

K-Dramas as Cultural Bridges: Analyzing Their Influence on Pakistani Viewers

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Abstract

This research analyzes the increased popularity of Korean dramas (K-dramas) among young Pakistani audiences and the impact that these dramas have had on consumer behavior, cultural relevance, and promotion of cultural participation. Based on the Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura, the study examines the way an audience views, imitates, and internalizes values and behaviors that are exhibited by K-dramas. Qualitative data were obtained by semi-structured interviews with 25 female participants aged 18-25, and analyzed using NVivo 15 thematic analysis. The discussion revealed four themes, which included cultural resonance, Korean product and practice adoption by the consumers, language learning and visiting South Korea aspirations. The results indicate that the K-dramas have a great appeal to the Pakistani viewers as they share some common values, including family bonds, respect for older generations, and modesty. Meanwhile, they serve as cultural intermediaries, motivating the audience to learn about Korean beauty products, food, and entertainment. K-dramas also contribute to people being interested in learning the Korean language and visiting South Korea. These

observations contribute to existing debates on the interplay of global media flows with local cultures and how they transform them.

Keywords: K-Dramas, Cultural Bridges, Globalization, Cultural landscape, Adaptation, and Observational Learning.

1. Introduction

The globalization of media has changed cultural landscapes across the world. Media globalization enables the interaction and influence of various cultures as different cultures introduce each other to new languages, customs and traditions (Pha & Lhe, 2022). This phenomenon is best illustrated by the increasing popularity of Korean dramas (K-dramas) on various international streaming websites such as Netflix. Over the past two decades, South Korea's cultural exports have become a global sensation. Korean dramas, or K-dramas, now reach audiences well beyond their original viewers. They have gained popularity in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia, mainly through streaming platforms (Jin, 2024).

In Pakistan, K-dramas have become popular among young viewers, especially women aged 18 to 25 (Saleem et al., 2023). This popularity is part of Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, which includes Korean music, food, fashion, language, and media content (Samosir & Wee, 2023). Studies also show that K-drama consumption in Pakistan increased with the use of digital streaming platforms, especially after 2020 (Iftikhar & Ali, 2025). Still, more research is needed to understand how Pakistani viewers relate to Korean culture and adopt some of its elements in their everyday lives.

The growing popularity of K-dramas in Pakistan can be credited to the greater accessibility of various online streaming platforms like Netflix, Viki, Amazon Prime during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bhatti et al, 2022). While in lockdown, people were searching for new forms of entertainment and fresh content, and during this time, K-dramas became a popular choice for them because of their unique approach to storytelling, availability of various genres, and cinematography (Bhatti et al, 2022; Naseer, 2022). During the pandemic, different online platforms like Netflix have made the availability of global content more accessible to Pakistani viewers; this allows them to

explore different international content, including K-dramas, which were less accessible before.

Moreover, the features available on these platforms to watch global content with subtitles and dubbing eliminated language barriers for viewers, making it easier for them to enjoy Korean content (Bhatti et al., 2022). This has led to an increased interest in watching Korean Content among Pakistani viewers. As a result, K-dramas have become an important part of media consumption among young Pakistani viewers. Their influence is not limited to entertainment. Previous studies show that K-dramas have also created interest in Korean fashion, beauty products, food, and language among Pakistani audiences (Sughra et al., 2022; Khan, 2024). This makes it important to understand how foreign media content affects local cultural interests and everyday choices.

Although some studies have discussed the popularity of K-dramas and Hallyu in Pakistan, most of them focus on general viewing habits, entertainment preferences, or the overall appeal of Korean media content (Bhatti et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2023). However, less attention has been given to how Pakistani viewers connect these dramas with their own values and how they adopt selected Korean cultural practices in daily life. There is also limited qualitative research on young Pakistani female viewers and their experiences of cultural relevance, product adoption, language learning, and travel interest. Therefore, this study uses Social Cognitive Theory to examine how young Pakistani female viewers observe, remember, and adopt selected cultural elements presented in K-dramas.

2. Research Questions

Following research questions are designed for this study:

RQ1: How culturally relevant are the themes and storylines of K-dramas to Pakistani audiences?

RQ2: How has the popularity of K-dramas influenced the consumption of other Korean cultural products (e.g., music, fashion, food) in Pakistan?

