

Comparative Study

Emotional Stability, Body Image and Psychological Well-being of Korean Drama viewers and Non Korean Drama viewers: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Korean drama has gained immense popularity in these recent years, influencing the emotions, perception and psychological well being of the viewers. This study explores the relationship between emotional stability (ES), body image, and psychological well-being among Korean drama (K-drama) viewers and non-viewers. By comparing both groups, the research examines how K-dramas influence self-perception, emotional regulation, and mental health. Findings suggest that while K-dramas cannot enhance emotional engagement, they may contribute to body dissatisfaction and unrealistic expectations. The study highlights the psychological impact of media consumption and emphasizes the importance of media literacy in fostering healthier viewing habits.

Keywords: *Emotional stability, body image, psychological well-being, Korean dramas, media influence*

The Korean media wave has gained immense popularity in the recent years through its colorful, vibrant entertainment scenes. The consumption of Korean media, Korean food, skincare, makeup, dresses have been increasing consumed by the people worldwide. The Korean government has increasingly supported the idea of exporting the cultural good of Korea around the world.

In India, the Zee Zindagi channel was the only channel which broadcasted the Korean drama dubbed in Hindi, this channel aired the episode of boys over flowers dubbed in Hindi and in 2016-17 the episodes of Descendants of the sun was also broadcasted. Earlier the Korean dramas used to come on the televisions, recently television has been replaced by the mobile platforms, there are various platforms that streams Korean dramas and films such as YouTube, and numerous OTT platforms such as Netflix, Viki, Amazon prime, Disney+ etc. There was language barrier earlier, but they are broken down by multi language dubbing and various subtitles which made Korean media accessible to audiences all over the world (Choi and Park, 2019).

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Korean dramas has spread very rapidly and it has affected the dress code, behaviour, language and several other aspects. Now a days, some youth are seen to be using Korean words such as “Jinja” (Really), “Ottoke” (What should I do), “Oppa” (Older brother) etc. That shows the curiosity and the influence of Korean dramas on people. This can have both positive and negative impact on the individual. K-dramas create likable characters and tackle universal subjects to connect with viewers on a deeper level.

Because of visually appealing actors and interesting storyline the individual tends to engage in Korean media consumption. By providing well-developed people with defects, goals, and challenges that viewers can relate to, they go beyond visual representations (Rowe,2018). The narratives incorporate various themes such as love, sorrow, friendship, and societal challenges, which encourage viewers to contemplate their own lives and experiences (Choi&Park,2019). These common human experiences transcend cultural barriers in a world growing more interconnected by the day, encouraging empathy, and understanding (Jin & Phua, 2018). The romanticized depiction of Korean society in K-dramas has drawn criticism for possibly missing the subtleties of real Korean life (Jin&Phua, 2018).

Emotional stability is the one capability to maintain one’s emotional equilibrium while under pressure.

Body image is ones perception about their body. “The picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the appears to ourselves’ (Schilder, 1950: 11).

Psychological well being can be said as presence of positive feelings (eg.- good self esteem) or the absence of negative feelings. Psychological well-being is a “State of ideal mental health and general functioning, marked by happy feelings, a clear sense of purpose, and solid interpersonal relationships” (Dhanabhakya&Sarath,2023:605).

Emotional stability, body image, and psychological well-being—are interconnected in shaping an individual’s mental health and self-perception. Their relationship is particularly relevant in the context of media exposure, such as K-drama consumption, which may influence or moderate these psychological aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A comparative study was done to investigate the Emotional Intelligence, Life satisfaction, and overall psychological well-being of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers by Trishika Baid (2024). A comparative study was done to analyze if there is potential difference in the emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and psychological well-being in the K-drama viewers and non K-dramas viewers. The research measured the three variables through standardized psychometric test. The research was conducted on 120 sample. According to the statistical analysis done there was no significant impact of Korean dramas on the emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and overall psychological well-being of the viewers.

