

Comparative Study

Impact of Korean Wave on Eating Disorders: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on studying the relationship between the rising global popularity of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) and its potential impact on the likelihood for eating disorders. It investigates and questions if ideal bodies, strict beauty norms, and eating habits in Korean pop culture might lead to eating disorders in global fans. With a comprehensive literature review and empirical analysis, this research explores the many ways in which media exposure to K-dramas, K-pop, and Korean beauty shows and standards may influence body image perceptions as well as eating behaviors. In this study, we used the eating disorder examination scale-Q 6.0 by Fairburn & Beglin, 2008 and collected a sample of 100 adolescents and found that on average people who follow the Korean Wave scored higher on the eating disorder scale than those who are not interested in Korean pop culture. This study seeks to offer valuable insights to the fields of cultural studies and mental health, providing essential contributions to future discussions on the intricate relationship between media, culture, and mental well-being on a global level.

Keywords: Korean Wave, Eating Disorders, Pop Culture, Negative Body Images

In 2013, a Korean celebrity IU revealed her secret and extreme diet for quickly losing weight which led to a trend called "IU diet challenge" wherein people were consuming lesser than 400 calories a day. Sulli, a young bright soul and artist committed suicide and one of the many reasons for this was being a constant target for her weight. Momo, another Korean Artist from the famous group Twice, has also admitted to doing an ice cube diet where she only ate ice cubes along with nutrient supplements for two weeks in order to lose weight. Their stories are painful and disturbing, but unfortunately not unique. Many Korean women have shared their experiences of having negative body images because they are not able to fit in the societal standards. Korean boys are just as likely to internalize the ideal of beauty circulated by the media. With the arrival of K-wave, similar unhealthy actions are spreading at an accelerated rate, with the adolescent population being most vulnerable. The Korean Wave or K-wave is a cultural phenomenon in which the global popularity of South Korean culture and tradition has dramatically risen since the 1990s. In a recent study, South Korean kindergarten girls reported wanting to be thinner, a desire identified with how long the girls had been exposed to K- Pop television stations (Kim & Han, 2021).

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Adolescents are a population of particular interest as they are not only the largest followers of the K-wave but also because of their vulnerability to having a negative body image (Ganesan et al., 2018). And to fix that, they indulge in limiting their diets and taking inordinate measures to lose weight, hence suffering from eating disorders. Eating disorders are behavioral situations defined by excessive and continuous disturbances in eating behaviors and having related distressing thoughts and emotions. They can be a very serious condition affecting physical, psychological and social function. Social media has become a significant platform for promoting unrealistic beauty standards, which can contribute to the development of eating disorders. The Korean Wave has caused the proliferation of Korean beauty products and skincare routines, which have become popular worldwide. Social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, have played a significant role in promoting these products and routines, often featuring celebrities. There are a number of mukbang (Korean eating shows) videos on these platforms as well which, according to a study, influence disoriented eating and internet addiction (Kırcaburun et al., 2020).

Lately, especially since the lockdown in 2020 from COVID- 19, there has been a massive rise in the popularity of kpop and k-dramas which seems to have created an instability of body image among the youthful adolescents in India as well. Previous explorations have not established whether there's a connection between K- Pop and Kdrama videos exposure and the development of eating disorders in India. Therefore, in this study, we're interested in assessing whether a similar link exists, particularly in teenagers (14- 19). And there has been no such study done in India till date causing the interest in observing whether there exists a relationship between K-wave and eating disorders.

K-wave

The Korean Wave or K-wave is a term used to refer to the massive rising popularity of the South Korean Culture in terms of their variety shows, music, fashion and other cultural phenomena. Hallyu is another regional and popular term for K-wave. The worldwide interest in this was first seen with the release of the popular music video Gangnam Style by Psy which has more than a billion views. The Korean Wave has been recognized as a soft power for the growth of the South Korean economy. The first generation of the Korean Wave, also called Hallyu 1.0, was the initial rise in popularity of Korean popular culture within nearby Asian countries. The first era started out in China at some point of the late 1990s, and focused on the unfolding of Korean tv programming. The Korean authorities have additionally constructed and opened “K-Culture Valley” in Goyang, a Hallyu (K-wave) inspired theme park which will house everything from movie studios, Korean restaurants, music concerts and live shows to film galleries, hotels, and departmental stores promoting Korean idols merchandise at a cost of USD 1.2 billion. The fundamental additives of the Korean Wave – movies, track and the dramas – has given delivery to a brand-new generation of Korean celebrities who have achieved superstar status in the entire South East Asia including Japan, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam and the craze is not limited to these countries but is seen globally. BTS, Blackpink and others have been drawing huge crowds wherever they go.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are severe health conditions that may impact not only one's physical health but also mental health. These situations encompass troubles in the way one thinks of food, eating, weight and shape, and other eating behaviors. These signs can have an effect on your health, your feelings and your potential to perform in critical regions of life. Eating disorders can also cause lifelong damages to health and even death in some cases where negligence in the treatment has been seen. Research has shown that eating disorders are highly prevalent

