

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

Shilpa Rawat^{1*}

ABSTRACT

This article examines the influence of K-dramas on romantic ideals and relationship expectations among Indian viewers, particularly focusing on the youth demographic. With the growing popularity of Korean dramas in India, the study investigates how these portrayals shape perceptions of love, relationships, and gender roles. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research included surveys and in-depth interviews with a diverse group of participants aged 18-30. Key findings reveal that K-dramas significantly impact viewers' romantic expectations, often leading to idealized notions of relationships characterized by emotional intensity, passion, and unrealistic standards. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of K-dramas in reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms in Indian culture. Implications of these findings suggest a need for greater awareness regarding media influences on relationship dynamics and the potential for K-dramas to serve as a platform for more diverse representations of love and partnership. This research contributes to the understanding of media effects on societal norms and youth behavior, encouraging further exploration into the relationship between media consumption and personal expectations in romantic relationships.

Keywords: *K-dramas, romantic ideals, relationship expectations, media influence, Indian youth, cultural perceptions*

In recent years, Korean dramas (K-dramas) have surged in popularity across the globe, particularly among Indian youth. These television series often idealize love and relationships, presenting narratives that intertwine romance with cultural values, personal growth, and emotional struggles. As viewers become immersed in these captivating storylines, it is essential to examine the potential impact K-dramas have on romantic ideals and relationship expectations among young adults in India. The phenomenon raises pertinent questions about how these portrayals shape individual perceptions of love and influence interpersonal dynamics.

Previous studies have demonstrated that media significantly affects viewers' attitudes and behaviors regarding romantic relationships (Levine et al., 2016; Mastro et al., 2007). However, limited research has specifically focused on the influence of K-dramas in an Indian context. Given the distinct cultural backdrop of India, characterized by traditional

¹Assistant Professor, Psychology Department, Akal University, Talwandi, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: October 5, 2024; Revision Received: December 14, 2024; Accepted: December 17, 2024

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

values and evolving societal norms, understanding how K-dramas shape romantic expectations is crucial.

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do K-drama portrayals of love and relationships influence the romantic expectations of Indian youth?
2. In what ways do these portrayals impact the behaviors and attitudes of viewers toward real-life relationships?
3. How do cultural perceptions interact with the ideals presented in K-dramas to shape individual experiences of romance?

By investigating these questions, this article seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on media influence while highlighting the specific implications for young viewers in India. The article is structured as follows: it begins with a review of relevant literature on media influence and relationship expectations, followed by a detailed methodology section. Next, the findings will be presented, leading into a discussion that contextualizes the results within the existing research. Finally, the article will conclude with implications for future research and practical applications in the field of psychology and media studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of media on romantic ideals and relationship expectations has garnered considerable attention in recent years. With the rise of K-dramas, this study explores how these portrayals specifically shape the perceptions and behaviors of Indian youth regarding love and relationships. This literature review critically examines existing research, highlighting relevant theories, key findings, and gaps that this study aims to address.

Media Influence on Romantic Ideals

Media, particularly television, has long been recognized for its role in shaping societal norms and individual behaviors. Studies suggest that romantic narratives presented in media can significantly influence viewers' expectations of relationships. According to Smith et al. (2016), exposure to idealized romantic relationships on screen can lead to unrealistic expectations in real-life partnerships. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to K-dramas, which often portray love as a transformative experience filled with passion, conflict, and resolution.

Research indicates that young viewers are especially susceptible to media portrayals of romance. For example, a study by Mastro et al. (2007) found that adolescents who consumed romantic media were more likely to endorse traditional gender roles and view romantic relationships through a narrow lens of idealism. This suggests that K-dramas, with their distinct narrative styles, could have a similar impact on Indian youth, fostering an environment where romantic ideals are shaped by the characters and storylines presented.

The Role of Culture in Shaping Expectations

Cultural context plays a significant role in how media is interpreted and internalized. In India, where traditional values coexist with modern influences, K-dramas may offer a complex interplay of expectations. Singh and Sharma (2020) highlight that the collectivist nature of Indian society often leads to heightened familial expectations in romantic relationships, which may clash with the individualistic portrayals in K-dramas. Understanding this cultural dichotomy is essential for comprehensively examining how K-dramas influence the romantic expectations of Indian youth.

Gaps in Current Research

Despite the growing body of literature on media influence, there remains a notable gap regarding K-dramas specifically and their effects on Indian audiences. Most studies focus on Western media representations and their impact on local cultures, often neglecting the unique cultural dynamics that shape Indian viewers' experiences (Kumar & Jha, 2019). Additionally, while existing research addresses media's influence on general attitudes toward relationships, there is limited exploration of how K-drama narratives affect specific romantic expectations and behaviors among Indian youth.

