

# A Study on the Psychological Healing Effects of Korean Learners through K-POP Club Activities

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the positive effects of psychological healing in Korean language learners through participating in K-POP club activities. As the reasons for learning Korean are becoming more diverse, the learner-centered education is gaining much attention. We conducted real-time classes and surveys to verify if participating in the K-POP club activities brings more positive impacts in learning Korean. The survey results indicated that not only the participants felt psychological stability through club activities, it also improved their peer relationships among the learners and it enhanced their Korean language skills. Additionally, the learners felt a strong desire to recommend the club activities to other learners. The study confirmed that club activities have a positive effect on Korean language learners.

**Keywords** Korean language learning, Language education and healing, K-Cultural education and healing, Club activities, experience of activities

## INTRODUCTION

As the interest and curiosity about Korea is keep increasing around the world, the number of learners coming to study in Korea is also increasing rapidly. Since learners' have diverse goals and motivations to learn Korean, there are discussions to come up with effective teaching methodologies for learners are constantly continuing.

By examining the learner's motives for learning Korean, it was revealed that the Hallyu Wave is the number one factor behind the expansion and the demand for Korean language at present. It has began to be called as the Hallyu Wave in the late 1990s, and from that period the number of foreigners in Korea who wanted to study Korean because of Hallyu Wave is keep increasing. Accordingly, the contents of the Hallyu Wave are diversified and the scope keeps expanding. However, the level of difficulties in classrooms reduce the learners' motivation to learn and makes them lose interest. Also, the psychological anxiety while learning a foreign language negatively affects the learning process. For example, limitations in Korean proficiency may lead to poor academic abilities and traumas.

Teaching the learners using Hallyu(Korean) Wave content is important, but to check the difficulties experienced by the Korean learners and to take necessary steps to help them overcome the difficulties by providing effective classes are also equally important.

With the spread of the Korean Wave, the popularity of K-POP is also expected to continue, and it is time to study about educational methods using K-POP.

There is a need for Korean language education strategies which will increase the interest and give emotional stability through learning Korean. The foreign language education should not be pursued only for knowledge acquisition. Therefore, I would like to utilize K-POP club activities which can be lead by learners themselves.

Long Zhu, & Huang, Haiying(2019) revealed that the K-POP club activities of Korean students in China had a positive effect on "expansion of experience, expansion of relationships, and expansion of knowledge." K-POP club activities are one of the creative activities that will help increasing the intimacy between the learners. They can help each other and develop self-direction through the process of collaboration.<sup>1</sup>

As prior research suggests, students demonstrate a higher level of language absorption when they are immersed in or exposed to a new language, or when their motivation to learn the language is high.

This study focuses on the psychological healing effects of Korean learners through K-POP club activities. I would like to conduct a real-time class and testify the hypothesis through a survey.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 1. Survey Overview

A survey was conducted on Korean language learners at a Korean language institute in Korea.

The K-pop club activities consisted of weekly 50-minute sessions over the course of 10 weeks. The K-pop songs were selected based on a preliminary survey, where learners

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indicated the songs they wanted to learn, and the final selection was made to ensure the songs were appropriate for educational purposes. After learning the choreography, students recorded videos showcasing their dance performances. Additionally, they prepared for a talent show stage, where they were encouraged to collaborate and communicate with each other without teacher intervention.

**2. Composition of Survey Questions**

The survey was conducted with questions about the respondents' age, gender, duration of learning Korean, motivation for learning Korean, and goals for learning Korean, as well as learning effects and psychological healing through K-POP club activities.

It was intended to measure the positive impact through club activities and the enjoyment and satisfaction felt through the exchanges with other learners and relationship development through club activities.

**3. Survey Execution**

The survey was conducted via Google Form in June 2023. A total of 75 learners have been participated, and the students who missed more than three club activities were excluded from the survey.

In addition to the survey, in order to supplement the limitations of the study, we added a question that allows the learners to freely describe what they felt through the club activities. It was said that if the learner do not have an opinion, they do not have to write it, and it is not a mandatory question. Accordingly, 20 out of 68 respondents were found.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated using JAMOVI to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of all questions was .707 or higher, indicating

the good reliability. These results suggest that the questionnaire was reliable and consistent. Excluding the open-ended questions, all survey items used a 5-point Likert scale.

**RESULT**

**1. Basic information about respondents**

A survey was conducted on learners who participated in K-POP club activities. The responses to the basic survey of Korean learners are presented in <Table 1>. The gender of the respondents were male (4, 5.9%) and female (64, 94.1%). The response rate of the age group 20s were the highest (53, 77.9%), followed by teens (12, 17.6%) and the 30s (3, 4.4%). The Korean proficiency level of the respondents were in the order of intermediate (36, 52.9%), beginner (23, 33.8%), and advanced (9, 13.2%) level.

