

---

## THE MAGIC ROLE OF KIM NAM JOON AS A LEADER OF BTS IN CONQUERING THE AMERICAN MARKET

---

**Iin Rachmawati**

STKIP PGRI Bangkalan

Email: [iinrachmawati85@gmail.com](mailto:iinrachmawati85@gmail.com)

---

### ABSTRACT

Bangtan Sonyeondan or popularly known as BTS is a South Korean phenomenal group. The massive popularity of BTS all over the world cannot be separated from the magic role of their leader, Kim Nam Joon. This research tried to explore Kim Nam Joon's role in regard to BTS's global popularity. This research used a qualitative descriptive method by using Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theories and styles as well as used Brown's audience involvement approach to analyze the data. The result showed that there are four major reasons for Kim Nam Joon's influence over BTS's success: Kim Nam Joon marked the beginning of BTS, Kim Nam Joon's compassion and dedication, Kim Nam Joon's powerful speech, and Kim Nam Joon's leadership role towards teamwork. Moreover, there was also the fact that several non-BTS American fans tend to become ARMY after they knew about Kim Nam Joon's leadership role. This is interesting because not all BTS's fans become ARMY from enjoying BTS songs and performances.

**Keywords:** *American Market; Audience Involvement; BTS; Kim Nam Joon; Leader of BTS; Leadership*

### Article information

**(Filled by Editorial Management)**

*Received: 20 June, 2022*

*Revised: 26 August, 2022*

*Accepted: 30 August, 2022*

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v9i2.75588>

Available at <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/rubikon/article/view/75588>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

---

### INTRODUCTION

It can't be denied anymore that the phenomenon popularity of BTS (*Bangtan Sonyeondan* or Bulletproof Boy Scout) in America has massively increased through the years. Since their debut 'I Need You' in 2015, BTS has continued their global success all over the world including in America. The fact said that the American market has known as the most difficult country for musicians to

penetrate outside of America or the most difficult market in the world for musicians outside America, but BTS proved that they can do it.

As Suryani (2019) said that the success of BTS in penetrating the American market is because of two main reasons: their androgyny physical appearance and messages in their songs about mental health problems and social issues. What is meant by androgyny physical

appearance is about their visualization. As we can see that BTS is a South Korean group that consists of seven members. All those seven members have an androgyny physical appearance with earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, and other feminine accessories, which redefines American traditional macho masculinity. This is what Hartman (2009) stated as the term 'new masculinity'. New masculinity is a kind of 'flower boys' in which boys physically appeared as girls by having no beard, flawless skin, and even putting makeup on their faces (Pham, 2019). American fans can receive BTS music because their songs can represent their life problems. As we know that mental health problems and social issues have become the two top life problems in America, especially for adolescents.

Of course, the popularity of BTS in America is not only about those two reasons, because based on the preliminary study that has been done recently, but it is also found that one essential reason behind the massive popularity of BTS is the magic role of their leader, Kim Nam Joon. What is meant by 'magic role' is the incredible and dominant role of Kim Nam Joon in BTS. He has that powerful role not only for the group members, but also for the company and the fans. Based on the interview done by Metro Style online magazine on 12 September 2021, "RM is an asset for Big Hit Entertainment from the very beginning of BTS debut in 2013 due to his intelligence and his charisma as a world leader. Other than that, RM is the first member of BTS and he attracted ARMY from the first time. He's different from any other K-Pop group's leader and it can be proven from his dominant role that makes BTS become the biggest and the most successful K-Pop group".

Kim Nam Joon is globally known as the great leader of BTS. As said in Esquire's official website (2022), Kim Nam Joon has succeeded in bringing his group to achieve top popularity across the world, including in the American market. History noted that in September 2018, BTS made the headlines to become the first South Korean act to address the United Nations (UN) and Kim Nam Joon played an important role there as he delivered a deep message to the whole world related to their 'Love Myself Campaign' taken from their album *Love Yourself*.