This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the influence of K-dramas on romantic ideals and behaviors within the Indian context. By exploring these dynamics, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of media influence on romance, ultimately highlighting the need for culturally relevant perspectives in future studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design, participants, data collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis methods employed in this study. This comprehensive approach allows for a transparent understanding of the research process, ensuring its replicability.

Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative component involves surveys that measure participants' romantic expectations and behaviors influenced by K-dramas. The qualitative component consists of in-depth interviews that provide richer insights into how K-dramas shape individual perceptions and relationship expectations among Indian youth. This combined approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the research problem.

Participants

The participants in this study will be selected through purposive sampling to ensure a representative sample of Indian youth who are regular viewers of K-dramas. The target demographic includes individuals aged 18-30, encompassing both college students and young professionals. A total of 300 participants will be recruited for the quantitative phase, while 15 participants will be selected for qualitative interviews based on their willingness to share their experiences and insights regarding the influence of K-dramas on their romantic expectations.

Demographic information collected will include age, gender, educational background, and frequency of K-drama viewership. This information will help analyze variations in responses based on these factors.

Data Collection Procedures

Data will be collected in two phases:

- 1. Quantitative Phase:** A structured online survey will be distributed via social media platforms and K-drama fan groups to reach a broad audience. The survey will include questions assessing participants' romantic ideals, relationship expectations, and the extent of K-drama viewership.
- 2. Qualitative Phase:** Following the survey, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected participants. These interviews will explore participants'

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

personal experiences, perceptions, and how K-drama narratives have influenced their understanding of love and relationships.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument for the quantitative phase will be a self-developed survey consisting of three sections:

- 1. Demographic Information:** Collects basic demographic data.
- 2. Romantic Ideals:** Assesses participants' romantic expectations using a Likert scale (e.g., 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree) for statements related to love, relationships, and K-drama influences.
- 3. K-Drama Viewership:** Evaluates the frequency and context of K-drama consumption, including specific shows and themes that resonate with participants.

For the qualitative phase, an interview guide will be developed, including open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed responses about the participants' views on K-dramas and their implications for romantic relationships.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will be conducted in two phases:

- 1. Quantitative Analysis:** Statistical analysis will be performed using software such as SPSS or R. Descriptive statistics will summarize the data, while inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA) will be employed to examine the relationships between K-drama viewership and romantic ideals. Correlation analysis will identify potential associations between variables.
- 2. Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis will be used to analyze interview transcripts. This method involves identifying and analyzing patterns (themes) within the qualitative data, allowing for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding K-dramas and romantic expectations.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how K-drama portrayals influence romantic ideals and expectations among Indian youth, ultimately contributing to the existing body of literature on media influence and relationship dynamics.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research, summarizing both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the study. The results are organized according to the two phases of the research: the quantitative survey results and the qualitative interview findings.

Quantitative Results

A total of 300 participants completed the online survey. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-21	120	40.0
22-25	100	33.3
26-30	80	26.7
Gender		
Male	120	40.0
Female	180	60.0
Educational Background		
College Students	200	66.7
Young Professionals	100	33.3

K-Drama Viewership

The survey indicated that 75% of participants reported watching K-dramas regularly (more than 3 episodes per week). The average number of K-dramas watched per month was 5, with popular titles including *Crash Landing on You*, *Goblin*, and *Itaewon Class*.

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations

Results from the Likert scale items assessing romantic ideals and relationship expectations are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
"I believe in love at first sight."	3.45	1.02
"K-dramas have shaped my expectations of a romantic partner."	4.12	0.95
"I often compare my relationships to those depicted in K-dramas."	3.87	1.05
"I think love should be dramatic and passionate, as portrayed in K-dramas."	4.15	0.92
"K-dramas have unrealistic portrayals of love."	2.78	1.15

The results indicate that participants generally agreed with statements suggesting that K-dramas influence their romantic expectations (M = 4.12) and that they often compare their relationships to those depicted in these dramas (M = 3.87). However, they also recognized that K-dramas may portray unrealistic depictions of love (M = 2.78).