The nationalities were relatively diverse such as Russia (20, 29.4%), Japan (14, 20.6%), China (11, 16.2%), Myanmar (8, 11.7%), Indonesia (4, 5.9%), Malaysia (3, 4.4%), Vietnam (3, 4.4%), Kazakhstan (3, 4.4%), Mongolia (1, 1.5%), and Belarus (1, 1.5%).

The most common motive for learning Korean by the respondents was academic purpose (34, 50%). The next motive for learning Korean was for hobby purposes (25, 36.8%). The purpose of employment was around (9, 13.2%). Finally, they were asked to choose any two K-culture that the learners were interested in, and in which K-POP (68, 50%) ranked the highest. K-DRAMA (34, 25%) followed next and after that respondents selected K-FOOD (29, 21.3%) and K-FASHION (5, 3.7%).

Through the respondents' basic information, it can be inferred that learners who are currently studying Korean in Korea are very much interested in K-CULTURE. Therefore, it

**Table 1.** Respondent information

	Division	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	5.9%
	Female	64	94.1%
Age	Above 10	12	17.6%
	Above 20	53	77.9%
	Above 30	3	4.4%
Korean Proficiency	Beginner	23	33.8%
	Intermediate	36	52.9%
	Advanced	9	13.2%
Nationality	Russia	20	29.4%
	Myanmar	8	11.7%
	China	11	16.2%
	Indonesia	4	5.9%
	Malaysia	3	4.4%
	Mongolia	1	1.5%
	Vietnam	3	4.4%
	Belarus	1	1.5%
	Japan	14	20.6%
	Kazakhstan	3	4.4%
Learning Purpose	Academic	34	50%
	Employment	9	13.2%
	Hobbies	25	36.8%
K-culture	K-POP	68	50%
	K-DREAMA	34	25%
	K-FOOD	29	21.3%
	K-FASHION	5	3.7%

\* Since the survey is targeted to learners who participated in K-pop club activities, we chose two K-culture, keeping in mind that K-pop will be ranked first.

**Table 2.** Psychological Changes and Mental Healing Correlation of Learners through K-POP Club Activities

Division	N	Average	Standard Deviation
10. Did you start studying Korean because you liked Korean culture?	68	4.32	.871
11. Do you think club activities help you improve your Korean skills?	68	4.34	.840
12. Can you get to know Korean culture well in Korean class?	68	4.01	.872
13. Has the anxiety about learning gone away through the K-pop club?	68	4.71	.575
14. Did you get healed through the K-pop club?	68	4.76	.550
16. Did your K-pop club time help you understand Korea?	68	4.32	.871
17. Did you get closer to your friends while you were in the K-pop club?	68	4.35	.707
18. Do you want to introduce K-POP club classes to other friends?	68	4.41	.738
Total	68	4.4025	.753

suggests that activities to experience K-CULTURE are necessary.

**2. Experience with Korean culture and psychological effect**

The results of investigating the psychological change and healing correlation of learners through club activities are presented in <Table 2> 13, 14, and 17. The mean and standard deviation of each response are as follows.

(13) Anxiety about learning were disappeared through K-pop club activities (M: 4.71, SD: 0.575) (14) K-pop club activities have healed the mind (M: 4.76, SD: 0.550), and (17) intimacy among friends have increased through K-pop club activities (M:4.35, SD:0.707).

These results revealed that the K-POP club activities have led to the disappearance of anxiety in learning and improved the healing effect of the mind through K-POP club activities. However, since the results appear differently depending on the learner, further research is needed to supplement them with qualitative research to find the effective results.

In the short answer question, they answered that their interest in learning Korean have increased and their confidence have increased through studying Korean. It can be said that it had a positive psychological effect while learning Korean.

During the talent show preparation and video recording, students were guided to prepare independently through peer communication without teacher intervention. This process fostered communication among the learners, leading to improved confidence and observable positive outcomes.

Based on the research results, the K-POP club activities can improve the communication skills and give a psychological healing effect.

**3. Learning effect**

The results of the survey to confirm the learning effect are presented in Table 2, 11, 16, 18, and Table 3 15.

Before conducting this study, the listening and speaking skills were considered as most difficult parts of Korean

**Table 3.** Improve Korean language skills through club activities

15. What has improved your learning ability and given you a healing effect of your mind through club activities?	N	%
Listening	34	50.00
Reading	1	1.47
Speaking	25	36.76
Writing	1	1.47
Word	5	7.35
Pronunciation	2	2.95
Total	68	100.0

language classes. And the learners were asked to write down the reason for their difficulties, the learners responded that they hesitated to speak in class because they thought they would make mistakes while talking, and that they became very anxious while speaking. However, as shown in <Table 3>, it revealed that the learning ability of learners were improved through club activities in the order of listening (34, 50%), speaking (25, 36.76%), words (5, 7.35%), pronunciation (2, 2.95%), and reading/writing (1, 1.47%). Respondents answered that they felt that their listening and speaking skills improved immensely while having conversations with friends in K-POP club activities. It is evident that it has made psychologically positive changes through club activities. This suggests that the positive effect can enhance the process of learning Korean.