This research is really important to show the world the realization of the soft power of South Korea through its K-Pop product: BTS. BTS has become proof that South Korea has massively and aggressively made promotions about their country (Rachmawati, 2021). It is proof that K-Pop is not only about showing the interactive physical appearance, but also showing original songs, and great culture, as well as promoting a campaign against two most sensitive issues in the world: mental health problems and social issues. And most of all, according to leadership theory by Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016), the role of the leader is truly substantial to give a great influence on a group of people, and this is related to the fact that every group in K-Pop industries always has a leader as the representation of the group's character (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022, p. 342).

Due to that reason, the researcher decides to do research entitled "The Magic Role of Kim Nam Joon as a Leader of BTS in Conquering American Market". It yields the research problem is as follows: "How far does the role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS bring BTS to their global success?"

## **Khan, Nawaz & Khan's Leadership Theories and Styles**

In the context of history, what is called the earliest leadership theories are 'The Great Man Theories', in the late 1800s. These theories mostly defined leadership by the leader's characteristics. The first understanding of leadership is about the fact that leaders were often men with dominant personalities (Yosko, 2017). However, the concept of this leadership has shifted a lot: leadership is not about who the leader is, but it is more about what the leader does.

Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) later argued about the meaning of leadership itself as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". This sentence can also be interpreted as "You are not made a leader by your job title, but you are made a leader by your influence". In contemporary literature, leadership theory has been used in almost every aspect of people's lives. To know about leadership practices, there are practically five main leadership theories: transformational leadership, leader-member exchange leadership, adaptive leadership, strengths-based leadership, and servant leadership.

- **Transformational Leadership**

The concept of this transformational leadership was first brought in the 1970s by James McGregor Burns that identified leadership as transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional happened when a leader influences others by what they offer in exchange, while transformational happened when a leader connects with followers, which can raise the level of motivation and morality. From the eye of business and psychological perspective, this

kind of leadership needs to be learned a lot if they want to influence and impact others.

- **Leader-Member Exchange Leadership**

This leader-member exchange theory explains that in any group, there are always in-group members and out-group members, or like in high school, there are always popular and unpopular students. In the context of business or work, those in-group members are more likely to earn promotion, while out-group members are more likely to leave or stay where they are.

- **Adaptive Leadership**

Adaptive leadership means a style of leadership that need a leader to be adaptable to any kind of situation. A leader is not born successful but can be created based on learnable behavior. Actions rather than just qualities are the focal points of this adaptive leadership style. The actual benefit of this adaptive leadership is that the leaders can learn and decide what actions they want to implement to become good leaders. Thus, it allows them to be flexible, efficient, and adaptive based on their circumstances. Task-oriented leaders and people-oriented leaders are two main leader characteristics of this adaptive behavioral leadership.

- **Strengths-based Leadership**

This strengths-based leadership suggests that leaders are born. Leaders have innate traits and skills to make them become great leaders. These are considered to be things that cannot be taught or learned. But there is criticism related to this kind of leadership: even though someone has the quality to be a good leader since he or she was born, it still needs to be

learned practically how to become the best leaders.

- **Servant Leadership**

When it comes to servant leadership, it is like talking about participative leadership skill. This kind of leadership suggests the team needs to be directly involved in the decision-making. The role of the leader here is to facilitate communication among all teams, take all the suggestions, and then come up with the best possible action. Thus, this servant leadership leads to serving the needs of the team, it thus is the kind of leadership that is mostly liked by the team members because they can be involved directly in the decision-making process.

### **Audience Involvement**

According to Brown (2015), involvement is a dynamic process that connects media consumption and co-producing through what is called mediated interaction. This kind of involvement needs several essential processes as follows:

- **Transportation**

This involves individual involvement with narratives. Moreover, the transportation process is not limited to the readers, but it can also focus on the viewers, listeners, or even the recipients. In short, audiences are involved in the narrative world.

- **Parasocial interaction**

This is a typical imaginary interaction between audiences or viewers and figures or in other words, this is also involved an interpersonal aspect. In this process, the audiences feel that their interaction with the media is real.

- **Identification**

Cohen (2001) once said that identification involves unification between oneself and other people. During the process, the audiences forget about themselves and transform into other people, then internalize their point of view. Identification is categorized as a temporary process but it can be long-term behavioral changes if the audiences repeat other people's identity capture.

