



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF KOREAN DRAMA CONSUMPTION ON FEMALE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRIVATE COLLEGES IN CHENNAI.

Dr. M. Sudha

Asst Prof. Mar Gregorios College of Arts & Science, Mogappair, Chennai

L. S. Sugapriyanka

Asst Prof. Mar Gregorios College of Arts & Science, Mogappair, Chennai

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Korean wave, also known as Hallyu, has spread globally, penetrating various industries and captivating audiences beyond South Korea. The focal point remains rooted in media, specifically K-dramas, K-pop music, and K-movies. This cultural phenomenon gained momentum in India, particularly in Northeast regions like Manipur, and significantly expanded during the pandemic. Chennai, a city known for its blend of tradition and modernity, has seen a surge in Korean cultural consumption among female postgraduate students.

Objectives:

1. To analyze the viewing patterns of Korean dramas among female postgraduate students in Chennai.
2. To explore the motivations driving the consumption of Korean dramas.
3. To examine the influence of Korean dramas on cultural perceptions.
4. To investigate the social implications of Korean drama consumption.

Methodology: This qualitative research engaged female postgraduate students through purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in disciplines and viewing habits. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather primary data, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. Data collection continued until reaching saturation, ensuring comprehensive insights. **Major Findings:** Viewing patterns revealed binge-watching habits during the pandemic, shifting to a daily episode routine post-pandemic, primarily in romantic and comedy genres. Motivations stemmed from social influences, stress relief, and curiosity about Korean culture. Korean dramas significantly influenced personal style, skincare routines, fashion choices, home décor, and even food habits. They also impacted the perceptions of men's attractiveness and societal beauty standards. The consumption of Korean dramas fostered stronger interpersonal relationships, influenced communication styles, and shaped relationship expectations among peer groups. **Suggestions:** The study emphasizes the need to recognize the stylized portrayal of characters in Korean dramas and resist internalizing narrow beauty standards. It advocates embracing individuality, understanding the distinction between fictional portrayals and reality in relationships, and prioritizing genuine connections and shared values. It recommends fostering healthier relationship expectations and appreciation for diverse attributes beyond unrealistic standards perpetuated by media. In conclusion, this research sheds light on the profound influence of Korean drama consumption on the cultural, social, and personal aspects of female postgraduate students in Chennai, highlighting the need for a balanced perspective while engaging with media representations.

KEYWORDS : KOREAN Drama, culture analysis, media

INTRODUCTION

The term "Korean wave" has evolved to encompass a broad spectrum of Korean elements, extending far beyond popular culture alone. It now embraces diverse industries such as tourism, beauty products, literature, culinary arts, technology, and fashion. Despite this expansive reach, the focal point of the Korean wave remains rooted in the realm of media. An alternate moniker for this cultural phenomenon is "Hallyu," a term that encompasses all facets associated with Korean culture, including online gaming, melodramas, music, films, and various forms of entertainment. The emergence of the Korean wave, or Hallyu, can be traced back to the mid-1990s, gaining its initial momentum in Beijing, the capital city of China. This surge in popularity is attributed to the widespread acclaim of South Korean movies, sitcoms, and pop music during that period (Lee, 2011, p. 86; Ravina, 2009).

In contemporary times, Eastern popular culture has seamlessly replaced the small screens that were once dominated by Western dramas, movies, and pop music. Notably, Korean entertainment, encompassing K-dramas, K-pop music, and K-movies, has enjoyed immense global popularity over the past two decades, creating a sweeping cultural phenomenon. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become focal points for the growing obsession with K-pop, evident in the increasing fan base. Renowned K-pop groups such as BTS Army and BLACKPINK have amassed substantial followings on social networking sites, captivating fans from diverse corners of the world. This global trend is further reflected in the most highly recommended titles on Netflix India in 2022, where dramas like "GOBLIN" and "Beloved Summer" dominate.

Initially perceived as an Asian-centric trend, the surge in Korean pop culture became recognized as inherently transnational by the late 2000s. Originating with the export of high-quality television dramas (K-dramas), the Korean wave has evolved into a multifaceted cultural phenomenon, permeating the international market through popular music (K-pop), movies (K-movies), animation, and games, as outlined by Jin and Yoon (2017)..