The Increasing popularity of Korean content, especially Korean dramas (K-dramas), in Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic is examined in a study by Bhatti, Khalid & Khalid. (2022). According to their research, the number of people watching K-dramas has significantly increased, and many of them are immersed in the series for hours everyday. Viewers have indicated that they prefer K- dramas to conventional Pakistani dramas, which

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is consistent with this trend. The study credits the distinctive plots, visually stunning productions, and gifted actors of K-dramas for this. The study notes that its survey technique has limits, but it also reveals a possible long-term trend in Pakistani viewing patterns—namely, an increasing acceptance of the Korean Wave.

Yoke and Jamil's (2022) studied the impact of Korean dramas on the youth in Malaysia. According to their research, K-dramas have a big influence on young Malaysians. A quantitative online survey with close to 50 respondents was used in the study. Most respondents had a strong positive influence from K-dramas, with many claiming an increased interest in Korean fashion, cuisine, and tourism. The majority also concurred that viewing K-dramas increased their knowledge of other cultures and even encouraged them to take up language study in Korea. The study acknowledged its limitations because of the limited sample size and the use of an online survey, indicating the need for more research on the impact of K-dramas on young people in Malaysia.

Sukendi et al. (2023) investigated what influences fan behaviour and viewer satisfaction with K-dramas. Five aspects were shown to have an impact on enjoyment: emotional connection, commitment, participation, and attractiveness, credibility and feeling immersed. According to the study, when viewers find K-dramas appealing, believable, and engaging, they will enjoy them more. It's noted that too much attachment to the narrative may make it less enjoyable.

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the problem

The present study is comparative study of Emotional stability, Body Image, Psychological wellbeing of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers.

Sample

The sampling size consists of 140 participants which includes 70 Korean drama viewers and 70 non Korean drama viewers. The sampling technique to be used would be Purposive Sampling Method. The participants would be either asked fill out Google forms or may be shared a hard copy of the questionnaire.

The inclusion criteria would be:

- Those who may or may not watch Korean drama entertainment.
- Those who belong to 15-25 age group.
- Those who are willing to participate.

The exclusion criteria would be :

- Those who are above 25 and below 15.
- Those who are cognitively impaired.

Research design

In the current research Comparative analysis research design would be used. The research would follow a mixed method design to collect and analyze data. It would focus on the emotional stability, body satisfaction, and psychological well-being of Korean dramas viewers and non Korean drama viewers, to identify potential difference or similarities among the two groups. A content analysis is to be done to analyze potential difference

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between the media of Korean drama other medias and Bollywood/ Hollywood media. Thematic Analysis was done to find potential themes.

Objective of the study

- To study and compare the Emotional stability of the Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers.
- To study and compare the body image of the Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers.
- To study and compare the psychological well-being of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers.
- To study the influence of Korean dramas on the Emotional stability, Body image and psychological well-being of the viewers of Korean media.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly higher Emotional stability than Non- Korean drama viewers.
- **H2:** Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly lower Body Image than Non-Korean drama viewers.
- **H3:** Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly higher Psychological well-being than non Korean drama viewers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Comparative statistics of Emotional stability, body image and psychological well being of Korean drama and non- Korean drama viewers. (n=140)

Test Statistic	Value	Hypothesis
Emotional stability	P-value: .173	Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly higher Emotional stability than Non- Korean drama viewers.
	Mean rank:- Viewers: 69.12 Non-viewers: 71.88	Rejected.
Body Image	P-value: <.001	Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly lower Body Image than Non- Korean drama viewers.
	Mean rank:- Viewers: 54.75 Non-viewers: 86.25	Accepted.
Psychological well-being	P-value: <.001	Korean drama viewers would exhibit significantly higher Psychological well-being than non Korean drama viewers.
	Mean rank:- Viewers: 97.81 Non-viewers: 43.19	Accepted.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the statistical values obtained by comparing the Emotional stability scores of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers. No statistically significant difference

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was noted, according to the Mann-Whitney U test, which produced a p-value of .173. This result implies that, in contrast to the hypothesis, people's total emotional stability may not be significantly impacted by their interaction with K-dramas. Irrespective of their K-drama watching habits, both groups demonstrated comparable emotional stability. The assumption that K-drama viewers would exhibit better levels of emotional stability in comparison to non-viewers is challenged by the non-significant finding.

