

Influence of K-Pop Dramas on Pakistani Youth: A Case Study on Netflix's Role in Cultural Transformation

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This study investigates the cultural influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani youth, emphasizing Netflix's role in shaping these preferences. Social Cognitive and Cultural imperialism theories applied in this study. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the research utilizes focus group discussions to explore the perceptions of youth, parents, educators, and religious and cultural scholars. Four focus groups, each consisting of 6-8 participants, were conducted to examine shared experiences, cultural shifts, and differing perspectives. The findings highlight that while youth enthusiastically embrace Korean entertainment, citing its aesthetic appeal, storytelling, and emotional depth, concerns arise regarding cultural displacement, unrealistic beauty standards, and diminishing interest in local entertainment. Parents and educators emphasize the need for media literacy to foster critical engagement, ensuring that global media exposure does not erode Pakistani cultural values. The study underscores the necessity of a balanced media approach that encourages cultural exchange while preserving indigenous traditions. Given the qualitative nature of this research, future studies may benefit from a mixed-methods approach to quantify media influence further. Additionally, policymakers and content creators should develop compelling local content to sustain youth engagement with their cultural heritage while adapting to global media trends.

Keywords: Korean wave, Netflix, Pakistani youth, cultural transformation

The Hallyu Wave has expanded globally, including in Pakistan, driven by K-Pop and K-Dramas. Once confined to East Asia, Korean entertainment now thrives in South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond, with Netflix boosting accessibility (Jin, 2023; Rahim et al., 2020). In Pakistan, its appeal stems from compelling storytelling, high production quality, and relatable themes (Yaqoub et al., 2024; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). K-Dramas' emotional depth and socially conscious narratives attract young audiences (Khalid, 2024), while K-Pop's music, performances, and aesthetics influence youth fashion and lifestyle (Lie, 2014; Nain & Chaudhary, 2022).

Netflix has expanded K-Dramas and K-Pop documentaries in Pakistan through heavy investment and algorithm-driven recommendations (ProPakistani, 2023; Bhatti et al., 2022). Its \$2.5 billion commitment fuels global interest (Kuo, 2024). This exposure influences Pakistani youth's language, fashion, and values (Saeed et al., 2023), sparking debates on cultural exchange versus traditional identity (Agrawal et al., 2024).

This study aims to analyze the influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani youth by examining the cultural shifts, identity changes, and Netflix's role in shaping these transformations. By conducting a case study through focus group discussions, the research seeks to explore:

- To examine the role of Netflix in promoting K-Pop and K-Dramas among Pakistani youth.
- To explore the cultural impact of Korean entertainment on the values, behavior, and identity of Pakistani youth.
- To analyze the perceptions of parents, educators, and cultural scholars regarding the influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani culture.

Understanding this cultural phenomenon will provide valuable insights into how global media influences local cultures and whether this transformation is a form of cultural appreciation, hybridization, or a crisis (Mumtaz & Farooqi, 2022; Bajwa et al., 2022).

Literature Review

The Hallyu wave's global rise rivals Hollywood, driven by digital connectivity. This study reviews 100 studies (2000–2019) on Hallyu, revealing research gaps, especially in low-income regions. Findings emphasize the need for broader exploration beyond East Asia and the Pacific (Ganghariya & Kanozia, 2020).

The Korean Wave (Hallyu) blends Eastern and Western influences, serving as soft power through K-pop, K-dramas, and cinema. Driven by digital platforms and government support, it shapes consumer behavior, language, and global entertainment, reinforcing South Korea's cultural and economic influence (Glodev et al., 2023; Rana, 2021).

Netflix's glocalization strategy expands cultural diffusion, as seen in *Squid Game* fostering global reach and exchange (Wang & Weng, 2022). It shapes entertainment consumption through market dominance (Sekartaji, 2023). Meanwhile, K-pop fandoms enhance Hallyu's spread and social capital, exemplified by PKCI's role in the Philippines (Yoon, 2023).

Soft power shapes global media expansion, as seen in China's focus on entertainment over news for cultural diplomacy, necessitating new media theories (Flew, 2016; Jang & Song, 2017; Roy & Das, 2022). Meanwhile, Indonesia's STEAM-based economics education enhances critical thinking and social character, emphasizing innovative teaching over traditional methods (Mawaddah et al., 2024).

Italy's evolving multicultural policies highlight challenges in integrating immigrant youth. The Identity Project (IP), adapted from the U.S., improved identity exploration and psychosocial outcomes in Italian adolescents. Findings support structured school-based interventions to foster inclusivity and interethnic relationships (Ceccon, 2024).

Cognitive and Theoretical Framework

The cognitive dimension of this study is grounded in Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, which explain how individuals internalize media content and adjust their behaviors accordingly.

Individuals learn by observing others and modeling their behavior. Media, particularly visual formats like dramas, serve as symbolic models that influence viewers' thoughts and actions. When Pakistani youth watch K-Pop dramas, they are not passive recipients but active observers who may adopt Korean fashion, speech patterns, relational behaviors, and lifestyle elements portrayed on screen (Bandura, 1986).

In the context of this study, Netflix acts as a platform that increases exposure and accessibility, thereby reinforcing behavioral modeling. The repeated engagement with idealized portrayals of Korean society may stimulate imitation and internalization of Korean cultural norms. “Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed”. To further analyze the broader societal implications of K-Pop content consumption, this study draws upon the following theoretical models.

Cultural Imperialism Theory asserts that dominant cultures can overshadow or erode the uniqueness of local cultures through mass media dissemination. In this case, South Korea, with strong state backing of Hallyu (Korean Wave), strategically exports its cultural content globally. Netflix, acting as a distribution partner, accelerates the process (Kamon, 2024).