Commencing in the 2000s, owing to limitations on Bollywood content and the presence of Hindi channels, Manipuri households began to witness an influx of Korean dramas and films. The emergence of K-dramas and K-movies on local broadcasting channels marked the onset of Korean media permeating Manipur homes. Furthermore, the availability of affordably priced pirated Korean CDs in the local market facilitated the widespread consumption of Korean media among the Manipuri populace. This trend swiftly transcended Manipur, capturing the fascination of other states in Northeast India, allured by the allure of Korean dramas, films, and music, as highlighted by Kuotsu in 2013.

Notably, Manipur stands out as the epicenter of the Hallyu phenomenon in India, often colloquially referred to as "Mini Korea." According to Kshetrimayum and Chanu (2008), Kuotsu (2013), and Reimeingam (2014), the impact of Korean popular culture is most pronounced among the youth in Northeast India.

The surge of the Hallyu wave in India has been notably propelled by the pandemic, witnessing a substantial increase in followers and enthusiasts of K-Dramas and K-Pop. During the period of strict measures in India last year, individuals turned to Korean dramas as a source of entertainment, leading to a heightened interest in various aspects of Korean culture, including food, cosmetics, and music. The enforced isolation during the pandemic prompted many Indians to explore online entertainment platforms, where they discovered and developed a deep appreciation for K-dramas, providing a sense of connection amid feelings of loneliness and helplessness caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This newfound fondness expanded into a broader affection for all things Korean, encompassing cuisine, jewellery, fashion trends observed in celebrities, the Korean alcoholic beverage soju they consumed, the language they spoke, and the beauty products they endorsed and used.

The younger generation, as highlighted in Kuotsu's work from 2013, tends to emulate the fashion choices and hairstyles of their favourite Korean celebrities. Moreover, they express a desire for the "Korean look" at salons and parlours, and there is an inclination to incorporate the Korean language into their cultural circles. This emphasis on

cultural emulation and language integration serves as a testament to the profound influence of Korean popular culture on the youth in Northeast India, as suggested by these studies.

Korean Culture & Chennai

In the bustling city of Chennai, where tradition harmoniously coexists with modernity, a captivating cultural phenomenon has taken root within the academic corridors of private colleges. Female postgraduate students, driven by intellectual pursuits and a desire for global connectivity, have found a unique form of cultural expression through the consumption of Korean dramas. This research embarks on a journey titled "Exploring the Impact of Korean Drama Consumption on Female Postgraduate Students: A Sociocultural Analysis," with a special focus on students enrolled in private colleges in Chennai.

Review of Literature

Shephali Bhatt, in an article for The Economic Times, shared findings from her study on the Hallyu phenomenon during the pandemic. She noted that India is currently witnessing a distinctive Korean wave encompassing cultural exports like K-beauty and Korean cuisine. While K-beauty is already familiar in India, Korean music and series gained significant traction during the 2020 coronavirus outbreak as people, especially the youth, had more time to explore new content. In contrast to Western media trends shaping Indian pop culture, the Hallyu wave faces a significant linguistic barrier. Bhatt's research revealed a notable increase in the number of individuals in India engaging in learning the Korean language during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Choudhary's study on the Hallyu wave in India emphasized the pivotal role of K-Dramas, which have been warmly embraced by overseas audiences seeking novel experiences. K-Dramas play a crucial part in enhancing people's understanding of various aspects of Korean culture in India, including plots, clothing, and everyday life depicted in these dramas. Choudhary concluded that beyond being visually and auditorily enjoyable, K-Dramas also inspire viewers to crave the foods and beverages featured in the shows. Additionally, K-Dramas and idols have made their mark on social media platforms like Instagram, influencing trends and increasing demand for Korean foods like Kimchi, Ramen, and Soju in Indian markets.

Le and Nhan conducted a study on the factors influencing the global popularity of Korean cosmetics. They identified five key factors affecting skincare product purchasing decisions: pricing, promotion, quality, brand reputation, and psychological considerations. They concluded that Korean skincare products stand out due to their unique qualities, including the significant use of natural components, uncommon chemicals, and innovative formulations not found in other markets.

According to The Times of India, South Korea is anticipated to be a major exporter of popular culture in 2021, with K-dramas setting the trend, followed by the rapid rise of K-pop across East, Southeast, and South Asia. Collaborations between K-culture and food chains have further facilitated the integration of Korean culture in India. The study highlighted the impact of culture on young minds, identifying the K-culture, or Korean culture, as a significant trend among Indian youngsters in 2021.