RQ3: Has the exposure to K-dramas led to increased interest in learning the Korean language or visiting Korea among Pakistani audiences?

3. Problem Statement

The increased adoption rate of Korean dramas (K-dramas) on Netflix has had a significant influence on the Pakistani culture. As more and more people are consuming K-dramas, we need to know what are the drivers of this trend and to what extent Pakistani audiences believe that K-dramas are culturally relevant. Additionally, there is a need to investigate the influence of K-dramas on the consumption of the other Korean culture products such as music, fashion, food and language. This study will fill these gaps by exploring how the K-dramas influence the Pakistani viewers and their curiosity towards the Korean culture.

3.1 Argument Statement

The increasing popularity of K-dramas among Pakistani users on Netflix is not a mere trend, but also a sign of other cultural influences. K-dramas' themes and narrative appeals to Pakistani viewers, creating a sense of cultural relevance that sparks interest in other Korean cultural products and a wish to learn the Korean language and travel to Korea. K-dramas not only entertain but also help in creating a wider perception and appreciation of Korean culture in Pakistan

4. Literature Review

Drama history in Pakistan can be traced back to the 1960s when Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) was founded. The initial Pakistani dramas were mostly broadcast on PTV and became an important part of the national culture, representing the traditional family values, social norms, and the historical events (Huma, 2015). As Huma (2015) states, these dramas gained incredible popularity due to realistic depictions of social problems and emotional values. Nevertheless, Pakistani dramas experience a change in audience, as in the 2000s, the appearance of the private channels contributed to the greater commercialization of the content, and the increased relevance of the content to melodrama and sensationalism (Khan, 2024). Although

Pakistani dramas still enjoy a loyal viewership, some audiences began seeking fresh and diverse content from international sources.

K-dramas were first introduced in Pakistan around 2016 when Nageen, an Urdu-dubbed version of *Dae Jang Geum* (Korean name of Nageen), was aired on PTV. This was an early attempt to introduce Korean content to local audiences (Bhatti et al., 2022). However, it was during the COVID-19 pandemic that K-dramas became extremely popular in Pakistan and captured the attention of viewers, who were attracted by the fresh storytelling and cultural aesthetics presented in these shows (Bhatti et al., 2022).

The increasing popularity of K-dramas and its influence on Pakistani audiences is a part of greater global phenomenon Hallyu. In 1990, a Chinese journalist invented a term “Hallyu” which means Korean Wave, as he observes the increasing appeal of Korean pop, Korean films and products in China (Korean Culture & Information Service, 2011). Since then, Korea has been exporting its cultural items, music, and food, across various countries and this phenomenon comes under the term of Hallyu (Pha & Lhe, 2022; Saleem et al., 2023).

Netflix began spending heavily on creating Korean content and contributed significantly to the marketing of Korean content globally in 2016. It has since transformed the production of Korean dramas as it produces country-specific and localized original content (Park et al., 2022). In so doing, it positions itself among the biggest platforms to produce and distribute K-dramas worldwide (Song, 2020; Kim, 2020). Netflix contributed to the popularity of K-dramas in the study by Challapalli et al. (2021) reported that a majority of the participants watched K-dramas on Netflix rather than local content. Netflix has been offering subtitles and dubbing of Korean dramas to viewers who do not understand Korean, making them more accessible (Barra, 2013; Bhatti et al., 2022). This has enabled K-dramas to reach a significantly broader global audience (Saleem et al., 2023).

Over the past years, we can see that K-dramas do not only entertain but also affect the shopping habits and cultural attitude of the viewers. Various researches indicate that K-dramas contribute to audience interest in Korean cultural products. The depiction of Korean food and fashion in such dramas

can often encourage viewers to travel and buy similar products (Park and Lee, 2019; Pha and Lhe, 2022). Likewise, Cayaban et al. (2023) discovered that there is an apparent rise in consumer interest in Korean products after they are featured in K-dramas. These results demonstrate the significant role K-dramas play in influencing the consumer preferences and behaviors of viewers.

K-dramas contribute to the marketing of Korean food, as a usual trend, movies and TV shows expose audiences to the food of the country they are located in (Chan, 2007). Traditional Korean dishes such as bibimbap, kimchi and ramyun are commonly used in Korean dramas and usually attract the attention of the audience. As Pha and Lhe (2022) observed, the visuals of these dishes make people feel like trying Korean food by going to restaurants or even by making the recipes at home.