For Pakistani youth, continual exposure to polished Korean media may result in the marginalization of indigenous languages, attire, social values, and traditional family systems. This potential erosion or hybridization signifies a subtle yet profound cultural shift. “The penetration of global media undermines the autonomy of local cultures...” (Tomlinson, 1991).

Why These Frameworks Fit

Framework	Key Role in Topic	Contribution
Social Cognitive Theory	Shows how youth observe and imitate K-Drama content	Explains <i>behavioral changes</i> like adopting Korean fashion, values
Cultural Imperialism Theory	Shows how dominant Korean media may affect Pakistani culture	Explains <i>cultural transformation at the societal level</i>

Method

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, which is an effective method for exploring complex social phenomena within their real-life context (Habes et al., 2021). Since the cultural impact of K-Pop and K-Dramas especially in Pakistani youth needs to be explored in detail especially from the lenses of the participants; the qualitative analysis will provide an in-depth understanding of their experiences and preferences as consumers of media (Creswell, 2014; Shah & Ahmad, 2023) and how the meaning of consumption changes across socio-cultural factors. Using a case study approach also allows the researcher an exploration into what meanings the youth attribute to their media contact, to what these influences entail in the framework of Pakistan as a society and, in what ways Netflix becomes a form of cultural transmission (Wolf, 1991).

The primary data collection method used was focus group discussions, to obtain the rich data needed to understand the context. Krueger and Casey (2015) note focus groups are especially

appropriate when the goal is to examine common experiences and social context that the best be examined through discussion and reflection in a group. This allows the researcher to understand how one influences their opinion in a group and/or how group experiences vary across social categories such as age, profession, or culture (Morgan 1997; Martínez Copete, 2016).

Four separate focus group sessions were conducted (one each per category): (1) Youth (university students, Netflix subscribers, K-Pop/K-Drama fans), (2) Parents (mothers and fathers of youth, ages 18–30), (3) Educators (teachers, university professors and media experts), and (3) Religious and Cultural Scholars (Islamic scholars, sociologists, and media analysts). Purposive sampling is a sampling technique where the researcher seeks participants with certain characteristics needed for the research question (Patton, 2014), and this enabled us to select the aforementioned participant groups. This method is reliable as by choice giving the participants exposure to or experience in the topic, multiple perspectives may be explored by the researcher and complex, descriptive, rich data gathered (Etikan et al., 2016).

In order to do so, this study utilizes a dual approach, that helps the researcher to be able to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural changes happening through the consumption of Korean entertainment among the Pakistani audiences. Participant groups in this study are important in order to reach a holistic and multidimensional view about the impact of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani youth. Each participant group represented a different viewpoint in terms of how culture acted upon these preferences and what role Netflix played. Below, you can find an explanation of the choice of each group:

Target Audience: Youth (University Students, Netflix Subscribers and K-Pop + K-Drama Enthusiasts)

- Aligned with the focus of the study: The influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas are directed towards the youth, especially university students who often use online platforms such as Netflix and are more participative in following international entertainment trends. Youth culture constantly evolves, and their media consumption brings about impactful, noticeable changes within the culture, making them the object of this study.

- Familiarity with the K-Pop/K-Drama: Given that they are fans of K-Pop and K-Dramas, this group has experienced the content being examined first hand. Through their perspectives and experiences, further insight will be provided on how these products of culture affect them in their identities, values, behaviors, and other areas of perception within cultural aspects.

Engagement with Netflix: Since Netflix is one of the largest sources of K-Dramas, it provides many of the commonly viewed content in assessing how youth view the role of Netflix in culture consumption. This will help show even more just how important the youth's engagement in Netflix is to the spread of K-Pop and K-Drama culture.

Parents: (Fathers + Mothers of youth aged 18-30 years)

- Cultural and Generational Context: Parents provide an even more distinct generational lens about the cultural change that is happening amongst their message's children. This study is telling us that getting their perspectives is useful in closing the generation gap by framing the differences between how older generations and younger generations view consumption habits and cultural ramifications of K-Pop/K-Drama content. We also seek input from parents, who provide an

important perspective when it comes to worries about cultural change, values and their impressions of international media.

- **Role Model:** Parents are one of the most important people that influence youth behavior, beliefs and values. The study thus seeks insight into the larger cultural response to K-Pop/K-Drama by interpreting how parents see the effect of K-Pop/K-Drama on children. There might nevertheless be parental concerns about "Westernization," loss of traditional values or other cultural losses, and these may provide insight into the school perceptions.

- **Tradition vs Globalisation:** Pakistan is a cultural amalgam of traditionalism and globalisation, and parents can talk about how they see things related to entertainment affect the cultural envelope?

Teachers, University Professors, Media Experts

- **Response from Educators and Media Scholars:** Compared to academics and experts, the informed responses from educators and media scholars offer a more informed response on how the exposure to K-Pop and K-Dramas affect the educational, social, and cultural outcomes of youth. With their background they interpret trends from a more cultural and social perspective, examining the impact of education and media on youth taste.

- **Influence on Interaction and Education –** Educators are frequently at the forefront of changes in youth behavior, learning, and social interaction. This puts them in a good position to at least consider the potential educational consequences of K-Dramas and K-Pop, which may change the way students view education, social norms, and global citizenship.

- **Effects on Media Literacy and Critical Thinking:** Media experts can help understand the impact of foreign media content such as K-Pop and K-Dramas on youth media literacy and critical thinking. We should explore how these media forms foster either positive or negative experiences in Cultural Awareness, Social Behaviors, and Critical Media Consumption, and these exploring would be helped by their input.