In a study on cultural proximity and hybridity regarding Korean pop culture in India, it was concluded that cultural proximity plays a crucial role in the appeal of Korean media in India. The study highlighted the cultural connection between Korea and Northeast India, particularly emphasizing the cultural connections in Manipur. The researchers explained that Hallyu's spread in India involves cultural hybridization, where local preferences, such as translating and subtitling in the local language, contribute to the emergence of a hybrid culture.

Shim's study in 2006 focused on the rise of Korean culture in Asian countries and identified the reasons behind the global success of Korean media. She found that Koreans infused their media with indigenous elements in inventive ways, leading to the widespread popularity of everything Korean, including food, music, cosmetics, and fashion, in Asia. Korea transformed itself from a struggling film industry into Asia's dominant film market, challenging the long-standing influence of Tokyo and Hollywood in mainstream culture.

Methodology

Qualitative Research: Qualitative research is a methodological

approach used to explore and understand complex phenomena in-depth.

Objectives

1. To analyze the viewing patterns of Korean dramas among female postgraduate students in private colleges in Chennai
2. To explore the motivations behind the consumption of Korean dramas
3. To analyze the influence of Korean dramas on the cultural perceptions of respondents
4. To examine the social implications of Korean drama consumption

Population and Sample Selection: Inclusion Criteria: Female postgraduate students in private colleges in Chennai. Regular consumers of Korean dramas. Willingness to participate in in-depth interviews.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling to select participants based on the inclusion criteria, ensuring a diverse representation of academic disciplines and viewing habits.

Sample Size: In this research, determination of the sample size was guided by the principle of reaching data saturation. Data saturation occurs when collecting additional information no longer provides new insights or perspectives on the research topic.

By stopping data collection at the saturation point, researcher aimed to ensure the robustness and meaningfulness of the insights gained from our research, providing a comprehensive exploration of the impact of Korean drama consumption on female postgraduate students in Chennai. Thus the sample size of the research is 9.

Primary Data : Primary data was collected from the female students doing their PG

Data Collection

In-Depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to allow for exploration of individual experiences and perspectives regarding Korean drama consumption.

Translation and Transcription: Interviews were recorded after receiving the consent of the respondents. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were anonymized, removing any identifying information. Use thematic coding to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories in the transcripts. Coding were both deductive (based on predetermined categories from the literature) and inductive (emerging from the data).

Findings

To Analyze The Viewing Patterns Of Korean Dramas Among Female Postgraduate Students In Private Colleges In Chennai

The frequency and duration of watching Korean dramas varied based on the specific time period. The majority (8) of respondents initiated their viewing during the pandemic. Consequently, this period was marked by binge-watching habits, with individuals engaging in daily, extended viewing sessions. It was not uncommon for them to complete an entire drama within a span of two or three days.

As we transitioned back to normalcy, there has been a notable shift in viewing patterns. Presently, individuals watch one episode per day, with each episode having a duration of 30 to 40 minutes. This viewing routine has become a daily practice. Holidays lead to binge watching (R9). Notably, the preferred genres during both the pandemic and the post-pandemic period predominantly revolve around romantic and comedy genres (R9). The introduction to Korean dramas came through the influence of friends and YouTube. Friends played a pivotal role in acquainting individuals with Korean dramas, while online platforms like YouTube served as additional channels for exposure to this form of entertainment.

R2: "I began to see only during pandemic and that time it was binge watching now I do that only during my holidays"

R5: "I use to see due to advertisements that use to come in reels, Instagram and Youtube"

R4: "I see it for a whole day... time passes and you will hardly notice"

To Explore The Motivations Behind The Consumption Of Korean Dramas,"

A major of the respondents shared that the driving force emerged in the form of social influences, particularly the desire for acceptance within peer groups (R6). Respondents expressed a keen interest in being embraced by their peers, and the need for shared content to discuss with friends became a compelling factor.

During the pandemic, the primary motivations shifted slightly, with stress relief and entertainment taking precedence (R8). Nevertheless, even as we transitioned out of the pandemic, these factors remained consistent. The respondents continued to find solace and enjoyment in Korean dramas, demonstrating the enduring role of this cultural form as both a source of relaxation and entertainment in their lives.

Respondents exhibited a palpable curiosity about Korean culture, which served as a significant impetus for their engagement with Korean dramas (R9). This curiosity stemmed from a desire to explore and understand the unique aspects of Korean society, traditions, and lifestyle depicted in these dramas. The allure of a different cultural milieu, distinctive from their own, prompted respondents to delve into Korean entertainment as a means of broadening their cultural horizons and gaining insights into diverse societal norms and practices.