- **Worship**

Brown stated that this worship consists of 3 different celebrity worships: low-level worship (an individual is attracted to celebrities), medium-level worship (an individual or audiences feel that they have personal relationship with celebrities, and high-level worship or mild pathological (those audiences believe that their relationship to celebrities is reciprocal due to excessive imagination). The last worship is considered to be dangerous because it can make celebrities feel disturbed and not comfortable with their fans.

Besides that process of involvement, there are also five audience involvement dimensions as follows:

- **Cognitive**

This dimension reflects how far the audiences give attention and reflects the meaning of the media content.

- **Affective**

This dimension tells us about how far the audiences react interpersonally to a message or character in the media.

- **Behavioral**

This dimension reflects on how far the audiences talk about media message with other audiences.

- **Referential**

This kind of dimension gives insight into how far the audiences relate media messages to their personal experience.

- **Critical**

The critical dimension is about how far the audiences are involved in the media message construction. According to Sood & Rogers (2000), the audience can reconstruct the television program by giving suggestions for a plot change.

Furthermore, there are so many researches that had been discussed and also related to this research. For example, there is research under the title “Analyzing the Reasons for the Global Popularity of BTS: A New Approach from a Business Perspective” by Parc & Kim (2020). This study has the purpose to analyze BTS as the center of the growing popularity of the Korean pop music industry. This research tried to see the popularity of BTS from the perspective of egocentric strategies as well as sophisticated consumer-oriented strategies.

Moreover, there is also a study proposed by Lestari & Irwansyah (2020) with the title “Participatory Fandom of Army BTS Indonesia in the Digital Comic on Webtoon Apps”. In general, this research has told us about culture exchange brought by the K-Pop industry through BTS. Specifically, this research tried to look closer at patterns of fan participation with different categories in utilizing the digital comic application as fandom media.

Then, the third research was conducted by Hermanto & Salindeho (2021) entitled “Analyzing the Impact of BTS on Resolving the Problem of Youth Mental Health”. In this study, readers have given new perspectives about some forms of BTS activities to help reduce mental health problems such as through BTS lyrics, UNICEF x BTS social campaign, as well as public responses.

The difference between all of the other researches with this research is about the object focus of the research itself. If the other researchers above see the popularity of BTS through some perspectives, this research tried to see the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS who brings BTS their global popularity today. Furthermore, this research also only focuses on Kim Nam Joon and his great influence on his team members.

This research will use qualitative as the research design since it will discuss more the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS who brings BTS their global popularity today. As Moleong (2005: 6) said about qualitative research that it is considered to be research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, etc. holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, on a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods.

In qualitative research, the more in-depth and excavated the data obtained, it can also be interpreted that the better the quality of the research. The data in this research will be described in detail by using the descriptive method from the perspectives of the audience involvement approach and leadership theory (Adhitya, Rosmawati & Fainnayla, 2022, p. 69).

This research will mostly use the data taken from some online sources (including official websites, fanbase websites, and official and fanbase social media on Instagram). This data has been taken from the period of January – June 2022 due to the researcher's interest in exploring the role of the leader of BTS ever since there is still no research exploring this perspective. This research has not had any respondents, but only use some important and related comments from those social media.

The analysis of the data aims to find out about the magic role of Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS to his team members as well as the one who brings BTS their global popularity today. At first, the researcher has taken all the data needed relating to the global success of BTS from some online sources. Then, the researcher tried to relate the data findings with the leadership theory through the audience involvement approach determined at the beginning of the study.

## **DISCUSSION**

Over the years, the world has shown us a lot of great and amazing leaders out there including the names like Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Theresa, Queen Elizabeth II, Jack Ma, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Barack Obama, Joe Bidden, Mark Zuckerberg, and many more. They came from several fields of technology, politics, economy, and business. As Yoonhee (2022) states in her article entitled "BTS Kim Nam Joon: The Great Leader of the Millennial Era, Why He's Chosen and The Moments He Used his Cards on the Members", there is one more leader who is worthy enough to get the attention from the world that did not come from any business or political background. It is worldwide known that since BTS's debut in

2013 up until now, Kim Nam Joon has created a path for other BTS members to connect with international audiences, especially American audiences, through his powerful communication skills. And not only that kind of fact that makes him become a great leader for the millennial era, but also his ability as the team's leader, he's always succeeded to manage them close during difficult times. Kim Nam Joon also marked the beginning of BTS, thus basically he was the internal symbol of how the idea of BTS began in the very first place.

