method is to explain and describe the facts or problems between K-Popers on Twitter carefully.

This research is located on Twitter. The informants in this research are 13 college students who were randomly selected on Twitter. The informants were divided into two categories, first is seven K-Pop fans that still get involved in fanwar and one K-Pop fans who's an expert in completing fanwar as the main informants.

The second is five K-pop fans that are no longer get involved in fanwar as the key informants. This research used observation, interviews, documentary studies, and literature studies as data collection techniques for this study. For data analysis, this research used Miles and Huberman's version, which are data reduction, data display, and verification/conclusion. For data validity, this research used member check and triangulations (which triangulations that this research used are the source and method triangulation).

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Impacts after Getting Involved in Fanwar

Fanwar has more negative effects than positive ones, which are just a waste of time, get mad easily, and heart feels uneasy. This is the reason why five of the 13 informants finally decided to stop doing fanwar. This is also discussed in her research, Lastriani (2018), which states that:

*...meanwhile, the negative impact of fanwar is disrupting school (due to staying up late to "fight" on social media), wasting time, having no benefits, and behaving and speaking harshly, so that the person doing fanwar is avoided by his/her friends in the real world.*

Most informants said that their friendship is a little twisted because they are becoming pickier in getting new friends, especially a friend who's also a K-Popers. Someone who is used to fanwar understands

more about the characteristics of a problematic fandom, even though not all people in the fandom are toxic. However, the trauma from arguing with other fandom making him/her hard to get new friends from that certain fandom. Not only that, fanwar can also cause someone to lose his/her friend if he/she keeps doing fanwar, because not everyone likes fanwar.

*"In the past, I used to do a fanwar with my school friends. Because of that, I feel like I don't want to be friends with EXO fans or SNSD fans anymore." (Nana)*

However, fanwar can also strengthen the friendship between fans in a fandom. This is because when they are involved in a fanwar with other fandoms, they will unite and defend fans who are being attacked by other fandoms, unless those fans who started the fanwar first, then they will ask those fans to apologize and delete their tweets. Mawar said that she has a friend who is still close to her because of fanwar. When a fanwar occurs, fans in fandom will interact more often than when there is no fanwar. There will be fans who discuss the fanwar with each other, or fans who entertain other fans with funny photos or videos related to their idols. When their idol is attacked by haters, fans will attack the haters together. Then, they will encourage each other, especially fans who feel sad because of what haters say about their idol, which makes the fandom becomes stronger than before. This is in line with the conflict theory by Lewis A. Coser (1956) who said:

*Conflict is a process that is instrumental in the formation, unification and maintenance of social structures. Conflict can place and maintain boundaries between two or more groups. Conflicts with other groups can re-strengthen the group's identity and protect it from dissolving into the social world around it. (in Tualeka, 2017, p. 37)*

Therefore, conflict can be advantageous for those who are involved. Coser argues that a

conflict is a form of interaction and its existence should not be avoided. This is in line with Simmel's opinion, which is:

*Conflict is one of the basic forms of interaction, and the conflict process relates to alternative forms such as cooperation in countless and complex ways. (in Basrowi, 2004, p. 41).*

After being involved in fanwar, people who do fanwar will feel relieved and satisfied, especially if they succeed in winning debates with other fans to the point of making their opponents lock their accounts and delete their accounts. However, that sense of relief and satisfaction do not last long because fans would feel uneasy afterward, worried that their idol would be insulted again by haters. Haters will also not hesitate to attack fans' personal lives, and even send death threats to scare their opponents. As what Hen said, he felt that he doesn't feel calm anymore because he thought about what if people who argued with him replying to his tweet again. Not only that, Hen is a person who likes to find mistakes in others now.

Fanwar can also improve the debating skills of those who do it, that is because when doing fanwar, one must look strong and understand what he/she is talking about so other person would not easily torn down his/her opinion. According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, a debate is a discussion or exchange of opinions on a topic by giving reasons to defend each other's opinions. In fanwar, those who are arguing must also show evidence that strengthens their argument, because otherwise the argument will be considered invalid. Chaeri said that her mind becomes more critical because every time she expresses an opinion, she will also include evidence so that her opinion is not just an opinion, but a fact that can make it difficult for her opponents to reply to her argument. She even said that she often made long threads with the evidence just to reply to false arguments from haters.