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worldwide which brings a matter of concern (Galmiche et al., 2019). The principal varieties of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. A third category is "eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS)," which includes several variations of eating disorders. Most of these disorders are much like anorexia or bulimia but with slightly different characteristics. Binge-eating disorder, which has obtained growing studies and media interest in these years, is one kind of EDNOS. It is more common to have an eating disorder during adolescence or young adulthood, however it may also occur in childhood or later in adulthood. Women and girls are much more likely than males to develop an eating disorder. Eating disorders are real, treatable clinical illnesses with complicated underlying mental and biological causes. They regularly co-exist with different psychiatric disorders including depression, substance abuse, or anxiety disorders. People with eating disorders can also be afflicted by severe different physical health complications, which include coronary heart conditions or kidney failure, that could cause death. Furthermore, a 2011 study showed that eating disorders have a higher mortality rate than most other psychiatric disorders (Arcelus et al., 2011).

Eating disorders are treatable. Psychological and medicinal remedies are powerful for lots of eating disorders. However, in more chronic cases, particular treatments have not yet been identified. In such cases, different types of combinations of treatment are used consisting of hospital treatment and monitoring; medications; dietary counseling; and person, group and/or family psychotherapy. Sometimes there is also an additional need for hospitalization to deal with malnutrition or to reach a healthy weight, or for other different reasons.

The professional team for treatment may include:

- A psychologist to provide psychotherapy. And/or a psychiatrist in case of a needed medication prescription.
- A registered dietitian to provide education on nutrition and meal planning.
- Medical or dental professionals to deal with health or dental issues that result from an eating disorder.
- Your partner, parents or other family members. For adolescents and teenagers residing at home, parents have to be actively concerned in treatment and can supervise meals.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of Korean shows and songs on eating disorders.

Aim of the Study

To study the difference among Korean shows viewers and non-viewers on the dimension of eating disorder.

Hypothesis

There would be a significant difference among Korean shows viewers and non-viewers on the dimension of eating disorder.

Research Design

An independent sample t-test design was used for this study.

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Sample

We used a purposive sampling method of 100 young adolescents from India. The samples were selected on the basis of their choice of watching or not watching korean content. Of them, 50 were those who actively enjoyed watching korean content and the rest 50 were those who were not interested in kpop or k-dramas.

- The age range of participants was 14-19.
- Purposive sampling was used.

Inclusive Criteria

- The sample includes all genders.
- The sample includes adolescents in the age range of 14-19.
- The sample includes Indian citizens.

Exclusive Criteria

- Anyone falling out of the age range 14-19 was excluded.
- Any nationality other than Indian was excluded.

Tools Used

- **Eating disorder examination scale-Q 6.0 by Fairburn & Beglin, 2008:** We used the eating disorder examination scale-Q 6.0 by Fairburn & Beglin, 2008. The scale includes 28 items and each item measures the self-reported eating disorder symptoms in the preceding 28 days. The scale is rated on a 7 point likert scale (0-6), ranging from "no days" to "every day" with a score of 4 or higher indicative of clinical range. Internal consistency of the EDE-Q 6.0 has been shown to be good, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated to be 0.93. The EDE-Q has good concurrent validity and acceptable criterion validity as well. Google form was used for data collection and SPSS 25 was also used for analysis data.

Statistical Analysis

Independent sample t-test is used for this study.

Procedure

For the process of data collection, we used Google forms to reach out to participants to fill the questionnaire, and the participants were approached through groups made on social media applications such as Telegram or Instagram. Participants were told they would participate in a study based on music preferences and eating habits of adolescents and after completing informed consent, they were directed to the survey via Google forms after which debriefing was done. Participants were then thanked for their cooperation. The data was analyzed with the help of SPSS version 25.0.

RESULTS

The current study looks at the difference among Korean shows viewers and non-viewers on the dimension of Eating disorder.

Table. 1 Descriptive statistics - Mean and Std. Deviation of Kpop/Drama viewers and Non viewers.

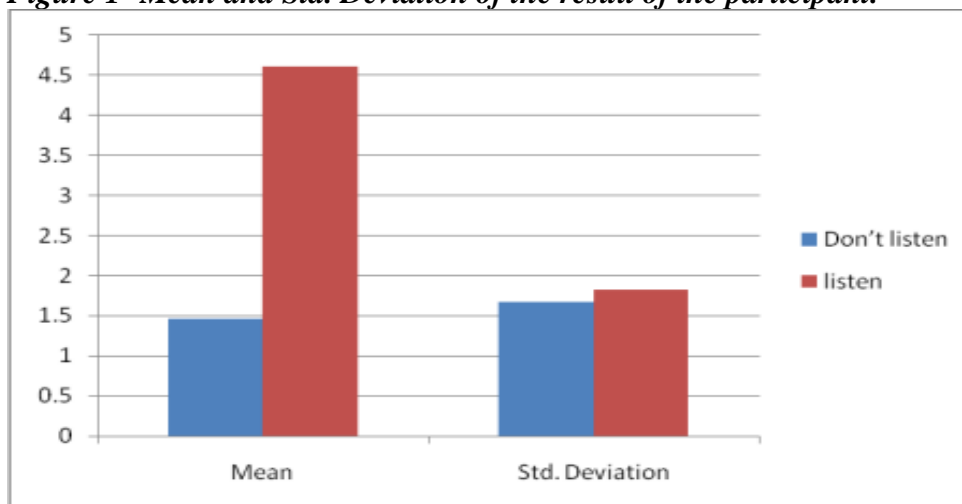
Kpop/kdrama	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non viewers	50	1.4580	4.6153
Viewers	50	1.67771	1.82421