Kim Nam Joon was born in 1994. In BTS, Kim Nam Joon has been known as RM or Rap Monster due to his ability in doing the rap part. Later, the Army has known Kim Nam Joon as the leader of BTS. He was born on 12 September 1994 in Dongjak-gu, Seoul, South Korea. He was known as the first member of BTS and he got the position as the main rapper, songwriter, and record producer. He is also known as the spokesman of BTS as his English is very good. He learned English from a US TV Series called 'Friends', even Nam Joon mentioned 'Friends' as his English parents, as he ever stated in some interviews in the U.S., like in Ellen Degeneres' show and during break rehearsal at Grammys 2021.

In the Korean entertainment industry, it is usual for K-Pop groups to have a leader as the representation of the groups' characters. In addition to their music and their performance, the leader of K-Pop groups leads a substantial part to communicate with the media and fans about their groups' activities and future planning (Benneth, 2014). The main role of this leader of the group is to maintain good relationships among team members as well as to be the representation of the group to the world.

For ARMY, Kim Nam Joon is popularly known as a young man whose words of wisdom never fail to inspire fans from all around the world. He inspired countless ARMY to love themselves, to be brave to speak up, and never give up. Based on the theory stated by Brown (2015), the relationship between ARMY and BTS is regarded to be in the stage of low to medium level of worship which makes the fans not only attracted to their idols but also feel that they have a personal relationship with their idols. During the process, those fans forget about themselves and transform into other people and internalize their point of view so that they identified themselves to have that personal relationship with their idols.

Throughout the past nine years since BTS first debuted, Nam Joon's leadership has shone in many ways as he unfailingly guides, helps, and motivates his team members to give their best in every performance. These are the reasons why BTS can get big success in the USA market (Cruz, 2021). His team members also called him RM, not just an abbreviated of 'Rap Monster', but also an abbreviated of 'Role Model' as he always listens to his team members, also he always speaks for the fans. One example of his snippet of speech can be seen through his remarkable words at the launch of Generation Unlimited at the UN General Assembly on the last 24 September 2018, as follows:

....but I am still an ordinary, 24-year-old guy. If there's anything that I've achieved, it was only possible because I had my other BTS members by my side, and because of the love and support of our ARMY fans. Maybe I made a mistake yesterday, but yesterday's me is still me. I am who I am today, with all my faults. Tomorrow, I might be a tiny bit wiser, and that's me, too..... After releasing the

'Love Yourself' album and launching the 'Love Myself' campaign, we started to hear remarkable stories from our fans from all over the world, how our message helped them overcome their hardships in life and start loving themselves. These stories constantly remind us of our responsibility. Find your name, find your voice by speaking yourself. I have many faults and I have many more fears, but I am going to embrace myself as hard as I can. And I'm starting to love myself, little by little. So, speak yourself!

What the agency wanted to show can be easily seen through what's been said by the leader of the group. As can be seen in BTS, Kim Nam Joon has always great influence on the whole members, including what they need to do, and what they have to say or do. As the leader of the group, Kim Nam Joon is also known as the spokesman of the group as his English is very good. During their debut in the U.S at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards, Kim Nam Joon played his magic role as the spokesman of the group, to tell the world about who BTS is and their success in winning Top Social Artist at that time and soon they become the first K-Pop act to be nominated a Grammy (taken from Billboard news, accessed on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022).

This fact is in line with the statement from Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) about his leadership theory of 'you are made a leader by your influence'. Related to Korean culture in general that still having high respect for age and seniority, those who's chosen to be a leader to certain groups are the oldest one (Bilsky & Schwartz, 2009). That is not the case for Kim Nam Joon. Kim Nam Joon has selected to become BTS leader not because he is the oldest member in the group, but he's chosen because of his brilliance, his compassion, his dedication, his ambition, his

charming behavior, his creativity, as well as his charisma (Yoonhee, 2022).