As noted in a study by Sughra et al., (2022) a large number of young viewers have become interested in the language they speak in K-dramas, which prompts them to learn some common phrases and expressions of that language. This cultural trend has led to the enrollment in language learning apps and classes being provided in the Korean Language. Korea has become one of the most popular tourism spots, according to Teh & Goh (2016), Korean drama has also contributed to the booming growth of tourism in Korea. Though Korean drama did not directly influence the overall level of tourist satisfaction, it functioned as a cultural platform where tourists orient themselves with the destination, prior to traveling to the destination (Ordoyo et al., 2021; Teh and Goh, 2016).

As K-dramas are gaining popularity among Pakistani viewers, they are not just consuming the entertainment but also engaging with Korean culture through food, language, fashion, and beauty products (Saleem et al., 2023). This cultural influence demonstrates how the media can transcend geographical borders and it is a medium of inter-cultural communication (Gatchalian et al., 2023). The rising popularity of K-dramas in Pakistan shows that media consumption patterns are changing. People are becoming more interested in international stories and themes. There is need to explore the impacts that these trends could have on local cultural identities in Pakistan.

5. Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura assumes that one's learning occurs by observation and we can change our behaviors by modeling the observed behaviors and social interaction. The main premise of SCT is that people learn to act and think in certain ways by observing others, what Bandura called "models" (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1986), learning is the result of interactions between behavioral, environmental, and personal factors.

5.1 Observational Learning

Observational learning is one of the core concepts of Social Cognitive Theory (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). It suggests that people can learn new behaviours and incorporate attitudes by observing other people (Bandura, 1986). When Pakistani audiences watch K-dramas they not only get entertained but they also learn about the social behaviour, customs and values portrayed by characters in Korean dramas. K-dramas act as symbolic models that Pakistani audiences observe by watching. These dramas allow the viewers to acquire behaviours, and cultural norms by watching the characters that exhibit these elements (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). For Instance: K-dramas portray Korean lifestyle, products, fashion and culture which may influence Pakistani viewers to adopt similar behaviours or develop interest in Korean culture.

5.1.1 Modeling

Individuals copy behaviors demonstrated by others (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). K-drama characters serve as powerful models, showcasing behaviors, attitudes, and values that viewers can imitate. There are four processes involved in modeling that are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1986; Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). Each of these processes can be applied to K-drama consumption:

5.1.2 Attention

For modeling behavior, one must pay attention to the action (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). K-dramas grab viewers' attention by providing them with unique content. Viewers pay attention to the behaviors depicted in K-dramas

like use of specific Korean beauty products and they try to use the same product.

5.1.3 Retention

The viewed behaviour must be remembered (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). When viewers watch a specific act or behaviour which catches their attention that specific content remains in their mind. Retention may also occur when viewers repeatedly watch episodes, follow related content on social media, or discuss storylines with peers, reinforcing their memory of cultural elements.

5.1.4 Reproduction

The ability to copy the remembered behavior is called reproduction (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). This involves adopting Korean fashion styles, learning Korean language phrases, or copying specific behaviors because of their portrayal in K-dramas.

5.1.5 Reinforcement

It is the perceived benefits of adopting a new behavior that is socially acceptable (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). For instance, if a viewer gets compliments for dressing like a K-drama-inspired type, or using a specific Korean product they will be more inclined to do this again.

5.2 Environmental Influences

Environmental influences refer to external factors in an individual's social or physical environment that impact learning and behavior (Zhou & Brown, 2015). For K-dramas consumption these environmental influences can include the availability of media, the social context of viewing, and cultural settings. Platforms like Netflix act as enabling environments by providing easy access to Korean dramas for Pakistani audiences. The constant exposure to Korean culture through these dramas creates a setting where viewers can repeatedly observe and learn from the behaviours, language, and values portrayed in the shows (Zhou & Brown, 2015).

The physical and social environments in Pakistan, which share some cultural similarities with Korea (e.g., emphasis on family values), make it

easier for audiences to accept and integrate Korean cultural practices. These shared norms act as a facilitator for cross-cultural learning and adaptation (Bandura, 1998). Pakistani viewers might see a character in a K-drama performing traditional Korean greetings with respect. The repeated portrayal of such behavior in an environment that values respect for elders (a common cultural value between Pakistan and Korea) motivates viewers to adopt these greetings or emulate similar respectful behaviour.