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Table 1 exhibits the obtained value for mean and SD for on kpop/kdrama viewers and non-viewers.

On eating disorder dimension, kdrama/klpop viewers from adolescents age group scored a mean of 4.6153 (SD 1.82421), whereas, non-viewers of same age group scored a mean value of 1.4580 (SD 1.67771).

Figure 1- Mean and Std. Deviation of the result of the participant.



Note: The total no. of participants is N = 100

Table. 2 t-test and significance

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.609	.208	-9.008	98	.000	-3.15735
Equal variances not assumed			-9.008	97.321	.000	-3.15735

To study the difference among Korean shows viewers and non-viewers on the dimension of eating disorder. t-test was computed. t-value (-9.008 $p < .00$) was found to be significant at 0.01 level; it means that k-drama/klpop viewers and non-viewers differ on eating disorders.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to find the significant difference of eating disorders between Korean show viewers and non-viewers. The results of the study support the hypothesis that the global scores of people who watch kpop or Kdramas will indicate a higher presence of eating disorders than those who don't. The table provided displays the results of a statistical analysis comparing people who listen to Kpop/watch Kdramas and people who don't, and focuses on the difference in their levels of eating disorder examination variable according to the EDE Q-6 scale. First, the mean difference in the global score between the two groups was -3.15735, indicating that individuals who watch K-pop had, on average, a higher global score compared to those who do not. This suggests a potential association between listening to K-pop and lower overall well-being in terms of eating habits. The negative mean difference of -3.15735 suggests that, on average, people who don't watch Kpop have lower scores or values in the

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eating disorder examination scale Q-6 (EDEQ-6) compared to those who do. The standard error of the difference was 0.35050, providing a measure of the variability in the difference between the groups. The t-value of -9.008, with a corresponding p-value of .000, indicates that the difference in global scores between the two groups is statistically significant. This suggests that the observed difference is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. These findings align with previous studies that have examined the relationship between music preferences and psychological or cognitive outcomes. Several studies have suggested that music can have a significant impact on individuals' mood, cognitive abilities, and overall well-being. For example, research conducted (Ferguson & Sheldon 2013) found that individuals who frequently listen to upbeat and energetic music tend to report higher levels of happiness and positive affect compared to those who listen to other genres or don't listen to music at all. In the context of Kpop specifically, a study (Habibah et al., 2021) explored the influence of Kpop on Indonesian adolescents' eating habits and negative body image and found a positive association between Kpop music exposure and body image. However, it's important to note that their study focused on a specific demographic and assessed a different outcome measure. While these previous studies do not directly correlate with the measured variable of eating disorders in the Indian population in this analysis, they provide a broader context for understanding the potential effects of music preferences on various psychological and cognitive outcomes. The negative mean difference in this study suggests that individuals who don't listen to Kpop or watch Kdramas have lower scores on the eating disorder examination scale, whereas people who listen to kpop or watch Kdramas scored significantly higher indicating that exposure to Korean variety shows and content has an influence on the eating lifestyle of an individual and may be a factor for borderline eating disorders. This suggests that kpop/kdrama viewers are trying to become like their favorites in terms of physical appearance. Korea is known for its high beauty standards which is also strictly followed by Korean idols. These idols even go public with their diets and routines revealing and promoting concepts such as "ice-diet" or "watermelon-diet". All of this pseudo perfectionism seems to be the possible reason for viewers getting influenced and changing their lifestyle and eating habits in order to achieve a similar appearance as their idol. Thus, the findings from this analysis, along with insights from previous studies examining the effects of music preferences on psychological and cognitive outcomes, suggest that there may be a relationship between listening to Kpop or watching Kdramas/Korean variety shows and the development of eating disorders. However, further research is necessary to fully understand the underlying mechanisms and potential implications of this association.

CONCLUSION

The present study conducted shows the comparison between individuals who listen to K-pop/watch Kdramas and those who do not on the dimension of eating disorder several key findings can be highlighted. The analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with a p-value of .000, indicating that the observed difference is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. In conclusion, the data provided in the table indicate that individuals who watch K-pop may have poorer eating habits compared to those who do not. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on the potential impact of music preferences on well-being and highlight the need for additional studies to better understand the complex relationship between music, cultural preferences, and overall well-being.

Limitations

Data collection was made by approaching participants through telegram groups that may or may not have led to response bias and there is a restraint of money and resources for this study.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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