This skill can be used in real life, especially for college students. As we know, college students and debate are inseparable. In

fact, there is a debate competition for college students in Indonesia organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, which proves that basically, students are expected to have good debating skills. College students are considered as someone who has the potential to understand changes and developments in the world of education and the community, also has a position and role as an agent of change, social controller, the future leader, and moral force. Therefore, good debating skills and a critical mindset are needed. When college students are expected to become agents of change, college students must understand a problem that occurs in society, then speak up their opinion in a public forum along with evidence that supports their opinion. So, other people who did not understand the topic before, can understand the subject matter and how big the urgency is.

## **2. Social Disintegration between K-Popers through Fanwar on Twitter**

According to Robert Fedderke and Johannes Kushner, social disintegration refers to dimensions such as conflict and imbalance, destruction in politics and civilian rights, crime and violence, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, and eroding the satisfaction of the population with their life. On the other side, social disintegration can be considered as a lack of integration, so that the main focus can be on the analysis of indicators that describe social integration (Klitgaard and Fedderke, 1995, pp. 357-369).

Social integration itself is a process that happens gradually. This process can start with the accommodation of the various parties' wishes to cooperate. This can arise because of their awareness of the same interests. At the same time, they have enough knowledge and self-control to fulfill these interests. Then, the process is continued with various forms of cooperation. In the process of cooperation, each party tries to overcome differences and accommodate the wants, hopes, or needs of one another. Furthermore, each party tries to enhance the unity of actions, attitudes, and mental processes by paying attention to

common interests and goals. Each party no longer differentiated itself from the other members at that time. The boundaries between them will disappear and melt into one. This shows that social integration has been achieved.

Fanwar is part of conflict because fanwar has the same characteristics as conflicts, in which whether in fanwar and conflict, there are quarrels, fights, disputes about opinions or desires; or difference; contradiction against; or disagree with (Tualeka, 2017, p. 34). For K-Popers on social media, although social integration has been achieved from how fellow fandoms interact with one another, this does not apply to a wider circle, which is fans from different fandoms. Every fandom has the same goal, which is to make their idol become the best. Finally, the boundaries between the respective fandoms are very clear, especially when their idols are competing for a prestigious award. Hence, if a fanwar is allowed to continue, then it can become a threat to social disintegration. Although not all conflicts will become disintegration, disintegration always starts from a conflict.

Fanwar contains many forms, such as hate speech and hate comment. Each of the fandoms argues with each other for hours, even days, without finding a solution. Problematic fans will not accept opinions from others that do not match with what they believe. So, even if other people provide evidence and facts in each of their arguments, these fans will still oppose their opponent's arguments. In fact, if they have lost the material for their argument, then they will use the racist card. So it can be concluded that the fan is an intolerant person or does not practice the tolerance word. In Episteme (2009), tolerance can be defined as:

*...a term in a social, cultural, and religious context which means attitudes and actions that prohibit discrimination against different groups or are unacceptable to the majority in a society allowing the existence of other religions. In religion, tolerance can be defined as an effort to respect all the rights of each religion (in Herlina, 2018, p. 237).*

Not long ago, BLACKPINK released their latest MV whose title is HOW YOU LIKE THAT, wherein the MV there is a statue of God from Hinduism, namely Ganesha, which is placed on the floor and only as an accessory, while Lisa (BLACKPINK member) sits on the king's throne. It made Hindu fans feel insulted and expressed their protest to BLACKPINK and its agency, YG Entertainment. Even so, some BLINKs (BLACKPINK fans) thought that it is something that should not be debated, they also thought that fans who protest are too excessive, even insulting other people's religions, so that fanwar came up.



Figure 1. Fans who were being racist.