This kind of compassion and dedication can be clearly seen through the old time when BTS almost disbanded due to budget issues that their agency faced. Through that difficult times, Kim Nam Joon is managed to bring them to stick together and convince them to pull through as stated by one member, Kim Taehyung about his leader:

Nam Joon takes care of and is very good for every single of the member. When the members have any worries, Nam Joon will text the member personally in a private message. If not, he will look for them and speak personally to them, giving them some opinions and reminders.

Moreover, as what's been said by Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) through his leadership theory that 'leadership is not about who the leader is, but it is more about what the leader does', this is actually what Kim Nam Joon does to BTS throughout these years. What the future of BTS looks like, and what it will be most remembered for, remains more of an unknown — especially to the group itself. As the leader stated in March 2022:

When our history is over, it'll be clearer. When the dust settles and we come down from our pedestal, we'll be able to tell. At the moment, we're standing in the eye of the cyclone. I don't think we or anyone else can accurately say anything.

From that short statement, at least everyone can look at his powerful words and controlled emotions. During the first BTS debut, Kim Nam Joon was only in his early 20s, but the way he spoke and communicated to the audiences already seemed like he was a world leader (Jenkins, 2013). He has the power to silence the audiences and listen to what he said. There are several proofs taken

from American ARMY's comments in Instagram account related to Kim Nam Joon's powerful speech as follows:

This is the time where BTS say goodbye to their old selves to start a new journey again. Only old Armys knows about this that's why I'm bringing it up again. It's just sad and I can't deny that I cried so hard while watching this but one thing I realized is that, there's no permanent in this world. We all know that there will become a time that BTS will gonna say goodbye to us too. I just can't imagine how sad their last concert will be. I know that will be the most hurtful thing that will happens in our life but we also need to accept that they're also humans. They deserve to be happy, deserve to meet their partners, get married, and deserve to have their own family. After all they almost spend half of their life's to us, so let them do what they want. Let them have a life they deserve and be happy for them. They've come so far and I'm so proud of them. After all the hard work and sacrifices they do, they deserve everything what they have right now. I won't regret and I will never regret stanning them, the best group with the best leader. (@jooniescups, 14 May 2022).

You are so intelligent with words, very well spoken!! It's hard!! You are a great leader, rapper, dancer, speaker and human being! I love you and Army loves you!! Thank you for your wonderful speech! You and BTS have made history and will stay in the hearts of millions forever!!! Thank you!!! God bless you all!!! (@conniemorris453, 14 May 2022).

I'm stanning RM as the best leader of all time. He never failed to make us cried a lot with his touching words. What he did for BTS is beyond wonderful. He's the one who makes BTS like we see today. BTS is nothing without their great leader. (@btsarmy\_baby\_army, 15 May 2022).



His presence and his ability to silence the entire stadium as they listen to his words. (@armybangtan3334, 15 May 2022).

The fact that I've watched his speech multiple times and I am still awe struck. This is what you call impact. The amazing impact of RM to us. He's the one that makes me wanted to become a great leader someday. He's my greatest inspiration. (@alondr\_amoreno, 15 May 2022).

His powerful speech can be heard through some awards that BTS won, even from the official stage like during the United Nation campaign and in the recent time when BTS has been invited by Joe Biden (The President of the USA) on 31 May 2022. His speech at the White House can be seen on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGoF1Iaj868>, uploaded by the Asian Mania channel on 1 June 2022. The snippet of the speech is as follows:

Hi, we're BTS and it is a great honor to be invited to the White House today to discuss the important issues of anti-Asian hate crimes, Asian inclusion and diversity. We thank President Biden and the White House and for giving this important opportunity to speak about important causes, reminding ourselves of what we can do as artists" (RM). "Today is the last day of AANHPI Heritage Month. We joined the White House to stand with the AANHPI community and to celebrate" (Jin). "We were devastated by the recent surge in hate crimes, including Asian-American hate crimes. To put a stop on this and support the cause, we would like to take this opportunity to voice ourselves once again" (Jimin). "We are here today thanks to our ARMY: Our fans worldwide who have different nationalities and cultures and use different languages. We are truly and always grateful" (J-Hope). "We still feel surprised that music created by South Korean artists reaches so many

people around the world, transcending languages and cultural barriers. We believe music is always an amazing and wonderful unifier of all things" (Jungkook). "It's not wrong to be different. The quality begins when we open up and embrace our differences" (Suga). "Everyone has their own history. We hope today is one step forward to respecting and understanding each and every one as a valuable person" (Taehyung). "Finally, we want to thank President Biden and the White House for giving us this valuable opportunity to speak out on important causes; and remind ourselves of what we can do as artists. Once again, thank you very much" (RM).