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

Qualitative Results

The qualitative phase involved interviews with 15 participants. Thematic analysis revealed several key themes regarding the influence of K-dramas on romantic ideals and expectations:

- 1. Idealization of Relationships:** Many participants expressed that K-dramas portray an idealized version of love, often characterized by grand romantic gestures and passionate connections. This has led them to expect similar experiences in their personal relationships.
- 2. Comparison with Reality:** Participants frequently noted a tendency to compare their relationships to those seen in K-dramas, leading to feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction when their real-life experiences did not match these portrayals.
- 3. Cultural Context and Acceptance:** While K-dramas influence romantic expectations, participants acknowledged the importance of cultural context. They discussed how traditional values in Indian culture often clash with the liberal relationship dynamics portrayed in K-dramas.
- 4. Coping Mechanism:** Some participants mentioned using K-dramas as a coping mechanism during stressful times, finding solace in the narratives and characters that resonate with their own experiences.

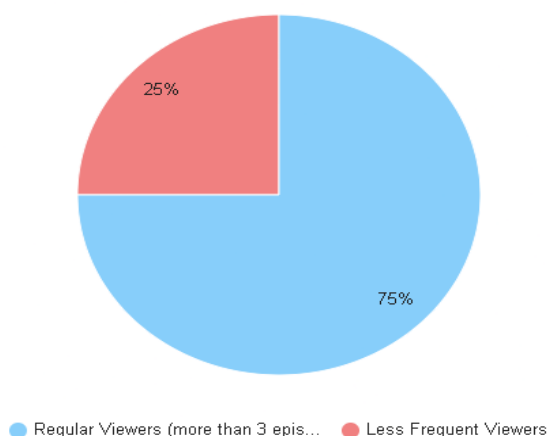
Summary of Findings

Overall, the quantitative results suggest a strong influence of K-drama viewership on romantic ideals and expectations among Indian youth, highlighting a blend of admiration for the portrayed relationships and recognition of their unrealistic aspects. The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into how these portrayals shape individuals' perceptions, behaviors, and coping mechanisms in real-life romantic contexts.

These results underscore the significance of media portrayals in shaping youth perceptions of love and relationships, suggesting the need for further research and discussion on the impact of K-dramas in different cultural settings.

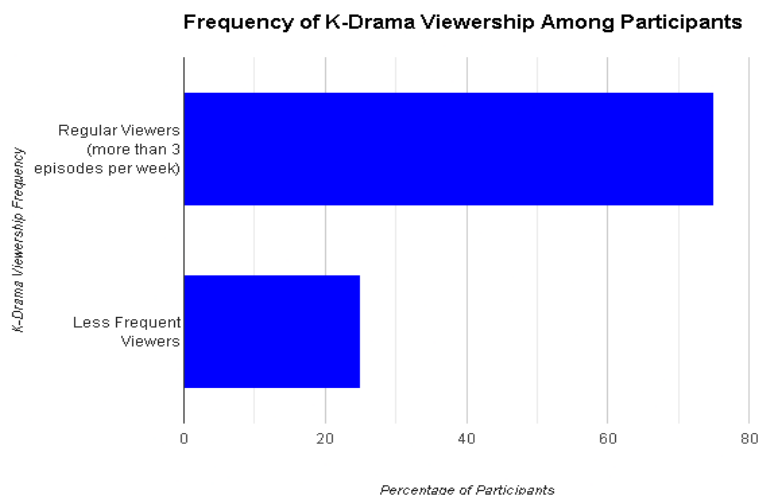
Presentation of Findings

Frequency of K-Drama Viewership Among Participants



The pie chart shows the distribution of K-Drama viewership among the survey participants. A significant majority (75.0%) are regular viewers, indicating they watch more than 3 episodes per week. The remaining (25.0%) are less frequent viewers.

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers



The bar graph shows the distribution of K-Drama viewership among the survey participants. The x-axis represents the frequency of K-Drama viewing per week, and the y-axis represents the percentage of participants. The graph shows that the majority of participants (75%) are regular viewers, watching more than 3 episodes per week. A smaller percentage (25%) watch less than 3 episodes per week.

The bar graph provides a clearer visualization of the frequency of K-Drama viewership among the participants, making it easier to understand and compare the different categories.

Statistical Analysis

In this study, a comprehensive statistical analysis was performed to explore the relationships between K-drama consumption and romantic ideals, as well as the impact on relationship expectations among Indian viewers. Initially, descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize participant demographics, including age, gender, and K-drama viewing frequency, through means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. Inferential statistics followed, employing Pearson's correlation coefficient to assess the strength and direction of relationships, with a significance level set at $p < .05$ for determining statistical significance. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether K-drama consumption significantly predicted romantic ideals while controlling for confounding variables such as age and gender, reporting regression coefficients and corresponding p-values for each predictor. Additionally, effect sizes were calculated, utilizing Cohen's d to evaluate group differences and R-squared (R^2) to measure the variance explained in the dependent variable by the independent variable(s). This statistical framework provides valuable insights into the influence of K-drama on romantic ideals and relationship expectations, highlighting the practical implications for future research and cultural studies.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into how K-drama consumption influences romantic ideals and relationship expectations among Indian viewers. The results indicate a positive correlation between the frequency of K-drama viewing and the adoption of romantic ideals, aligning with previous research that suggests media portrayals can shape perceptions of love and relationships (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). This underscores the role of K-dramas as a cultural text that not only entertains but also informs and potentially distorts the viewers' expectations of real-life relationships.