5.3 Self-Efficacy

The second concept of SCT is self-efficacy, which refers to the extent to which an individual perceives his or her capacity to execute a particular behavior (Zhou & Brown, 2015). While analysing the impact of self-efficacy, Bandura (1986) notes that this function increases motivation and persistence, and successfully changes the set behavioural patterns. In the context of K-drama viewership, audiences who consider themselves competent to decode Korean culture are more likely to adopt certain elements shown in K-dramas, such as trying Korean outfits or learning the Korean language.

5.4 Vicarious Learning

Viewers learn by observing the consequences of others' (Baran & Davis, 2015, p. 173). It emphasizes the fact that people do not have to be involved in an activity to learn that activity, but they can acquire information through observing the behaviors of other people and the outcome (Bandura, 1986). This idea is especially applicable to media studies because people tend to imitate the actions taken in films, television series, and content on the internet. Vicarious learning is useful in explaining how the Pakistani viewers can learn about the Korean culture through K-dramas without having to know it first.

Viewers become familiar with the cultural practices by observing the presentation of Korean greetings, eating habits, and traditional clothing on the screen. When these cultural traits are depicted in a positive manner, they become more preferable and viewers are motivated to embrace them. When a K-drama character has positive results of a certain behavior, the viewer will tend to learn the behavior. As an example, when a K-drama character acts kindly or generously and this results in good social relations, the viewers might be motivated to follow the same behaviors in their lives.

In this study, SCT is used to understand how Pakistani viewers learn from K-dramas through observation and selective adoption. The main concepts of SCT, including attention, retention, reproduction, reinforcement, self-efficacy, and environmental influence, help explain how viewers notice Korean cultural practices, remember them through repeated exposure, and adopt selected elements in their own lives. Therefore, SCT provides a useful lens for analyzing the study's themes, including cultural resonance, cultural adaptation, language learning, and travel aspiration.

6. Method

6.1 Research Design

This study used qualitative research, an interview approach to investigate the influence of K-dramas on Pakistani audiences. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection because they allowed participants to share their views in detail while also giving the researcher flexibility to ask follow-up questions related to cultural relevance, consumer adoption, language learning, and travel aspirations.

6.2 Sample Size

A total of 25 female participants, aged 18 to 25, were interviewed for this study. This age group was selected because young women in this age range were more active K-drama viewers in the available sample. Arnett (2000) also explains that young adulthood is a stage where people are more open to new social and cultural experiences. During data collection, similar responses started appearing after the 19th interview. To make sure that no major new idea was being missed, six more interviews were conducted. Therefore, the final sample of 25 participants was considered sufficient for the qualitative scope of this study.

6.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used because the study required participants who had direct experience of watching K-dramas. The participants had to be female viewers aged 18 to 25 and must have watched at least two K-dramas in the last four months. This helped ensure that they had recent exposure to K-dramas and could share their views about cultural relevance, Korean products, language learning, and travel interest.

6.4 Data Collection

Participants were selected through university groups and social media posts, and data was collected between November and December. Participants were given the option of selecting the time and location for their interviews. Interviews were conducted both in-person and online (Zoom/Google Meet) based on participant's preference and availability. Each interview lasted 20–30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded with participant's consent and notes were also taken to ensure accurate data collection. The recorded interviews were transcribed for data analysis.

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were given utmost priority. The information about the purpose of study was provided to the participants. Participant's consent was taken to ensure their voluntary involvement in the study. Moreover, the audios were recorded with their approval. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by not using participants' real names in the study. Participants were also allowed to withdraw from the interview at any stage if they felt uncomfortable.

6.6 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which helps identify and report patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo 15 was used to organize the interview transcripts and support the coding process. First, the audio recordings were transcribed, and each interview file was added to NVivo 15.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Firstly, the transcripts were read more than once so that the responses could be understood properly. After this, repeated ideas were marked and coded. Most of these ideas were related to cultural relevance, Korean products, language learning, and travel interest. In the third phase, similar codes were grouped into broader themes using parent and child nodes in NVivo. For example, "Cultural Adaptation" was developed as a parent theme, while "Fashion," "Food," and "Music and Entertainment" were developed as child themes. In the fourth and fifth phases, the themes were reviewed, refined, defined, and named according to their relevance to the research questions. In

the final phase, the findings were written with the support of participant quotations, thematic maps, and word clouds generated through NVivo.