Kim Nam Joon got his first turn in giving a speech and he also closed the speech with excellent English, while other members speak in Korean. As we can see from the speech above, every time he speaks, he keeps his emotions in control and choose his words carefully, also he keeps just enough sprinkles of passion to make his words more meaningful. And the most essential thing is that Kim Nam Joon never speaks for himself, because as the leader of the group, he managed to speak for the company, the group, and also for their loyal fans.

Furthermore, as what is said by Yoonhee (2022) about Kim Nam Joon's notion: 'team work makes the dream work'. This notion is clearly understood by Kim Nam Joon as he always tries his best to make every member of BTS involved in every situation. Even in a big situation like when they have to make speech about anti-Asian racism and discrimination in the White House in May 2022, Kim Nam Joon always gives opportunity for all the members to speak their opinion even though he is known as the most eloquent speaker of the

group. When his team members are too nervous to speak up, Kim Nam Joon always there to back them up, translate and convey the message the members wanted to tell. He always tries to make sure that every BTS voice is being heard and respected.

There is also another big reason about the influence of Kim Nam Joon as the leader behind the global success of BTS today: that is about his ability to put himself both as a leader and as a friend to his team members. There is a time when Nam Joon is really a real friend to his team members when he makes fun and jokes to other BTS members during ‘Run BTS’ or during their everyday life. Even there were also times when some BTS members making a lot of fun of Nam Joon and he just seems to voluntarily give up. But there are also times when BTS members need their leader, and this is the moment when he used his leader card to put the group in order (Yoonhee, 2022).

Among the five Khan, Nawaz & Khan’s leadership theories, it can be concluded that Kim Nam Joon offers four out of those five leadership theories: transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, strength-based leadership, and servant leadership. Transformational leadership happened when a leader connects with followers, which can raise the level of motivation and morality. Kim Nam Joon takes a great role in terms of making a connection through his communication ability which increases the group’s motivation and morality to stay connected to each other to make better performance and to be bigger than before. In other words, he always becomes the person who can connect his group members to stay motivated and stick together during every situation through his compassion, his charming behavior as well as his charisma.

This kind of transformational leader will usually have four basic abilities: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized concern (Northouse, 2016). Kim Nam Joon has four of those criteria to become a transformational leader for BTS as stated in People’s Magazine’s article:

... every time BTS RM speaks, he keeps his emotions in control. Also, he understands the notion that as a leader, he doesn’t only speak for himself. As BTS leader, he represents the company, the group, and the entire ARMY fans.

Then, it is about adaptive leadership that can be seen through Kim Nam Joon’s leadership role. As what’s been said by Khan, Nawaz & Khan above that there are two main leadership characteristics of adaptive behavioral leadership: task-oriented leadership and people-oriented leadership. If we look at Kim Nam Joon’s leadership role, it is seen that if there’s a problem with the team members, a task-oriented leader will look at the process to see if something needs to be adjusted with the workflow. And a people-oriented leader will look at the individuals and go right to them, asking what the issue is (Northouse, 2016).

When it comes to seeing conflicts among the team members like what’s ever happened to Kim Seokjin and Kim Taehyung, Kim Nam Joon will look at the problems and investigate the whole process. The way he did it can be considered as solving the conflict through a task-oriented perspective. And he also did a people-oriented perspective through the way he goes to each member individually and decides the best solution as he said: “It’s not about Jin or V or RM, it is about BTS, and we will make it as BTS”.

Strength-based leadership leads to the suggestion that leaders have innate traits and

skills to make them become great leaders. But still, even though Kim Nam Joon was born to be a great leader with his determination, charisma, and intelligence, he still feels that he needs to learn a lot to raise his ability to become a better leader for BTS. Kim Nam Joon understands that leaders are unable to come from the shadows, they are either chosen or not. High levels of ambition and determination are needed to be the most eloquent leader and it is no doubt that Kim Nam Joon has this kind of criteria as an eloquent leader.