The mean and standard deviation of each response are as follows.

(11) Club activities help you improve your Korean skills (M:4.34, SD:0.840), (16) It helps you understand Korea in K-pop club time (M:4.32, SD:0.738), (18) I want to introduce K-pop club classes to other friends (M:4.41, SD:0.738).

Summarizing these results, K-POP club activities helped to adapt to Korean language skills and life in Korea, and furthermore, it was found that it was a class that I would like to recommend to other learners.

Following are the response to the question, "Please write down about how the K-POP classess helped you to heal psychologically."

The pre-dominant answer to this question was that there were many good sentences in the K-pop lyrics. One of the respondent answered that the K-POP lyrics have healed him. Next, he talked about his concerns with his friends and said that it helped him adjust to his life in Korea. In addition, he said that although the learners' Korean level was different, they were considerate of each other, which helped him to attend the class comfortably.

Although there were various reasons why Korean language education feels therapeutic, the respondents

generally mentioned that learning Korean helps them find emotional stability through K-pop club activities. These responses suggest the possibility that K-POP club activities can help in dealing with problems arising from the mental aspect.

## DISCUSSION

As Korean learners' purpose and motive of learning Korean have become more diverse, the number of learners learning Korean languages are also increasing. So the learners not only learning Korean for communication purpose, they are also learning for hobby interests. Recently, research has been conducted to improve Korean language learners' Korean skills and to examine the heal process through language.

Lim Soo-soo and Cho Hyun-yong (2023) saw that learning Korean can have a psychological healing effect. I saw that it was effective in reducing the psychological problems experienced by middle-aged and elderly learners.<sup>2</sup>

Ye-In Heo, Ji-Hye Ji, Jae-Yeong Han, Hyun-yong Cho(2024) conducted a survey to explore the healing effects of Korean learners. The results proved that there is a positive correlation between language learning and mind healing.<sup>3</sup>

Song Bong-woon (2023) conducted a survey of Korean language majors in Myanmar and revealed that they received psychological healing through learning.<sup>4</sup>

Kim Nang-ye (2024) revealed that through K-FOOD, Korean learners can gain interest, heal their psychology, and reduce stress. Also, it suggests that Korean language education is focusing on psychological healing too.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at the results of this study, positive psychological changes were experienced through K-POP club activities, which also helped improve the Korean language skills of the learners. Based on these studies, I would like to make the following suggestions for improving mental healing in Korean language education.

First, we need to take educational measures to increase interaction among Korean learners. Hyun-yong Cho (2024) surveyed learners in Africa and the Middle East and found that most learners answered that Korean learning is effective in healing, and that interaction and cultural education play an important role in healing.<sup>6</sup>

It was revealed that foreign language education emphasizes intercultural ability, which can add a new identity. In addition, it was revealed that they can analyze their own values, beliefs, and behavior patterns through language groups. In other words, interaction can also help language learning. As in 4, we are focusing on psychological healing in foreign language education. The fact that such positive results were found shows that club activities had a positive effect on psychological healing. Negative emotions can be alleviated through empathy among learners. At this time, the role of the teacher is important. The teacher have to assign the tasks and provide feedback during interaction between the learners.

Second, it is necessary to continuously provide activities for learners to act as subjects. In OECD (2019), student

behavioral subjectivity was defined as learner's individual ability, will, and act. In other words, it was seen that active judgment, decision-making, and responsible participation by individuals were necessary to have a positive impact on life.<sup>7</sup> Looking at the purpose of learning a foreign language, it was confirmed that the proportion of learners who are learning for hobby purposes were high. Also, it suggests that there are many learners who choose to study abroad in order to learn the language they are interested in. To maintain this motivation, the learner should be the subject and they should be continuously provided with the activities preferred by the learner so that interest does not deteriorate.

Third, classes related to k-culture should be opened. Due to the Korean Wave, many learners choose to study in Korea. In addition, if learners are used as a medium for learning for what they are interested in, they can actively attend classes and improve their language skills. However, classes that emphasize only Korean culture excessively hinder learners' learning effects, so the process of interacting with other cultures is necessary.

Fourth, we need to conduct classes that can improve language skills and heal learner's minds. You can feel stress and anxiety while studying languages in a foreign country. It insists that we need more classes that can enhance the psychological healing effect in the future.

This study did not conduct k-pop club activities for treatment purposes, but the survey was conducted among the 68 Korean learners who were participated in k-pop club activities.

Through the questionnaire, it was confirmed that there is a psychological healing effect among the learners. In the future, Korean language education also needs education methodologies that focuses on healing. This study is meaningful in that it has verified the psychological healing effect as well as language through K-POP club activities. It is expected that more specific research results can be obtained if more clinical trials are conducted on learners who are learning Korean for treatment purposes in the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Not applicable

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicting financial interests.

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