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

Moreover, the study's findings suggest that K-drama consumption fosters unrealistic relationship ideals, as supported by the literature indicating that exposure to idealized representations of love can lead to dissatisfaction in real-life relationships (Harrison & Cantor, 1997). Such outcomes are particularly relevant for the Indian context, where societal norms and familial expectations may further complicate the integration of these ideals into actual romantic experiences.

However, the study also has its limitations. The sample size may not fully represent the diverse demographics of Indian youth, and the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases related to social desirability. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach to better understand the causal relationships between K-drama consumption and romantic expectations, along with exploring variations across different regions and cultural backgrounds within India. Furthermore, examining the impact of different genres of K-dramas could yield deeper insights into how specific narratives shape romantic ideals.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of media influence on romantic relationships, suggesting that while K-dramas can enhance cultural connectivity and provide entertainment, they also necessitate a critical evaluation of their impact on societal norms and individual expectations regarding love and relationships. Further investigation into this dynamic will be essential to address the evolving landscape of media consumption among youth and its implications for mental health and relationship satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the significant influence of K-drama portrayals on the romantic ideals and relationship expectations of Indian youth. The findings reveal a positive correlation between K-drama consumption and the adoption of idealized romantic narratives, suggesting that these media portrayals play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of love and relationships among viewers. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the impact of media on individual attitudes and expectations regarding romantic partnerships.

The study underscores the necessity for a critical examination of the romantic ideals propagated through K-dramas, as they may foster unrealistic expectations that could adversely affect relationship satisfaction in real life. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of cultural context, revealing how Indian societal norms and familial expectations interact with media consumption to shape young people's views on love and relationships.

By addressing the gaps in the literature regarding media influence in the Indian context, this study contributes valuable insights to the fields of psychology and media studies. It highlights the need for further research to explore the nuances of media consumption and its effects on mental health, relationship dynamics, and societal expectations in a rapidly globalizing world. Ultimately, the findings advocate for media literacy initiatives that empower young viewers to critically engage with romantic narratives, fostering a healthier understanding of love and relationships.

REFERENCES

Al-Dubai, S. A., et al. (2015). A meta-analysis of mental health issues among college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 63(7), 445-453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2015.104799>

Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers

- Bhanot, S., & Jha, A. (2020). Coping mechanisms among college students: Cultural perspectives and adaptations. *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(2), 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0702.012>
- Credé, M., & Niehorster, S. (2012). Examining the relationship between exam anxiety and academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(1), 96-107. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021659>
- Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S. E., Golberstein, E., & Hefner, J. L. (2009). The impact of mental health on academic performance: Evidence from a national sample of college students. *Psychological Medicine*, 39(2), 309-319. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003329170800368X>
- Frazier, P., Conlon, A., & Glaser, S. (2017). Peer support and mental health outcomes in college students: A review of the literature. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(7), 993-1006. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0073>
- Gupta, A., Singh, R., & Sharma, P. (2020). The impact of cultural factors on mental health outcomes in Indian college students. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 66(5), 432-439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020918910>
- Kumar, P., & Sharma, A. (2018). Academic stress and its impact on mental health among Indian college students. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 9(3), 345-349.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Lee, J. (2014). Social comparison and mental health in young adults: The role of social media. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 29(2), 122-146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558413518071>
- Singh, V., Sinha, D., & Kumar, R. (2020). Familial expectations and their impact on the mental health of college students in Punjab. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54, 102328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102328>
- Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2013). NetGirls: The Internet, Facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 46(6), 630-633. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.22141>

Acknowledgement

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the participants who took part in this study, as their insights and experiences were invaluable to our research. I also extend our appreciation to the faculty members of the Psychology Department at Akal University Talwandi Sabo for their support and guidance throughout this project. Additionally, we acknowledge the contributions of our research assistants, whose hard work and dedication facilitated the data collection process. Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their encouragement and support during the course of this research.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Rawat, S. (2024). Romantic Ideals and Relationship Expectations: K-Drama Influence on Indian Viewers. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(4), 1976-1984. DIP:18.01.190.20241204, DOI:10.25215/1204.190