Last but not least is the definition of servant leadership or which is later called participative leadership. Kim Nam Joon has been known to implement both servant or participative leadership and power leadership. This kind of leadership suggests team members need to be directly involved in the decision-making. The role of the leader here is to facilitate communication among all members, take all the suggestions, and then come up with the best possible action. The benefit of this leadership that Kim Nam Joon tries to do is that his team members feel more engaged and motivated because they are involved in the decision-making process. Still, based on Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theory, Kim Nam Joon tends to hold both positional power and personal power over his relationship with BTS members. Sometimes he played the role of the main leader that makes the group order, and sometimes he also played the role of an individual who also needs suggestions and creates a closer relationship with the team members.

In relation to Khan, Nawaz & Khan's statement, Brown (2015) mentions the transportation aspect in audience involvement theory, it can also be said that the audiences

(in this case known as ARMY) are involved in the narrative world or other words, this transportation aspect needs the involvement of the audiences to ensure the massive success of the group. Also, the para-social aspect is also involved during the process of explaining the relationship between the figures and the audiences. In this process, the audiences feel that their interaction with the media is real even though it is just imaginary interaction. In short, it involves what is called an interpersonal aspect.

And about other five audience involvement dimensions including cognitive, affective, behavioral, referential, and critical dimensions; these dimensions help to reflect how far the fans give attention, react interpersonally, and relate the media messages to their personal experience to create media construction about Kim Nam Joon as a leader of BTS.

What is not included in Khan, Nawaz & Khan's leadership theories is leader-member exchange leadership since at this point, there are in-group members and out-group members. It means that there are members who get more attention than other group members. This is not what happened under Kim Nam Joon's leadership as he always treats all members fairly, there is no reward or punishment just like regularly used in business. One of his principles is about doing everything in the name of BTS, not in the name of Kim Nam Joon or Park Jimin or Min Yoongi or Kim Taehyung or Kim Seokjin or Jeon Jungkook or Jung Hoseok. This is because there is no drop of superiority in every word he speaks or arrogance in how he behaves toward others.

According to Khan, Nawaz & Khan's strength-based leadership theory, Kim Nam

Joon also becomes a great leader because he always returns everything back to the ARMY as their loyal fans during every speech, especially in concerts. One great example can be seen as follows:

Through this Love Yourself Tour, I'm finding how to love myself. I didn't know anything about loving myself. You guys [ARMY] taught me. Through your eyes, your love, your tweets, your words, and your everything, you guys taught me and inspired me how to love myself. It is our mission to define our way of loving ourselves. It's never intended but it feels like I'm using you guys to love myself. So, I want to say one thing: please use me. Please use BTS to find a way to love yourself. Because you guys taught me how to love myself everyday. (BTS RM during Love Yourself Tour, 2018).

Kim Nam Joon's statement went viral since that day and inspired tons of people especially many adolescents all around the world to love themselves. For instance, a BTS fan Ghelani wrote this in July 2022 that explained how she was inspired by Kim Nam Joon to be a better leader, to be a qualified leader.

This Love Yourself era became an intrinsic part of who BTS are and the message they represent. As a leader RM moved his fans by acknowledging how difficult it was for him to find ways to love himself. He showed me that in order to truly love others, it was important to love myself first. This is the integral part of what it means to be a leader. As authentic as RM is, he also thoroughly believes in himself which makes those around him feel confident in his ability to lead. This motivated me to re-evaluate my journey of self-love; which I believe will ultimately make me a more genuine and honest leader.

Kim Nam Joon is a great leader, and the ARMY always associates him with the whole of BTS. There is no BTS without Kim Nam Joon. His speeches always touch all people's hearts who listen, as we can see through his statement below:

Everyone's afraid of changes. Staying, moving on, staying, moving on. We are repeating the same things again and again. I guess that's life, I'm afraid. Old or new, new or old, that isn't really important. What's important is, that we still breathe and live in the same place. So, let's move on. If someday in your life, our existence or our music, our performance, or our photos and videos if they can help you a little bit. If your pain is at 100 and we can lower it to 99, 98, or 97.. even if that's all we can do, that's enough to value our existence. (Nam Joon's ending part on their song 'Moving On').