This could be explained by the fact that emotional stability is impacted by a wide range of variables other than media use. K-dramas may provoke strong emotions in viewers and help them develop empathy and perspective-taking skills, but these reactions might not always result in increased emotional stability. Individuals emotional stability may be shaped more by other factors than only media use, such as social interactions, life events, and personality qualities. It's possible that different viewers of K-dramas will have different emotional reactions or develop different levels of emotional awareness. It is possible for viewers emotional experiences and ensuing emotional intelligence to be influenced by variables like their personal experiences, cultural background, and preferred genres.

Moreover, the lack of statistical significance could also emphasize the intricate and diverse characteristics of emotional stability. Self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills are just a few of the abilities that makeup emotional stability. These abilities can be impacted by a broad range of internal and external circumstances. K-dramas might not be the only factor in determining someone's emotional stability, even though they might present chances for emotional connection and introspection.

The quantitative data analysis suggests that there was no significant differences between both the group. The Hypothesis suggesting that “Korean drama viewers would exhibit higher Emotional stability compare to non Korean drama viewers.”, was **Rejected**. Both the group exhibited similar level of Emotional stability.

Hence despite different perception of the viewers both the group had similar level of emotional stability because of their different coping mechanisms.

Table 1 shows the statistical values obtained by comparing the Body image scores of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers. Statistically significant difference was noted, according to Mann-Whitney U test which produced the p-value of <.001. This result implies that, in accordance to Hypothesis, people's body image would be significantly impacted by their interaction with K-dramas. People who watch K-dramas exhibited low score on body image scale and people who don't exhibit high score on body image scale. The assumption that Korean drama viewers would exhibit lower level of body image in comparison to non viewers is accepted by the statistically significant findings.

Korean dramas (K-dramas) often portray highly idealized beauty standards, which can contribute to negative body image among viewers. The actors and actresses frequently embody narrow definitions of beauty, such as having flawless skin, slim physiques, and specific facial features like large eyes or small noses. These characteristics are not only glorified but are also linked to romantic success, social status, and happiness within the storylines. As viewers consume these media representations, they may begin to compare themselves to the characters, feeling inadequate if they don't match the perceived ideals.

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The frequent use of cosmetic enhancements or digital editing can further distort viewers' perceptions, making it harder for them to accept their own, more realistic, body shapes.

The quantitative data analysis suggests that there was significant differences between both the group. The Hypothesis suggesting that "Korean drama viewers would exhibit lower Emotional stability compare to non Korean drama viewers.", was **Accepted**. Korean drama viewer exhibited lower body image satisfaction compared to non Korean drama viewers.

Hence, The body image satisfaction of Korean drama viewers are lower because they often compared their body and skin to that of Korean dramas actors. Whereas the non viewers depicted higher body image because of versatility of body types shown in the movies and dramas.

Table 1 shows the statistical values obtained by comparing the Psychological well-being scores of Korean drama viewers and non Korean drama viewers. Statistically significant difference was noted, according to Mann-Whitney U test which produced the p-value of $<.001$. This result implies that, in accordance to Hypothesis people's total psychological well-being would be significantly impacted by their interaction with Korean dramas. People who watch Korean dramas exhibited high psychological well-being and those who don't exhibited low scores on Psychological well-being being. The assumption that Korean drama viewers would exhibit high level of Psychological well-being in comparison to non viewers is accepted by the statistically significant findings.

Korean dramas viewers can exhibit high level of Psychological well-being, as Korean dramas tend to show emotionally engaging narratives often provide viewers with an immersive experience, fostering strong emotional connections with characters and storylines. This can lead to a greater sense of emotional fulfillment and escapism, helping viewers manage stress. Korean dramas often depict themes of personal growth, social bonds, and resilience, which may resonate with viewers and inspire positive reflections on their own lives. The sense of community that often accompanies fandoms around Korean dramas, where fans engage in discussions and share experiences, may also contribute to feelings of belonging and social connectedness, further boosting psychological well-being.

Korean dramas depict the cultural richness and aesthetic beauty portrayed in K-dramas often serve as a form of positive escapism. The visually appealing settings, character designs, and romanticized versions of real-life situations can transport viewers into a different world, helping them momentarily detach from their personal concerns. K-drama fandoms plays a significant role in enhancing well-being. Many viewers connect with others through online communities, fan groups, and social media, sharing discussions, fan theories, and emotional reactions. This collective engagement fosters a sense of belonging and shared identity, which is known to contribute positively to social well-being. Through these interactions, viewers build friendships, find support, and experience social validation, which can further improve their overall psychological health.