Religious & Cultural Experts (Islamic Scholars, Sociologists, Media Analysts):

- **Cultural and Religious Views:** Pakistan is a land where the glue between religion and culture is strong; therefore, if religious and cultural scholars interpret the foreign media effects on local traditions and values, it really provides a boost to their efforts. Thus, this group offers further insight into perceptions of K-Pop and K-Dramas from religious and cultural perspectives, especially in terms of cultural preservation, religious morality, and Western versus non-Western cultural influences.

Social and Cultural Effects: Sociologists can provide an overview of social changes in the society—the impact of the consumption of media products from abroad on the changes of social norms, changes in family relationships and social organization. They can provide insights on how do you think the consumption of the K-Pop/K-Dramas by the youth is affecting their social behaviour and what kind of culture is being created in Pakistan.

- **Media and Culture Analysis:** Media suffers from a lack of understanding of what it means to be not only a communication medium but also a means of cultural production, replacing and departing from an academic eye to the matter. They might be able to critique what Korean entertainment on Netflix is helping do in the cultural transformation in Pakistan.

Clarification of Key Concepts

- **Hallyu (Korean Wave):**
A term used to describe the global popularity of South Korean culture, especially in music (K-Pop), television dramas, film, and fashion. It is a state-sponsored soft power strategy aimed at cultural export and image-building.
- **K-Pop:**
Although primarily associated with music, K-Pop also refers to a broader entertainment ecosystem that includes Korean TV dramas (K-Dramas), which share similar aesthetic, narrative, and cultural elements. K-Dramas often serve as an entry point into Hallyu culture.
- **Netflix:**
A global streaming platform that provides on-demand access to media content, including K-Pop dramas. Its role in content curation, recommendation algorithms, and regional accessibility makes it a critical agent in the international dissemination of Korean culture.
- **Cultural Transformation:**
A process through which individuals or communities undergo a shift in cultural values, norms, and practices, often influenced by exposure to foreign media. In this study, it refers to observable changes in attitudes, language use, fashion preferences, and interpersonal behavior among Pakistani youth resulting from engagement with K-Pop dramas.

Table 1

Focus Group Composition and Sampling Technique

<i>Focus Group Category</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Focused Group Interviews</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Criteria for Selection</i>
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University students Netflix users K-Pop/K-Drama fans 	02 02 02	Lahore	Aged 18-30, actively engaged with Korean entertainment
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mothers Fathers of youth aged 18-30 	03 03	Lahore	Parents of youth influenced by K-Pop/K-Dramas
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers University Professors Media experts 	02 02 02	Lahore	Professionals with insights into media influence & education
Religious & Cultural Scholars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islamic scholars Sociologists Media analysts 	02 02 02	Lahore	Experts in culture, religion, and media discourse
Total:	4 Groups	24 participants		

Table 2

Themes Aligned with Research Questions

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-Themes</i>
1. How does Netflix contribute to the popularity of K-Pop and K-Dramas among Pakistani youth?	Netflix as a Catalyst for Korean Entertainment Popularity	- Accessibility and Convenience of Korean Content - Netflix's Role in Curating and Promoting K-Dramas and K-Pop Documentaries - Algorithm Influence and Personalized Recommendations - Binge-Watching Culture and Engagement with Korean Content
2. What cultural transformations have emerged among Pakistani youth due to the influence of Korean entertainment?	Cultural Transformations in Pakistani Youth Due to Korean Entertainment	- Influence on Fashion, Beauty Trends, and Lifestyle Choices - Adoption of Korean Language and Slang in Daily Conversations - Impact on Social Behavior and Romantic Ideals - Shift in Entertainment Preferences and Local vs.

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes
3. How do parents, educators, and cultural scholars perceive the impact of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani traditions and identity?	Perceptions of Parents, Educators, and Cultural Scholars on Cultural Identity and Traditions	Foreign Media Consumption - Concerns Over Cultural Erosion and Identity Crisis - Perspectives on Moral and Ethical Values in K-Entertainment - Influence of K-Dramas on Family Dynamics and Social Norms - Media Literacy and the Need for Cultural Awareness Among Youth

Theme 1: Netflix as a Catalyst for Korean Entertainment Popularity

Netflix has played a significant role in the rising popularity of K-Pop and K-Dramas among Pakistani youth. Through its accessibility, strategic content promotion, algorithm-driven recommendations, and binge-watching culture, Netflix has influenced youth preferences and cultural engagement with Korean entertainment. The responses from different groups—Youth, Parents, Educators, and Religious & Cultural Scholars—highlight both positive and negative aspects of this influence.

Accessibility and Convenience of Korean Content

Group 1: Youth (University Students, Netflix Users, K-Pop/K-Drama Fans)

- “Netflix makes it easy for youth to access high-quality Korean content with subtitles”.
- “Many students prefer Netflix over traditional TV because it offers uninterrupted viewing without advertisements”.
- “K-Dramas and K-Pop-related documentaries are readily available, making it effortless for fans to engage with Korean entertainment”.

Group 2: Parents (Mothers & Fathers)

- “Parents acknowledge that Netflix provides a safe and legal way to access Korean entertainment compared to pirated websites”.
- “Some parents are concerned that their children are more exposed to Korean culture than Pakistani content, which could weaken their connection to local tradition’s.
- “The easy availability of K-Dramas encourages longer screen time and emotional attachment to Korean entertainment”.