## **CONCLUSION**

In short, it can be concluded that actually, Kim Nam Joon is a type of an unlikely role model. He is a young figure who redefined what it means to be an intelligent and impactful leader. Furthermore, to truly lead a movement of change, it is imperative for people to care and have compassion for others they represent and work with (Keesing, 2007). As mentioned above that Kim has inspired many people out there to use self-love and advocate for the people around us so that we may continue to influence them positively as a strong leader. His figure is not only seen as a great leader for BTS, but also known as one reason why many American non-BTS fans fall in love with his leadership role who's then becoming ARMY after that. This is all because of his positional power as well as personal power to lead BTS to finally reach

their global success in America and around the world.

## REFERENCES

- BANGTANTV. (2018). *Answer: Love myself*. UNICEF. (2017). *Love Myself*. LOVE MYSELF. <https://metro.style/people/celebrities/kim-namjoon-rm-bts-birthday-tribute-2021/31232#:~:text=Throughout%20the%20eight%20years%20since,Bangtan%20Boys%20respect%20him%20too>
- Benneth, L. (2014). *Tracing textual poachers: Reflections on the development of fan studies and digital fandom*. Routledge.
- Bilsky, W & Schwartz, S. H. (2009). Values and personality. *Eur J Pers*, 8(3), 163-181. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2410080303>.
- Ghelani. (2020). How Kim Nam Joon, RM of BTS, taught me to be a better leader. *Linkedin*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-kim-namjoon-rm-bts-taught-me-better-leader-grishma-ghelani>.
- Hartman, A. (2009). What is culture? Raymond Williams and the cultural theory of 'customary difference'. *New Left Review*, 55, Jan/Feb 2009. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii55/articles/francis-mulhern-culture-and-society-then-and-now.pdf>.
- Hermanto, L. & Salindeho, M. (2021). Analyzing the impact of BTS on resolving the problem of youth mental health. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan*, 5(2), 33-41. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36312/jisip.v5i2.1801>
- Hutauruk, Y. G. & Salamah, U. (2020). Factors influencing youth audience involvement (A study on BTS fans who follow @army\_indonesia Instagram Account). *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 9(2), 125-134. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jki.v9i2.12774>.
- Irwansyah. & Lestari, A. F, (2020). Participatory fandom of Army BTS Indonesia in the digital comic on Webtoon apps. *Journal Communication Spectrum: Capturing New Perspectives in Communication*, 10 (1), 46-57. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36782/jcs.v9i1.1872>.
- Jenkins, H. (2013). *Textual poachers: Television and participatory culture studies in culture and communication*. Routledge.
- Keesing, R. (2007). *Theories of culture*. Institute of Advanced Studies. Australian National University.
- Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A. & Khan, I. U. (2016). Leadership theories and styles: A literature review. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*, 16, 1-7.
- Libero, C. (2021). Nam Joon stage name stands for "role model". <https://metro.style/people/celebrities/kim-namjoon-rm-bts-birthday-tribute-2021/31232#:~:text=Throughout%20the%20eight%20years%20since,Bangtan%20Boys%20respect%20him%20too>.
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Sage Publishers, Inc.
- Parc, J. & Kim, Y. Y. (2020). Analyzing the reasons for the global popularity of BTS: A new approach from a business perspective. *JIBE (Journal of International Business and Economy)*,

21(1), 15-36. **DOI:**  
**10.51240/jibe.2020.1.2.**

Rachmawati, I. (2021). *The soft power of South Korea*. DeePublish Publisher

Suryani, A. N. (2019). Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) as New American Idol. *Rubikon: Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 6 (1), 28-54.  
**<https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v6i1.61489>**.

Yoonhee, L. (2022). BTS Kim Nam Joon or RM: The great leader of the millennial era, why he's chosen and the moments he used his cards on the members. *KpopPost*.  
**<https://www.kpoppost.com/what-makes-bts-kim-namjoon-rm-the-great-leader-of-the-millennial-era-why-hes-chosen-moments-he-uses-his-leader-card/>**.