The quantitative data analysis suggests that there was significant differences between both the group. The Hypothesis suggesting that "Korean drama viewers would exhibit higher Psychological well- being compare to non Korean drama viewers.", was **Accepted**.

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Hence the Korean drama viewers reported a higher level of Psychological well-being compare to non Korean drama viewers because the Korean drama provides a sense of comfort, relaxation and a sense of connection and belongingness. Whereas the non Korean drama viewers reported a little lower Psychological well beings compared to Korean drama viewers.

Qualitative data analysis

Table 2: Qualitative Data and themes (n=140).

Variables	Themes
Emotional stability	Escapism and Emotional Regulation. Emotional investment in fictional character.
Body image	Comparison with Actors Physical Appearance.
Psychological well-being	As a source of comfort and relaxation. Empowerment and motivation from character portrayals.

For the qualitative data, the sample was of 140, all the participants were said to fill out the 5 question such as why do they enjoy watching their preferred drama or movie, what are their preferred genres etc.

For the qualitative data analysis, Content analysis was done to understand the different content shown in the Korean dramas and media and Non Korean dramas and media i.e. Bollywood and Hollywood content. To identify the difference between the media content of two different media. Thematic analysis was done to find different themes that emerged, “Escapism and Emotional Regulation.” “Emotional investment in fictional character.”, K-dramas work as a catharsis for viewers, viewers use Korean dramas as a means of overcoming stress and escaping from reality. K-drama viewers tend to connect with the fictional characters and related to their problems that make them feel that they are somewhat similar, whereas on the other hand non-Korean drama viewers when asked about how do they cope or manage stress, they said they would engage in activities such as physical exercise and would talk to a friend. They said Bollywood or Hollywood movies are such that they are packed with action and adventure, they said that can’t be used to relax and these movies are only source of entertainment and sense of gratification.

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portrayals.” Korean drama viewers reported that they felt a connection with the characters such as a character starting from nothing to making his or her own ways gave them a sense of empowerment and motivation and Korean drama viewers reported whenever they watch Korean drama they felt relaxed because of soothing story line and after a hectic day they felt a relaxed after watching Korean dramas. Where as Non Korean drama viewers said that Bollywood and Hollywood movies are good to watch but they don't feel a sense of connection and attachment towards the characters. Korean drama viewers also said that they engage with various online fan pages of viewers that makes them feel a sense of connection with people with similar interests.

CONCLUSION

The study examined differences in emotional stability, body image, and psychological well-being between Korean drama viewers and non-viewers.

Conclusion for quantitative Data

- No significant difference was found in emotional stability between the two groups.
- Korean drama viewers had lower body image perceptions compared to non-viewers.
- Korean drama viewers exhibited higher psychological well-being than non-viewers.

Conclusion for qualitative Data

Emotional stability is primarily influenced by long-term personal traits, social support, and life experiences rather than specific media consumption. While Korean dramas may evoke strong emotional responses, these effects are temporary and do not significantly alter an individual's overall emotional stability. The consistency in emotional stability across both groups suggests that personality and external factors play a more dominant role than media exposure.

Korean drama viewers reported lower body image perceptions, possibly due to the idealized beauty standards frequently depicted in these dramas. Characters in Korean dramas often have flawless appearances, emphasizing physical aesthetics, which may lead viewers to internalize unrealistic beauty ideals. This aligns with social comparison theory, where repeated exposure to unattainable beauty standards can contribute to body dissatisfaction.

Despite concerns about body image, Korean drama viewers showed higher psychological well-being compared to non-viewers. This may be linked to the uplifting, emotionally engaging, and relatable narratives in Korean dramas. Themes such as love, personal growth, and overcoming adversity provide viewers with emotional comfort, escapism, and entertainment. The positive psychological impact may align with uses and gratifications theory, suggesting that viewers seek and receive emotional benefits from media consumption.

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Conflict of Interest

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