7. Findings

Through thematic analysis 4 main themes were identified along with 9 subthemes. 1) Relatable Themes of K-dramas (i) Family Ties (ii) Respect for elders (iii) Hospitality (iv) Friendships (v) Festival Celebrations 2) Cultural Adaptation (i) Beauty and Skincare Products (ii) Fashion (iii) Food (iv) Music and Entertainment 3) Language Learning 5) Desire to travel Korea

7.1 Theme 1: Relatable Cultural Themes

This theme reflects the SCT concept of attention. Participants were more likely to engage with K-dramas when the storylines contained values that felt familiar, such as family ties, respect for elders, hospitality, and modesty. These familiar cultural values made K-dramas more meaningful and increased viewers' attention toward the characters and narratives. This theme emphasizes that the relationship between Korean dramas and Pakistani viewers is created through similar values and relevant stories.



Figure 7.1 Mind Map of Relatable Cultural Themes

7.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Family Ties

This sub theme deals with the cultural parallels that the participants see between the Korean Dramas and the Pakistani family relationships. According to the participants, family meetings, support of family members to

each other are a common theme in K-dramas. The participants believed that these traits resemble their own cultural values and that this builds a feeling of familiarity since the same values are present in the Pakistani culture.

One of the participants claimed that in both cultures, the focus on family is enormous. You find that in K-dramas characters are always concerned with the happiness and well-being of their family and that is something we appreciate here as well.

7.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Respect for elders

Respect towards elders in K-dramas is similar to Pakistani culture, which the participants find acceptable. Both the Korean and Pakistani cultures have values like respecting the elders and hospitality that are deeply rooted in them. Korean dramas have characters who usually make an extra effort to respect their seniors. In addition, participants observed that honorifics are employed in K-dramas, like oppa (elder brother) and noona (elder sister) which is also common to Pakistani culture since they also use honorifics to address their elders. One participant mentioned that the respect element was quite familiar. We respect the elder in our society, and so do the Koreans with words such as oppa and noona. That really appeals to me.”

7.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Hospitality and Modesty

This sub theme explores how the K-dramas depicted hospitality and modesty as part of Korean culture, which was relatable to the participants in their cultural practices. The portrayal of hospitality in K-dramas including receiving guests, serving meals and being hospitable was similar to Pakistani hospitality as observed by participants. One of the participants mentioned that their focus on hospitality is one. In K-dramas, there is always food or tea when one visits a home just as we have it in our culture.

7.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Friendships

Participants also related to the friendships shown in K-dramas. They said that these friendships often show loyalty, care, and support during difficult times. This made the dramas more relatable for them. One participant shared, “An aspect that resonates with me the most about K-dramas is female friendships or just friendships in general. I think that they are very heartwarming and wholesome.”

7.1.5 Sub-theme 5: Festival Celebrations

Participants also connected with festival scenes in K-dramas. Chuseok reminded some of them of Eid and Pakistani weddings because both cultures value family gatherings, rituals, and celebrations. One participant said, “Their festivals and traditional celebrations seem to be quite similar to ours such as Chuseok that reminds me of our Eid traditions. Their appreciation of rituals and their pride in culture is very similar.”

7.2 Theme 2: Cultural Adaptation

This theme is related to how participants copied or tried some things they saw in K-dramas. Many participants noticed Korean skincare, fashion, food, and entertainment through drama characters. Later, some of them tried these things in their own lives, such as using Korean skincare products, wearing Korean-inspired clothes, trying Korean food, or listening to K-pop. This shows that K-dramas did not only entertain them but also influenced some of their everyday choices.