R8: “my friends use to see, so I also began to see it”

R5: “All my friends began to see so I also began and I liked it”

To Explore The Influence Of Korean Dramas On The Cultural Perceptions Of Respondents

Enhancing Personal Style and Lifestyle Choices

Korean dramas are renowned for their chic portrayals of fashion and contemporary lifestyles, instigating positive transformations in personal style and daily practices among viewers.

Skincare Revolution: The dramas have sparked a skincare revolution, with a noticeable shift towards natural products like rice-based face gels and the incorporation of rice water for hair growth and facial care (R9).

Fashion Accessories: Viewers have embraced fashion eye blinders paired with stylish hair bands, replacing conventional nighty attire with more casual and modern choices such as t-shirts and shorts (R5).

Footwear Trends: A shift is observed in footwear choices, with the prevalence of furry slippers and the casual use of slippers at home, reflecting the influence of Korean fashion comfort (R5).

Sling Bags in Vogue: The popularity of sling bags has surged, becoming a staple accessory as in K drama (R5).

Use of Indoor Plants: Indoor plants, preferably with delicate foliage, bring a touch of nature indoors. This echoes the connection with nature often portrayed in Korean dramas and adds a refreshing element to the room (R6).

String Lights and Ambient Lighting: Soft, ambient lighting is crucial. String lights, paper lanterns, or pendant lights can create a warm and inviting atmosphere. The goal is to achieve a gentle, diffused glow rather than harsh, direct lighting (R6).

Korean Merchandise Trend: Regular visits to Korean shops, particularly those carrying brands like Miniso, have become a monthly ritual (R4). This includes the purchase of water bottles, pouches, and other items with Korean branding.

Food Habits: After being exposed to Korean dramas, respondents have developed a strong desire to indulge in specific Korean culinary delights (R7). The cravings extend to dishes like ramyeon noodles, a significant choice as these noodles are traditionally enjoyed in the company of loved ones. Additionally, the culinary preferences have expanded to include rice noodles, kimchi, and a heightened appreciation for a variety of Korean soups.

Korean Stores & Restaurants: Notably, respondents are well-informed about Seoul stores that specialize in Korean products, further highlighting their commitment to embracing the Korean culinary experience (R9). This awareness extends beyond home cooking, as respondents are also acquainted with various restaurants in their vicinity that specialize in serving authentic Korean cuisine. The desire to replicate the gastronomic experiences witnessed in Korean dramas has cultivated a keen awareness of where to source Korean ingredients and where to relish the full spectrum of flavors offered by Korean restaurants.

Adaption of Korean Mannerism: After watching Korean dramas, many individuals have adopted the charming tradition of making heart symbols with their fingers as a gesture of affection and endearment (R9). This practice has become a symbolic expression of the emotional connection viewers feel with the romantic narratives and heart warming moments depicted in Korean dramas. The heart symbol,

formed by bringing the thumb and index fingers together to create a heart shape, has transcended its cultural origins and become a universal language of love and admiration. This simple yet powerful gesture is often used by fans and viewers as a way to express their emotional resonance with the romantic and sentimental themes portrayed in Korean dramas.

Exhibiting Korean Mannerisms: The adoption of the finger heart symbol reflects not only an appreciation for Korean culture but also a shared, cross-cultural expression of affection. It has become a delightful and visually charming way for viewers to convey the warmth and fondness evoked by the romantic narratives they have experienced in the world of Korean dramas. This phenomenon showcases how cultural symbols from media can transcend borders, fostering a sense of global connectedness through shared gestures of love and appreciation (R7).

Family Meal & Greeting Elders: The students have been significantly influenced by the deep-rooted cultural practices of respecting and greeting elders and having food together fostering a sense of togetherness and family unity (R5). This cultural emphasis on communal dining extends beyond the mere act of sharing a meal; it underscores the value placed on interpersonal relationships and the acknowledgment of family bonds.

The Students, having internalized these cultural norms, actively engage in the practice of not only eating together but also expressing respect and greetings to their elders. This cultural influence has become an integral part of their daily lives, creating an atmosphere of mutual regard and reinforcing the importance of family connections. The act of greeting elders and sharing meals collectively is perceived as more than a routine; it is a cherished tradition that enhances the familial bond. The students understand the significance of these rituals, not only for the nourishment derived from the food but also for the emotional sustenance gained through shared moments, conversations, and the expression of respect.