Group 3: Educators (Teachers, University Professors, and Media Experts)

- “University professors note that students are consuming international media more than ever before, with Korean content being one of the most dominant”.
- “Media experts observe that Netflix has eliminated the barriers of traditional TV programming, allowing students to explore global entertainment without limitations”.
- “Some educators worry that Netflix reduces exposure to Pakistani media, potentially influencing language preferences and cultural awareness”.

Group 4: Religious & Cultural Scholars (Islamic Scholars, Sociologists, and Media Analysts)

- “Islamic scholars express concern that unrestricted access to foreign content can expose youth to values that may conflict with Pakistani cultural norms”.
- “Sociologists highlight that Netflix has bypassed traditional cultural gatekeeping, allowing foreign influences to integrate into daily life”.
- “Media analysts believe that Korean entertainment has become a mainstream part of youth culture, altering their fashion choices, social behaviors, and entertainment preferences”.

Netflix's Role in Curating and Promoting K-Dramas and K-Pop Documentaries

Youth

"Many young viewers first encountered K-Dramas and K-Pop content on Netflix's trending section or featured recommendations".

"Netflix provides access to exclusive content such as K-Pop documentaries and behind-the-scenes interviews, increasing engagement with Korean culture".

Parents

"Parents note that Netflix actively promotes Korean entertainment, even when their children watch unrelated content".

"Some believe Netflix's targeted promotions encourage deeper involvement in K-Pop and K-Dramas, sometimes leading to obsession".

Educators

"University lecturers highlight that Netflix markets K-Dramas aggressively, making them a popular topic of discussion among students".

"Media studies professors argue that this constant exposure has made Korean entertainment a global phenomenon, influencing students' linguistic preferences, beauty standards, and lifestyle choices".

Religious & Cultural Scholars

"Islamic scholars worry that Netflix normalizes foreign social behaviors, some of which might not align with Islamic values".

"Media analysts argue that Netflix's promotional strategies shape what youth consider "trendy", leading to an increased preference for Korean entertainment over local content".

Algorithm Influence and Personalized Recommendations

Youth

"Many students note that once they watch a single K-Drama, Netflix continuously recommends similar content, keeping them engaged".

"They appreciate how the algorithm helps them discover new K-Pop and K-Drama content effortlessly".

Parents

"Parents worry that the algorithm reinforces addiction by repeatedly suggesting Korean entertainment, limiting exposure to diverse content".

"Some parents feel that Netflix is influencing their children's entertainment choices rather than allowing them to explore content independently".

Educators

"Professors highlight that students do not actively search for K-Dramas, but rather start watching because Netflix recommends it, leading to long-term engagement".

"Media experts argue that algorithm-driven content exposure is reshaping media preferences among students, potentially limiting their awareness of Pakistani cultural productions".

Religious & Cultural Scholars

"Sociologists believe that Netflix's algorithmic recommendations are creating a cultural bubble, where youth consume more Korean content than Pakistani entertainment".

“Media analysts warn that Netflix’s content suggestions might gradually shift identity and cultural preferences, making Pakistani youth more aligned with Korean media aesthetics and storytelling styles”.

Binge-Watching Culture and Engagement with Korean Content

Youth

“Many youth admit that Netflix’s autoplay feature encourages binge-watching, often leading to late-night screen time”.

“Some express emotional connections to Korean characters and storylines, making them deeply invested in Korean culture”.

Parents

“Parents observe that their children prioritize finishing K-Dramas over studies, family time, and religious activities”.

“Some are worried that binge-watching reduces social interactions and promotes isolation”.

Educators

“University professors note that excessive binge-watching affects student productivity, academic performance, and class engagement”.

“Media experts argue that immersive storytelling in K-Dramas leads to high emotional involvement, causing students to neglect their academic and personal responsibilities”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars warn that binge-watching contributes to moral and social concerns, as excessive exposure to Korean culture may overshadow traditional Islamic teachings”.

“Sociologists highlight that the immersive nature of K-Dramas creates strong identification with Korean characters, leading some youth to adopt Korean speech patterns, clothing styles, and social behaviors”.

Theme 2: Cultural Transformations in Pakistani Youth Due to Korean Entertainment

Korean entertainment, particularly K-Dramas and K-Pop, has significantly influenced the fashion choices, beauty trends, language preferences, social behaviors, and entertainment consumption patterns of Pakistani youth. Netflix has played a crucial role in facilitating this cultural shift by providing unrestricted access to Korean content. The responses from different groups—Youth, Parents, Educators, and Religious & Cultural Scholars—highlight varying perspectives on these transformations.

Influence on Fashion, Beauty Trends, and Lifestyle Choices

Group1: Youth (University Students, Netflix Users, K-Pop/K-Drama Fans)

“Many students admire the aesthetic appeal of Korean fashion, leading them to adopt oversized clothing, pastel colours, and minimalist styles”.

“Korean skincare routines, such as glass skin trends, sheet masks, and 10-step skincare regimens, have gained popularity among youth, especially females”.

“Some youth express a preference for Korean hairstyles, coloured contact lenses, and natural makeup looks, which they see as a symbol of modernity”.

Group 2: Parents (Mothers & Fathers)

“Parents have noticed a shift in their children’s dressing styles, with some adopting modest yet trendy Korean fashion”.

“Some parents are concerned that Pakistani traditional attire is being replaced by Korean-inspired casual wear, leading to a loss of cultural identity”.

“A few parents acknowledge the positivity of skincare awareness but worry about consumerism and unrealistic beauty standards influenced by K-Dramas”.