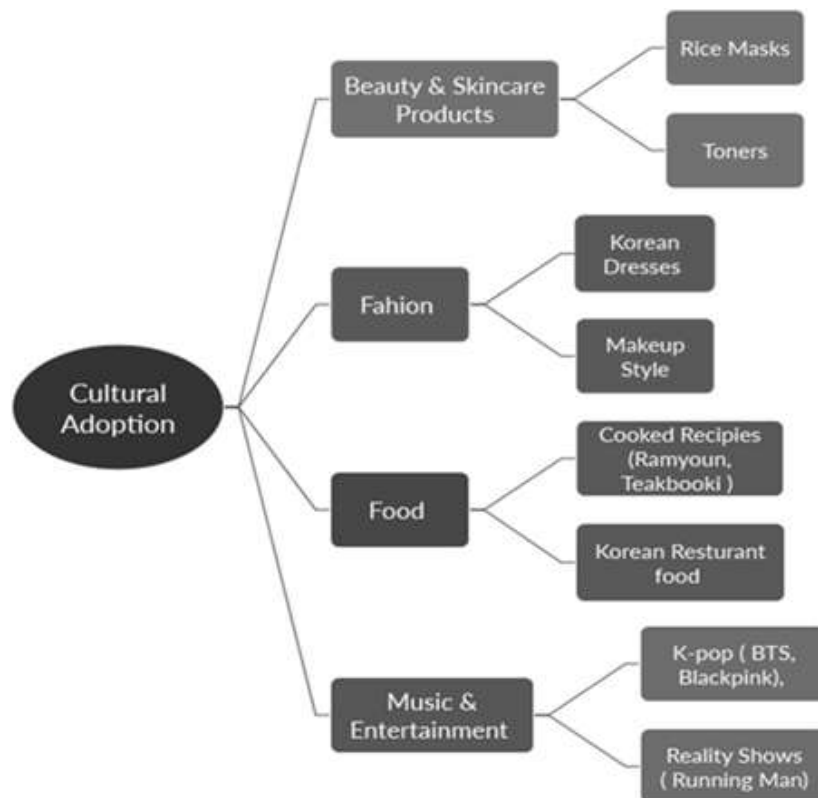


Figure 7.2 Mind map of cultural adoption

7.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Beauty and Skincare Products

The participants were strongly influenced by the image of ideal Korean beauty and skincare activities depicted in K-dramas. The characters often have transparent and radiant skin and beauty routines have been perfectly blended in the dramas that leave viewers intrigued. Most interviewees reported using Korean face masks and toners. One of the participants mentioned using Korean sheet masks and toners.

7.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Fashion

The representation of Korean fashion in the K-dramas made the participants adopt modest and stylish designs. The participants were fond of how Korean fashion emphasizes on modesty, layers, toned colors and shape. This was consistent with the Pakistani values and easy to adapt. The majority of the respondents indicated that K-dramas have directly influenced the wardrobe choices they make. One of the respondents said that even her wardrobe has changed; now she wears more neutral colors and modest styles.

7.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Food

The consumption of Korean food is another aspect of cultural adoption. Traditional Korean dishes are featured in the popular K-dramas. As a result of these portrayals, viewers become interested in Korean food. Korean food including ramyun, kimchi, bibimbap, and tteokbokki were frequently mentioned by participants. They mentioned that they tried these recipes at home or visited a Korean restaurant to eat these dishes. One participant shared “I’ve been to Korean restaurants here in Lahore. I’ve tried bibimbap, kimbab, and Korean fried chicken. I also love making ramyun at home”

7.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Music and Entertainment

K-dramas act as a gateway to exposure in the Korean entertainment industry, which includes reality shows and K-pop. Many participants shared that they started listening to K-pop majorly BTS after watching K-dramas. Participants shared that they listen to various K-pop groups including Blackpink, EXO, Twice and Infinite. One participant shared “The first drama I saw had two Infinite members so from there I found Infinite and I listened to a lot of K-pop as well.”

Participants also shared that they watch Korean reality shows as well which includes Running Man and The Return of Superman. One participant shared “After watching a few dramas, I got curious about K-pop. Now I’m a fan of BTS and EXO. I’ve also started watching reality shows like The Return of Superman and Running Man. They’re so entertaining.”

7.3 Theme 3: Language Learning

This theme can be linked with retention and reproduction. Through repeated exposure to Korean dialogues, subtitles, and common expressions, participants remembered basic Korean words and phrases and attempted to use or learn them through apps and online tutorials.