Not only being racist towards a religion, fans who are doing fanwar can also humiliate their opponents physically. Even worse, they uploaded a photo with the face of their opponent to Twitter and added insulting words. Eventually, that tweet became full of insults and insults, and the person whose photo was leaked had to lock his account because he was constantly being attacked, even though he did not know anything about it beforehand. In fact, many irresponsible fans stole photos of their opponents carelessly and used them for bad things, such as doing fanwar and being provocateurs. For this reason, K-Popers on social media rarely use their personal accounts and prefer to use their second accounts, this is to avoid things like that in the future. Just like what happened to a LOCKEY, he had to clear his name because someone irresponsible used his photo to provoke a scene on various platforms. Fortunately, his fellow fandom helped him clear his name by retweeting the

tweets so people who don't know about that can see them.

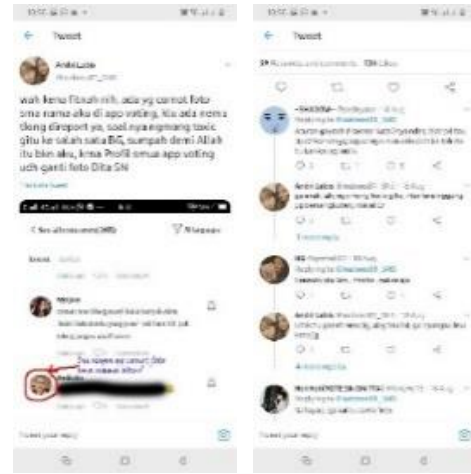


Figure 2. A LOCKEY was displeased because someone stole his photo and real name.

Thirteen informants in this study also gave their opinion on this matter, one of them was from Nana. Nana said that in cyberspace, fanwar has become a routine activity that K-Popers always do almost every day. However, in the real world, Indonesia in particular, each fandom basically has a good relationship with other other, it is shown by how much they respect each other when there are K-Pop events attended by K-Popers from various fandoms. Therefore, social disintegration in K-Popers will only exist on social media. Mawar even added that if there is social disintegration in K-Popers, then the cause is not because of K-Pop, but because of malicious comments that have nothing to do with K-Pop.

On the other hand, Ama gave a different opinion, she agrees that fanwar can cause social disintegration because one of the negative impacts of fanwar is bothering the friendship. It means that the friendship between K-Popers have become compartmentalized due to these differences in fandom. As stated by Hen, in the world of fandom in K-Pop, only relying on the solidarity of one agency can narrow the friendship of every K-Popers. Usually, fans from a certain group will only volunteer and want to hang out with fans from the same group

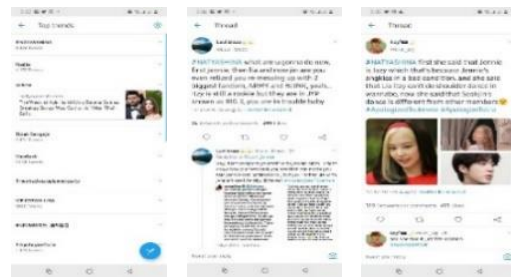


or fans from groups that are under the same agency. In conclusion, agency affects the treatment of one fandom to other fandoms. Big agencies' fandom tends to look down on small agencies' fandom and think that groups from small agencies don't deserve to be compared with groups from big agencies.

Suparlan revealed, in the physical conflict that happens, people from different social groups or ethnic groups, who were originally good friends, will remove the good friendship into a hostile relationship, or at least become an avoidance relationship. Their relationship becomes a group relationship, that is, each of the group represents their group in the conflicted relationship that occurs. Outsiders, who have absolutely nothing to do with the groups that are in physical conflict, if they have attributes that show similarities to the characteristics of the opposing party, will be classified as opponents (Suparlan, 2006, p. 146). It is suitable with what this research has found in the field, that just because their fandom is different, a person is willing to break off the friendship with his/her friend if his/her friend doesn't join the fandom he/she participates in. This proves that the difference in fandom in K-Popers is something that has a big impact. Especially for K-Popers who have just liked K-Pop recently, they are unable to control their emotions properly because they are not used to fanwar. Usually, new K-Popers still believe that their idols are the most perfect. During the interview, Chaeri also shared her story about this, where her friend who had just become part of K-Popers thought that no group could beat BTS and BLACKPINK. Her friend even looked down on her idol Chaeri and made her very annoyed. But, because it was her friend, she decided to hold back her annoyance because she did not want to argue with her friend.