In essence, the cultural practice of respecting and greeting elders during meals has woven a rich tapestry of family values for the students, shaping their perspectives on the meaningfulness of shared mealtimes and the importance of upholding traditions that strengthen familial ties.

R7: “I decorated my room, I like the rooms seen in K drama, they are not big but they are nicely decorated”

R6: “I started to grow in door plants and not it has become my hobby”.

R8: “we do keep heart symbols that is cute way of saying I love you”

Shift in Preferences of Men

Elevated Importance of Good Hairstyle: The influence of Korean dramas places a heightened emphasis on the significance of a well-groomed and stylish hairstyle among men. Viewers are drawn to the meticulously crafted and fashionable hairstyles donned by Korean heroes, inspiring a preference for similar grooming practices.

Emphasis on Fashionable Attire: Korean dramas showcase male characters adorned in fashionable and trendsetting outfits. This portrayal significantly influences the perception of attractiveness, prompting a liking for men who exhibit a keen sense of style and are well-dressed, aligning with the fashion-forward aesthetic portrayed in the dramas.

Desire for a Korean Hero Aesthetic: The desire to emulate the appearance of Korean drama heroes becomes a driving force in the evolving preferences of individuals. This includes not only the physical attributes but also an aspiration to embody the confidence, charm, and suaveness exemplified by these characters.

Impact on Self-Perception and Attraction: Exposure to Korean dramas not only shapes preferences in potential partners but also influences self-perception. Individuals may find themselves aspiring to embody the characteristics and aesthetics of the male leads in these dramas, reflecting a broader impact on personal identity and attractiveness.

Societal Influence and Beauty Standards: The influence of Korean dramas extends beyond personal preferences, contributing to evolving societal beauty standards. Men who align with the stylized and aesthetically pleasing portrayals in these dramas may experience an elevated attractiveness in the eyes of their peer.

R3: “More than tamil or hindi movie heroes I like Korean heroes. They look very handsome and very stylish”

R5: “They are too good. They look s so good”

R4: "They are very romantic"

R5: "Their skin is so good and their hair style and they are very caring & romantic"

To Examine The Social Implications Of Korean Drama Consumption

Interpersonal Relationships: Respondents shared that their friends who share a common interest in Korean dramas find a basis for forming stronger interpersonal connections. They engage in discussions about plot twists, character developments, and favorite shows, creating bonds based on shared viewing experiences.

Peer Dynamics: Within a group of friends or peers, those who watch Korean dramas influence the viewing habits of others. Peer dynamics could involve the exchange of recommendations, collaborative viewing sessions, or even group activities inspired by the dramas, such as themed events or gatherings.

Shared Experiences: Respondents shared that Watching a popular Korean drama series together become a shared experience among a group of friends. This shared activity lead to inside jokes, references, and a sense of camaraderie based on the emotional highs and lows experienced collectively while watching the drama.

Cultural Influence on Communication Styles: Respondents shared that the language, expressions, and mannerisms portrayed in Korean dramas does find their way into the communication styles of viewers. Friends who share this interest adopt phrases from the dramas, creating a unique form of communication within their social circle.

Influence on Relationship Expectations: Korean dramas often depict romantic relationships in a particular way. Respondents shared that their friends may internalize these portrayals, influencing their expectations and attitudes towards real-life romantic relationships within their peer groups.

R2: " may be , since I see all my friends also see k drama and we speak a lot about it , I don't ask cute but she does,"

R3: "Mannerism, yes of course we also try to use Korean words like uppa, to addres our close ones, we try the accents too".

R5: " We do a lot of shopping at mineso and we have visited the branch in mogappair west , in V R Mall & also Anna nagar"

R5: " I love kimchi, Ramayane noodles too"

Suggestions

Recognize that the depiction of Korean heroines in dramas as fair and handsome is a stylized portrayal for storytelling purposes and doesn't reflect real-life diversity. Embrace your unique qualities and resist narrow beauty standards perpetuated by media. Encourage a positive self-image rooted in self-acceptance and appreciation for individuality. Remember that real beauty varies and extends beyond physical appearance.

Understand the difference between fictional portrayals and reality in relationships. Real connections involve genuine aspects beyond idealized scenarios seen in dramas. Appreciate positive qualities in Korean heroines, but comprehend that scripted characters differ from real-life relationships. Seek partners aligned with personal values and approach relationships authentically, valuing their uniqueness. Prioritize acceptance and appreciation of individuals for who they are, rather than aspiring to unrealistic standards, fostering healthier relationship expectations based on genuine connections and shared values.

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