Participants shared that they prefer to watch k-drams with subtitles and as a result they’ve picked up some words such as *annyeonghaseyo* (Korean greeting) and *Saranghae* from these dramas. Also, most of the participants shared that they used Duolingo App or tutorials on social media apps (YouTube and Instagram) to learn Korean language. One Participant shared “I’ve picked up a few phrases from dramas, and I’ve even tried using language apps. I wouldn’t say I’m good at it, but it’s fun to learn basic words.”



Figure 7.3 Word Cloud of responses of language learning question

7.4 Theme 4: Desire to Travel Korea

This theme can be linked with vicarious learning of SCT. Participants said that K-dramas increased their wish to visit South Korea. The cities, food,

resemble familiar life situations. These findings suggest that K-dramas appeal to Pakistani viewers because they offer both familiarity and difference. The Korean setting, language, fashion, and lifestyle feel new, but the family-centered values make the dramas relatable.

These findings can also be understood in relation to Pakistani media consumption patterns. Pakistani dramas have traditionally focused on family relationships, social issues, domestic conflict, morality, and emotional values (Huma, 2015). These themes are familiar to local audiences, but participants' responses suggest that K-dramas offer a different viewing experience through fresh storytelling, visual appeal, diverse genres, and character development. This does not mean that Pakistani viewers reject local dramas. Rather, K-dramas seem to provide an alternative for viewers who want emotionally engaging content that is culturally relatable but less repetitive in plot and presentation.

The appeal of K-dramas also reflects cultural hybridity. Participants did not describe Korean culture as something they wanted to copy completely. Instead, they selected elements that could fit within their own lives, such as modest fashion, skincare, food, respectful behavior, and family-centered stories. This shows that viewers interpret foreign media through local values rather than accepting it passively (Kraidy, 2006).

K-dramas also introduced many participants to Korean cultural products, including K-pop, beauty products, fashion, food, and entertainment. As Kim (2018) found, global viewers of K-dramas often become interested in K-pop, which shows a connection between different Korean cultural products. In this study, some participants also moved from watching K-dramas to exploring Korean music, reality shows, skincare, and food. This suggests that K-dramas can act as an entry point into the wider Hallyu wave.

The viewing habit of K-dramas influenced some participants to explore Korean beauty products. Some viewers said that they tried Korean skincare products such as sheet masks, serums, and toners. This is consistent with Osman and Ismail (2022), who found that exposure to Korean popular culture influenced the purchase of Korean products. Son and Kijboonchoo (2016) also found that the Korean Wave affects cosmetic consumption habits.

However, this influence also raises a critical point. The attraction toward Korean beauty products may increase cultural curiosity, but it may also shape beauty standards and consumer desires among young viewers.

Participants also mentioned some changes in their clothing choices. Some liked the simple, elegant, neutral, and modest styles shown in K-dramas. This shows selective adoption because they did not copy Korean fashion completely. They chose only those styles that matched their own modesty, comfort, and social setting. Food was also mentioned by many participants. Dishes such as ramyun, kimchi, bibimbap, kimbap, and tteokbokki made them curious to try Korean food. Some participants tried these dishes at restaurants or at home. This shows that K-dramas influenced not only viewing habits but also small everyday choices.

The study also found that Pakistani viewers showed interest in the Korean language. Participants mentioned learning basic words and phrases through subtitles, repeated dialogues, apps, and YouTube tutorials. Sughra et al. (2022) similarly found that Pakistani audiences who actively consume Korean media content tend to adopt Korean words and phrases in their speech patterns. However, the language learning reported in this study was mostly basic. This shows that K-dramas may create interest in the Korean language, but deeper learning requires more formal effort.

The desire to visit South Korea was another important finding. Many participants described South Korea as a dream destination and mentioned places such as Seoul, Jeju Island, and Han River. This finding is consistent with Teh and Goh (2016), Ordoyo et al. (2021), and Pablo et al. (2022), who found that K-dramas can influence destination image and travel intention. The desire to visit South Korea also demonstrates expectations of outcomes and self-efficacy and indicates that media has the potential of influencing cognitive and practical involvement (Bandura, 1986). These findings highlight how international entertainment can be used as a cultural exchange tool and influence attitudes, preferences and behaviors.

The findings can also be linked with soft power. K-dramas create a favorable image of South Korea through stories, characters, visuals, food, fashion, language, and tourist places. This influence is not direct or forceful.