In some instances, the social disintegration that occurs in K-Popers on Twitter may melt when there are external factors that attack them. When there are people outside K-Popers who have the potential to threaten them, such as haters saying that Korean idols are plastic or K-Pop music is not

good in quality, make K-Popers who are originally competing with each other for their idols, unite because of this threat. As happened recently, when Jennie from BLACKPINK and Lia from ITZY were insulted by a dance cover named PINK PANDA, whose name member is Natya. Natya said that Jennie's dances always looked powerless on stage, she also said that Jennie is unprofessional. In Lia's case, Natya said that Lia cannot dance and that she considered herself better than Lia when it comes to dancing. Because of that comment, all K-Popers from any fandoms attacked Natya. In fact, her name is shown on Trending Topic Twitter in Indonesia.



**Figure 3.** Natasya on Trending Topic

However, for social integration to be achieved in society requires sacrifices, whether it's the sacrifice of feelings or the sacrifice of materials for everyone (Mais et al, 2019, p. 9). Based on the observations, this still seems too difficult for K-Popers because everyone's preferences are different, one fandom cannot force other fandoms to follow what they like. Besides that, the world of K-Pop is also a world of competition, where each group will continue to compete in various things, so every fandom will also compete to win the idol they support.

Conflict never recognizes age boundaries, people of all ages can be involved in conflict because conflict is a part of the interaction, as implied by Coser (in Nursantari, 2018, p. 4). This also applies to college students who do fanwar. College students are late adolescents who are still in the process of reaching maturity, and maturity is not something that can be measured by age, so

college students cannot be forced to become adults in a short time. It takes sufficient process and experience to change themselves. The diversity of opinions in specifying the boundary of adult age is caused by the absence of a standard that can be used accurately to determine the limit of human maturity (Ghufron, 2016, p. 323). Even people in their 50s are still involved in conflict.

Even so, this behavior has made the role and function of college students as a moral force and social control not working. When college students should be able to mediate those who is in conflict, they are also involved in fanwar and it is not uncommon to influence other fans with their words because many of them are big accounts with large followers. According to Gillin and Gillin, social control is:

*Social control is the system of measures, suggestions, persuasion, restrain and coercion by whatever means including physical force by which society brings into conformity to the approved pattern of behavior, a subgroup or by which a group molds into conformity its members.*

College students with their ideas and knowledge have a role in maintaining and improving social values and norms in society. College students should be able to lead their fellow friends to not getting involved in fanwar, because it is not suitable to the pattern of behavior approved by the community, as Gillin and Gillin said, unfortunately cannot carry out their functions properly and end up getting involved in fanwar as well.

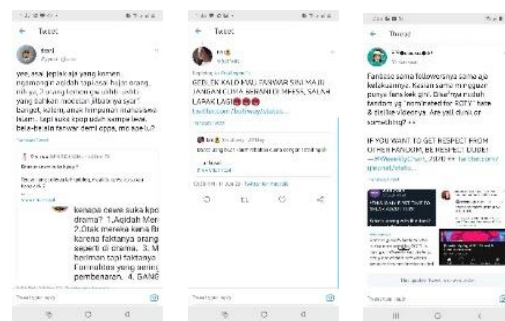
Regarding haters, Shield argued that haters are related to psychological problems, so that they must also be overcome by using a psychological approach. In fact, according to Sorokowski, et al in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020, p. 3), haters on the internet have the potential to become psychopaths. This can be seen from the results of their research which states that:

*Results showed that the strongest predictor of hating online comments was*

*the Psychopathy subscale ( $\beta = 1.37, Z = 2.69, p < 0.001$ ), whereas the Scale of Envy was close to reaching the statistical significance ( $\beta = 0.67, Z = 1.91, p = 0.056$ ). (2020, hlm. 3)*

These results may not be surprising, because psychopaths are identified by impulsive attitudes and sensation-seeking behavior (Paulhus and Williams, 2002 in Sorokowski, et al, 2020, p. 4). Hence, high levels of impulsivity can encourage impatient behavior, such as expressing negative and derogatory attitudes/opinions towards someone or something that is evaluative, but, at the same time, does not constitute constructive criticism.