Group 3: Educators (Teachers, University Professors, and Media Experts)

“Professors note that students increasingly discuss Korean beauty trends in classrooms, demonstrating the influence of social media and Netflix”.

“Media experts argue that Pakistani fashion brands have started incorporating Korean aesthetics, proving the widespread influence of Korean entertainment”.

“Some educators worry that students are comparing themselves to Korean celebrities, leading to body image issues and unrealistic beauty expectations”.

Group 4: Religious & Cultural Scholars (Islamic Scholars, Sociologists, and Media Analysts)

“Islamic scholars express concerns that Korean fashion and beauty standards may conflict with Islamic modesty principles, particularly among young women”.

“Sociologists highlight that the preference for Korean beauty ideals over South Asian beauty norms may create self-esteem challenges among Pakistani youth”.

“Media analysts observe that global beauty trends are redefining youth identity, making Korean fashion a status symbol in urban Pakistan”.

Adoption of Korean Language and Slang in Daily Conversations

Youth

“Many fans frequently use Korean phrases such as “Oppa” (older brother), “Saranghae” (I love you), and “Aigoo” (expression of frustration) in daily conversations”.

“Some students try to learn Hangul (Korean alphabet) and even incorporate Korean words in their English or Urdu speech”.

“Watching K-Dramas with subtitles has led to passive learning of the Korean language, making it easier to recognize and understand common expressions”.

Parents

“Parents notice their children using Korean words while speaking Urdu or English, which sometimes confuses family members”.

“Some parents believe learning multiple languages is beneficial, while others worry about the reduced use of Urdu in family discussions”.

“A few parents argue that obsession with Korean culture might disconnect youth from their own linguistic heritage”.

Educators

“Language teachers observe that some students mimic Korean speech patterns in an attempt to sound like their favourite actors or idols”.

“Media experts believe this linguistic influence is temporary but still indicates the deep engagement of youth with Korean entertainment”.

“Some educators worry that this shift may reduce interest in learning regional Pakistani languages, such as Punjabi or Sindhi”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars argue that language reflects cultural identity, and replacing Urdu with Korean slang could indicate cultural dilution”.

“Sociologists note that using Korean phrases has become a trend among urban youth, signalling prestige and belonging to a global pop culture”.

“Media analysts suggest that the incorporation of Korean words into daily speech is a sign of cultural assimilation through digital media”.

Impact on Social Behavior and Romantic Ideals

Youth

“Many young viewers idealize the romantic relationships portrayed in K-Dramas, expecting similar grand gestures and emotional depth in real life”.

“Some youth admit that Korean entertainment has reshaped their views on dating, friendships, and gender roles, often in contrast to Pakistani social norms”.

“Many students admire Korean values such as respect, politeness, and hard work, incorporating them into their daily interactions”.

Parents

“Parents worry that K-Dramas portray an unrealistic version of romance, which may set unattainable relationship expectations for their children”.

“Some parents appreciate that K-Dramas promote clean romance and emotional depth, which differs from Western media’s focus on explicit content”.

“A few parents believe that the idealization of Korean relationships may lead to dissatisfaction in real-life interactions”.

Educators

“Professors observe that students often discuss romantic themes from K-Dramas, showing their emotional investment in Korean storytelling”.

“Media experts note that K-Dramas reinforce soft masculinity, where male leads display gentle, caring, and respectful behavior, influencing students’ expectations from partners”.

“Some educators caution that over-romanticizing relationships could create unrealistic standards that do not align with Pakistani societal norms”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars express concerns that romanticized relationships in K-Dramas may contradict Islamic values of modesty and marriage traditions”.

“Sociologists believe that exposure to Korean social behaviors is gradually shifting perceptions of love and relationships among youth”.

“Media analysts suggest that Pakistani youth may subconsciously internalize Korean dating culture, leading to a change in how relationships are perceived in society”.

Shift in Entertainment Preferences and Local vs. Foreign Media Consumption**Youth**

“Many young viewers prioritize Korean content over Pakistani dramas, citing better production quality, storytelling, and emotional depth”.

“Some students admit that Pakistani media feels outdated, leading them to prefer Netflix’s Korean entertainment library”.

“A few youth believe Pakistani dramas focus too much on repetitive family conflicts, whereas K-Dramas offer diverse genres”.

Parents

“Parents worry that their children watch more Korean content than Pakistani TV, leading to reduced interest in local culture”.

“Some parents believe Pakistani dramas should evolve to compete with global entertainment standards”.

“A few parents acknowledge that K-Dramas provide a refreshing alternative, but still want their children to appreciate Pakistani media and values”.

Educators

“Media professors argue that Pakistani content creators must innovate to regain youth interest in local dramas”.

“Teachers note that students often compare Pakistani and Korean dramas in class discussions, showing a clear preference for Korean storytelling”.

“Media experts suggest that Pakistani TV needs to embrace global storytelling techniques while maintaining its cultural essence”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars worry that excessive preference for foreign content could weaken Pakistani cultural identity”.

“Sociologists highlight that the globalization of media consumption is inevitable, but balancing local and foreign influences is crucial”.

“Media analysts believe that Netflix and digital platforms will continue to shape entertainment choices, requiring Pakistan’s media industry to adapt and compete globally”.

Theme 3: Perceptions of Parents, Educators, Cultural Scholars, and Youth on Cultural Identity and Traditions

The impact of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani youth has raised significant concerns among parents, educators, and cultural scholars, but it has also led to enthusiastic acceptance among young audiences. While many fear cultural erosion, youth perceive their engagement with Korean entertainment as a form of global cultural exchange rather than a loss of identity. Below are the responses from all four groups, including youth, on key aspects related to cultural identity, traditions, and media literacy.