It works through attraction and repeated exposure. Nye (2004) explains soft power as influence through attraction rather than coercion, while Jin (2024) argues that digital platforms have strengthened the role of Korean popular culture in South Korea's global image-building. This is how K-dramas create soft power through entertainment.

Social Cognitive Theory helps explain these findings through observation, retention, and reproduction. Participants first observed Korean characters using skincare products, eating Korean food, speaking Korean words, and visiting different places. With repeated viewing, these practices became familiar to them. Some participants later tried selected elements in their own lives, such as Korean skincare, food, fashion, or basic Korean phrases. This supports Bandura's (1986) view that people can learn by watching models and may repeat certain actions when they find them meaningful or rewarding.

This influence is not completely simple. K-dramas help Pakistani viewers learn about another Asian culture, but they can also shape beauty choices, shopping habits, and lifestyle goals. The interest in Korean food, fashion, skincare, and travel may also help local businesses that offer Korean-inspired products or experiences. At the same time, it creates pressure for Pakistani media. If young viewers feel that local dramas have repeated plots, they may look more toward foreign content for new stories and better visuals. In this way, K-dramas support cultural exchange, but they also show that local media needs more variety and youth-focused stories.

9. Conclusion

The research highlights the importance of K-dramas in Pakistan and more so among young Pakistani women between the age of 18-25. The unique narration, familiar cultural issues, and the representation of the Korean culture are similar to Pakistan. It discusses the different K-dramas' effects, including aspects that encourage people to view them, including the relatability of the cultural themes, the adaptation of the Korean culture and the need to learn the language and visit Korea. Factors such as family suggestions, social media edits, peer recommendations, and the original plots of these dramas compel the audience to watch them. K-dramas such as family structure, elders' respect

and modesty are themes that Pakistani audiences can identify with because they are close to Pakistani cultural values. This creates a feeling of identification and justifies their popularity. The research also reveals that the exposure of Pakistani youth to Korean dramas affects them greatly and they have adopted the Korean culture.

10. Limitations & Future Recommendations

This study adds to the existing research on K-dramas and Pakistani audiences. However, there are some restrictions and limitations that need to be mentioned. The research was limited to female viewers only, who are active K-drama watchers, which limits the study since their opinions were not addressed. This restriction will affect the generalizability of the findings to other genders. The study was restricted to the age group of 18-25 years old because this group tends to be more responsive to the global cultural tendencies (Arnett, 2000). Future studies might include more diverse demographics, such as male audiences and older age groups, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the K-drama effect on Pakistani society. Moreover, the sample size of 25 subjects can restrict the generalizability of the findings.

The research applied qualitative techniques (semi-structured interviews) that may also bring subjectivity and limit the extent of quantitative analysis. Therefore, the findings cannot be applied to the wider Pakistani population. Future research can use a larger sample and survey-based methods to measure the influence of K-dramas more clearly. Statistical tests such as correlation analysis or t-tests can also be used. This study focused only on K-dramas, so future studies can also include other parts of Hallyu, such as K-pop and Korean films. The data was collected from urban participants only, so rural viewers may have different media habits and cultural responses. Additional studies might involve the comparison of urban and rural population groups in order to study the regional differences in consumption of K-dramas.

11. Implications & Recommendations

The results of the study have great implications on how the media shapes culture. Findings indicate that international media facilitate intercultural

attitudes by making Pakistani society more familiar with the Korean culture (Saleem et al., 2023; Sughra et al., 2022). The given trend emphasizes the active spirit of cultural exchange in the digital era and shows the great power that the global media has over the life of people. The Pakistani youth are embracing the Korean language, cuisine, fashion and beauty standards in their daily lifestyles. This assimilation of cultures poses some concerns, especially the possibility of overpowering the local customs and beliefs. The inclination to Korean media content can lead to decreased appreciation of local cultures. This can trigger issues of preserving culture. To address this problem, it is important to establish a media space that honours both the global and the local cultures.

To balance globalization without losing the local culture, it is important to encourage the production and consumption of local media content. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider the inclusion of media literacy classes in the curriculum to educate youth about the ability to critically assess various forms of media. This will make them value domestic and foreign cultures. There are also significant economic implications of this cultural trend. The owners of local businesses can take advantage of the increased demand of Korean fashion, cuisine and beauty products which can enhance the economy. It is however necessary to make sure that such economic changes do not compromise local industries

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