However, in fanwar, there is a difference between college students and teenagers or children when arguing. Teenagers or children usually speak up their disagreement by relying on harsh words, while college students talk about other scientific matters related to fanwar, not only relying on harsh words. But, even so, it doesn't mean that college students never look down on their opponents during fanwar, they sometimes even use their knowledge to insult their opponents. So, it seems that they misuse the knowledge they have.



**Figure 4.** Few college students that getting involved in fanwar.

When social disintegration happens, it is necessary to make various efforts to minimize it, which is by improving the social skills of fanwar actors. Social skills are the ability of individuals to communicate effectively with others both verbally and nonverbally by the



situations and conditions that exist at that time, where these skills are learned behaviors. As stated by her research Ines, et al (2020), which is:

*Social skills in conflict resolution become important for the younger generation to give the aspects of communication / relationships between individuals, cooperation and conflict resolution are aspects that need to develop, so differences of opinion can end peacefully. (p. 26)*

That statement is in line with the statement of Mu'tadin (2006) which states that one of the developmental tasks that must be mastered by adolescents who are in the development phase of middle and late adolescence is to have social skills to be able to adapt to everyday life. These social skills include the ability to communicate, build relationships with others, respect yourself and others, listen to opinions or complaints from others, give or receive feedback, give or receive criticism, act according to applicable norms and rules. When facing fanwar, fanwar actors tend to be selfish and think as if they are the most correct and do not accept the opinions of others. They do this because they have their own interests, which is to protect their idols or want their idols to be the greatest among the others

So, to solve this problem, one of them is to developing an attitude of wisdom. According to Sahrani et al (2014), wisdom is defined as an individual's intelligence in using his or her mind, based on experience and knowledge; at the same time with integrating thoughts, feelings, and behavior; as well as a willingness to self-evaluate, in assessing and deciding on a problem, to create harmony between individuals and the environment. Meanwhile, Clayton and Birren (in Ardelt, 2003, p. 15) said it consists of three aspects called three-dimensional wisdom, which is cognitive, affective, and reflective. The cognitive aspect shows the ability to understand life and interpret a moment deeply which is related to intrapersonal and interpersonal. Next, the reflective aspect is very important for the

development of the cognitive dimension, showing an understanding of life, self-awareness, without subjectivity, projection, and selfishness. The affective aspect consists of positive feelings and behaviors towards others and the absence of negative feelings and behaviors.

In addressing fanwar, with an attitude of wisdom, harmony between K-Popers on Twitter can be realized if this attitude is successfully applied. There will be no more fighting parties just because of different idols and different opinions. If this continues, social disintegration among K-Popers can also be eliminated.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

For college students, the positive impact that can be received from doing fanwar is that their debating skill can increase because of fanwar. This is because fanwar contains debates between fans, so those who do fanwar are expected to be able to argue well so that they don't lose easily to their opponents. Besides that, there is a feeling of relief because they had conveyed what they wanted to convey to haters, even though it had to be in a harsh form. Even so, fanwar also has a negative impact, it can cause a broken friendship if it is caught by other friends who are not involved in fanwar. Those who are fanwar actors will be considered noisy and immature by their friends because they are college students but still get involved in fanwar. Thus, fanwar also causes the friendship of each K-Popers to become compartmentalized. Not to mention that there are provocateurs that makes each fandom attacks each other, that's why do not conclude that everyone in a fandom is bad too soon. Because, if this continues to be allowed, social disintegration will arise between K-Popers on Twitter eventually

The social disintegration that happens in K-Popers on Twitter itself applies to those with different fandoms, especially if those fandoms often fight with each other. However, when there are external factors that attack them, then K-Popers on Twitter team up to fight those factors. Besides that, social disintegration in K-

Popers can be minimized by developing a wise character in each individual. With wisdom, there will be no more disharmony between K-Popers just because of different opinions and different idols.

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