Concerns Over Cultural Erosion and Identity Crisis**Group 1: Youth (University Students, Netflix Users, K-Pop/K-Drama Fans)**

“Many youth reject the idea that they are abandoning Pakistani culture, instead arguing that exposure to Korean entertainment broadens their worldview”.

“Some youth feel more connected to Korean culture than their own, as they engage with it daily through music, dramas, and fashion trends”.

“Others acknowledge that Pakistani media does not offer engaging content, making Korean entertainment a more appealing choice”.

Group 2: Parents (Mothers & Fathers)

“Parents worry that their children are more interested in Korean traditions than their own, leading to cultural detachment”.

“Some parents see Korean entertainment as an extension of globalization, but fear the dilution of Pakistani values”.

“A few parents argue that as long as youth respect Pakistani traditions, exposure to foreign cultures is not harmful”.

Group 3: Educators (Teachers, University Professors, and Media Experts)

“Professors observe that students often use Korean phrases, follow Korean fashion, and admire Korean social norms, sometimes at the expense of their own culture”.

“Some educators believe that Pakistani culture is resilient, and global influences will not erase national identity if local media strengthens its presence”.

“Media experts argue that the problem is not cultural exposure but the absence of high-quality local content that engages youth”.

Group 4: Religious & Cultural Scholars (Islamic Scholars, Sociologists, and Media Analysts)

“Islamic scholars warn that Korean entertainment promotes values that may not always align with Islamic teachings, which could lead to identity conflicts”.

“Sociologists highlight that cultural transformation is inevitable, but there should be efforts to preserve traditional values alongside global influences”.

“Media analysts suggest that Pakistan needs stronger policies to promote its own cultural content, counterbalancing the foreign media influx”.

Perspectives on Moral and Ethical Values in K-Entertainment

Youth

“Many youth argue that K-Dramas promote positive values, such as respect, discipline, and strong work ethics, which they appreciate”.

“Some youth believe that Pakistani media often portrays regressive narratives, whereas Korean entertainment provides more progressive role models”.

“Others admit that idealized romance in K-Dramas has influenced their expectations in relationships, sometimes creating unrealistic standards”.

Parents

“Parents appreciate that K-Dramas are less explicit than Western media, but worry about the unrealistic romantic ideals they portray”.

“Some parents believe that youth are too influenced by Korean beauty standards, leading to body image concerns”.

“A few parents stress that not all Korean content aligns with Islamic ethics, and youth should be guided in their media consumption”.

Educators

“Teachers observe that students often compare Pakistani and Korean moral values, sometimes viewing the latter as superior”.

“Professors stress the need for critical media literacy so that youth can analyze entertainment instead of passively adopting its values”.

“Media experts argue that Pakistani drama creators should learn from Korean storytelling to modernize local narratives”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars express concern that K-Dramas normalize relationships that may conflict with Islamic values, requiring youth to navigate these influences carefully”.

“Sociologists argue that moral transformation is complex and should be studied with a balanced perspective rather than outright rejection”.

“Media analysts advocate for educational initiatives that teach youth to differentiate entertainment from reality”.

Influence of K-Dramas on Family Dynamics and Social Norms

Youth

“Many youth find Korean family values relatable, particularly the respect for elders and emphasis on hard work”.

“Some youth feel that Pakistani family dynamics can be restrictive, and K-Dramas introduce more progressive ideas about independence and personal choice”.

“Others enjoy discussing K-Dramas with family members, which strengthens their relationships rather than weakening them”.

Parents

“Some parents appreciate that their children are watching content that emphasizes family values”.

“Others worry that K-Dramas promote independence in ways that challenge Pakistani family structures”.

“A few parents report positive changes in their children’s attitudes, as they learn respectful behavior from Korean entertainment”.

Educators

“Teachers note that students discuss family relationships from K-Dramas in class, comparing them to their own experiences”.

“Professors argue that youth should be encouraged to critically assess cultural differences rather than blindly imitating them”.

“Media experts believe that Pakistani dramas should evolve to reflect the modern aspirations of youth while maintaining traditional values”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars warn against youth adopting cultural behaviors that conflict with Islamic teachings”.

“Sociologists believe that Pakistani families should use these conversations as a way to strengthen intergenerational understanding”.

“Media analysts argue that local content creators must innovate to keep Pakistani entertainment relevant”.

Media Literacy and the Need for Cultural Awareness Among Youth

Youth

“Most youth do not see Korean entertainment as a replacement for Pakistani culture, but rather an addition to their interests”.

“Some youth wish that Pakistani media produced more diverse and engaging content, so they wouldn’t have to look elsewhere”.

“Others argue that watching foreign media makes them more globally aware, helping them appreciate both their own culture and others”.

Parents

“Parents stress that youth need guidance in media consumption, ensuring they engage with content critically rather than blindly adopting trends”.

“Some parents suggest introducing media literacy programs in schools and universities”.

“A few parents believe that exposure to multiple cultures is beneficial, but should not come at the cost of neglecting Pakistani traditions”.

Educators

“Teachers argue that students should be encouraged to analyze media content from a cultural perspective, rather than consuming it passively”.

“Professors stress that youth should be taught to appreciate their own culture before engaging with foreign entertainment”.

“Media experts recommend that Pakistan should create its own streaming platforms to promote local content”.

Religious & Cultural Scholars

“Islamic scholars emphasize that mosques and community centers should educate youth on balancing cultural engagement with religious values”.

“Sociologists advocate for a blended approach, where youth can appreciate global media while remaining grounded in their own culture”.

“Media analysts call for collaborations between educators, parents, and media creators to ensure a culturally aware generation”.

Results and Discussions

R Q1: How Does Netflix Contribute to the Popularity of K-Pop and K-Dramas Among Pakistani Youth?

Netflix has played a pivotal role in the rising popularity of K-Pop and K-Dramas among Pakistani youth by offering unrestricted access, personalized recommendations, and fostering a binge-watching culture. Its global reach and strategic promotion of Korean entertainment have significantly shaped Pakistani youth's entertainment choices, social behaviors, and cultural engagement. According to Mukhtar (2024), international streaming platforms like Netflix have revolutionized media consumption, making Korean entertainment more accessible than ever. Youth participants in this study confirmed that Netflix's high-quality K-Dramas with subtitles and uninterrupted streaming enhance their immersion in Korean entertainment, eliminating barriers of traditional TV programming.

Netflix actively promotes K-Dramas through its trending sections and recommendation algorithms, ensuring even new viewers are exposed to Korean content. Kim (2025) argues that this strategic content curation has turned K-Dramas into a global phenomenon. University educators in this study echoed this view, noting that Netflix markets K-Dramas aggressively, making them dominant discussion topics among students. However, parents raised concerns that Netflix's continuous promotion of Korean entertainment reduces youth engagement with Pakistani cultural productions.

Netflix's advanced algorithm reinforces user engagement by continuously suggesting similar content after watching a single K-Drama or K-Pop documentary. Yoh (2025) found that such recommendations create a content bubble, limiting exposure to diverse content. Youth respondents confirmed that Netflix's suggestions make Korean entertainment a major part of their media consumption. However, parents and educators worry that excessive exposure to Korean entertainment may lead to shifts in cultural identity, fashion preferences, and language adoption among Pakistani youth (Habib et al., 2024).

Another critical factor is Netflix's binge-watching culture. The platform's autoplay feature encourages prolonged viewing, fostering deep emotional connections with Korean narratives. Youth respondents admitted that Netflix tempts them to watch multiple episodes in one sitting, intensifying their engagement. However, parents and educators observed negative effects on academic performance, social interactions, and family dynamics. Religious and cultural scholars warned that such immersion may overshadow traditional Islamic and Pakistani values (Kim et al., 2024).

In conclusion, Netflix has significantly influenced the growing popularity of K-Pop and K-Dramas among Pakistani youth. While it enhances global entertainment access, concerns remain regarding its impact on local media preferences and cultural identity. As Buckingham (2013) suggests, balancing global and local content consumption is crucial to maintaining cultural diversity in the era of digital (Chelysheva & Mikhaleva, 2022).

R Q 2: What cultural transformations have emerged among Pakistani youth due to the influence of Korean entertainment?

The rise of Korean entertainment, particularly K-Dramas and K-Pop, has led to notable cultural transformations among Pakistani youth, influencing fashion, beauty standards, language, social behaviors, and entertainment preferences. With Netflix providing unrestricted access, young Pakistanis increasingly adopt Korean aesthetics and values, shaping their perceptions of identity and lifestyle. This reflects what Kim et al., (2024) describe as the global diffusion of Korean pop culture, where digital platforms facilitate cross-cultural exchanges, influencing youth worldwide.

One of the most visible changes is the shift in fashion and beauty trends. Many Pakistani university students embrace minimalist styles, oversized clothing, and pastel colours inspired by Korean fashion. Korean beauty trends, such as the glass skin look, natural makeup, and elaborate skincare routines, have gained popularity, particularly among young women. Cross and Joo (2023) argue that Korean entertainment promotes aspirational beauty standards globally. However, parents and educators express concerns that the increasing preference for Korean-inspired fashion over traditional Pakistani attire signals a cultural shift driven by consumerism.

Language adoption is another major influence. Many youth frequently use Korean phrases like “Oppa” (older brother) and “Saranghae” (I love you) in daily conversations, with some even learning Hangul. Herrero et al., (2023) notes that foreign media exposure facilitates passive language acquisition. While some parents appreciate multilingualism, others worry that excessive use of Korean slang could undermine Urdu and regional languages. Educators and religious scholars caution that language is a key part of cultural identity, and increasing Korean language use may indicate deeper cultural assimilation.

K-entertainment has even influenced social behaviors and romantic ideals. K-Dramas tend to depict romantic relationships that are emotionally intense, and male leads often exude what is described as “soft masculinity,” marked by kindness and emotional depth. Which influences young viewers to idolize such relationships causing the expectations in them to change. Media narratives create social context and influence perceptions of romance and gender roles, leading to unattainable expectations (Ju, 2021). Not every parent loves K-Drama feeling that drama becomes ground for distorted real relationships. And religious scholars also worry that romantic notions in Korea may not mesh in Pakistan with Islamic values and traditional marriage customs.

Similarly, entertainment preferences have too changed as most of the Pakistani youth enjoys watching the K-Dramas rather than the local content. For students, K-Dramas have better production quality, captivating stories, and a wider range of characters while Pakistani dramas revolve around the same family feuds. Azmee (2024) observe that the special narratives and quality of production found in K-Dramas attract global fans. Nevertheless, parents, educators and cultural scholars fear a loss of connection to Pakistani media and culture amongst youth through an overzealous appetite for Korean content. Local creatives are being told to update storytelling but still be true to their cultures, experts say

In conclusion, the impact of Korean entertainment on Pakistani youth represents not only the appreciation of a foreign culture but also the potential change in their identity. So although exposure to a melting pot of local culture can create better global appreciation, there is concern that this exposure goes too far and there is no longer anything to preserve. With the rise of digital media platforms changing the way we consume media, it is important for Pakistani audiences to critically

engage with foreign entertainment but also find the right balance between integrating into global culture and retaining our heritage.

R Q 3: What are the views of parents, teachers and cultural critics about K-Pop and K-Dramas impact on Pakistani culture and identity?

Now, while the influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas on Pakistani traditions and identity has both positive and negative opinions. K-pop fans see their involvement with Korean entertainment as cultural exchange, while older generations worry about a loss of tradition and cultural identity crises. According to Appadurai (1996) theory of cultural globalization and media flows generate hybrid identities, where people are able to assimilate foreign cultural aspects while they still are able to preserve their own. But the parents are concerned that the children show so much interest in Korean traditions that they are distancing themselves from the cultural identity which Giddens (1991) defines as identity change. Others recognize globalization as an unstoppable force but fear loss of Pakistani values, reminiscent of Tomlinson (1991) on cultural imperialism.

Educators observe the growing influence of Korean entertainment on students' language, fashion, and behaviors. Many students use Korean phrases, follow Korean fashion, and idealize Korean social norms, reflecting Hall et al., (2024) concept of cultural representation. Some argue that Pakistani culture is resilient, while others note the decline of local media engagement, aligning with Straubhaar's (2007) cultural proximity theory, where youth seek relatable media but turn to Korean content due to the lack of high-quality Pakistani productions. Media experts advocate revitalizing Pakistani storytelling to meet youth aspirations, in line with Jenkins (2006) media convergence theory, which emphasizes innovation in local media to remain relevant (Kim, 2023).

Scholars of religion and culture raise objections that Korean entertainment may be in clash with Islamic values as well as the traditions of Pakistan. Others caution that K-Dramas idealize relationships that are akin to haram/un-Islamic, which resonates with theory of cultural hegemony, where dominant media (Korean soap operas and dramas) slowly but surely change cultural norms. Korean ideals of beauty also serve to reinforce Wolf's (1991) "beauty myth" by dictating how women should view themselves, which in turn impacts their body image, such as experiencing depression when they cannot live up to this idealized self. On the contrary, sociologists see cultural change as unavoidable and causal, which closely aligns with Robertson (1995) globalization theory, where the global is internalized into the local level. Media analysts have advocated for policies that favour the local media landscape to re-establish local reporting, resonating with Hesmondhalgh's (2013) perspective on cultural production.

Although Korean entertainment promotes cultural exchange, the potential for love, identity conflict and unrealistic expectations of Korean lifestyle and people remain as tensions. Writing in 2003, Buckingham stresses that critical shaping of foreign content is the type of media literacy education that is needed. According to Jenkins (2006), With the evolution of national media afflictions, the need to adapt becomes a necessity so they can compete on a global platform. If only the content creators (writers, directors, producers, etc.) could encourage each other to modernize the narratives to fit the needs of today's youth while not disconnecting from the cultural roots, the Pakistani youth can enjoy the entertainment of the world without divorcing from their heritage and hence enjoy a wholesome identity.

While analyzing the data, it became evident that not all group members' responses were identical. Instead, participants expressed a range of views depending on their social roles and

perspectives. Youth respondents highlighted Netflix's accessibility, emotional appeal, and Korean content's influence on their entertainment choices and identity. In contrast, parents raised concerns about cultural detachment and declining interest in Pakistani traditions, while educators focused on behavioral shifts and the academic impact of binge-watching. Cultural and religious scholars emphasized the potential conflict between Korean media values and Islamic norms. This diversity aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, which values variation in participant narratives as a strength in qualitative inquiry. Thus, assuming homogeneity among group members would oversimplify the complex, multilayered nature of their responses.

Conclusion

These findings highlight the indisputable role of Netflix as a catalyst in the emergence of K-Pop and K-dramas in their lives as cultural identity, social behaviours and entertainment of Pakistani youth shows considerable shift. Despite this helped children in Korea getting enthusiastic and immersed into Korean content, fashion, language, and lifestyle trends, parents and educators, cultural scholars expressed concern about this cultural shift within youth. The findings expose a complex relationship between K-Culture and local culture, where love for Korean media exists in tandem with fears of losing local culture, the rise of unrealistic beauty ideals, and changing social norms. This cultural shift needs a more critical approach toward media and societal influence so that limited Pakistani culture can be preserved with the global society.

With Korean entertainment becoming a more prominent factor in the daily life of Pakistani youth, the study underlines the need for better media awareness and cultural education to deal with the changing media environment. Although international entertainment offers avenues for learning and exposure to foreign cultures, the need to preserve local traditions is still crucial. Policymakers, educators, and families can promote critical media consumption while providing a healthy balance between in-and out-and media, ensuring that cultural exchange does not result in cultural erosion, but in a more informed and culturally rich generation.

Limitations

There are some limitations of this study like it is qualitative based upon interviews thus cannot cover and cannot accurately reflect the entire context of K-Pop and all the K-Dramas preferences within Pakistani youth. In part, this is because the research is really about Netflix as a streaming service, overlooking all the other digital, social, and media forces that are diverging and/or converging to change culture.

Future Research Direction / Recommendations

However, the present research being of qualitative nature, lack the quantitative dimension which need to be addressed in the future through mixed methods approach. Policy-makers along with educators are advised to create Media Literacy Programs that would allow youth to critically interact with foreign contents while still being able to retain their culture or identity. Moreover, there is a need for Pakistani entertainment industry, to invest in quality youth-centric content that compete the global media, in order to make sure that cultural narratives echo in the digital landscape.

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