

A STUDY ON BINGE-WATCHING BEHAVIOUR TOWARD KOREAN DRAMAS AMONG YOUNG ADULT MALAY MUSLIM WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Korean dramas have gained popularity in Malaysia, leading to increased binge-watching behaviour among viewers. This study explores Korean dramas' influence on Malay Muslim women in Malaysia, specifically on the signs of binge-watching behaviour. Insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with five young adult Malay Muslim women. The findings reveal how Korean dramas contribute to binge-watching behaviour among this demographic, emphasizing factors like cost-effectiveness and accessibility of streaming platforms. The study also examines indicators of binge-watching behaviour, including emotional engagement and audience attitudes toward Korean dramas. The research also uncovers the influence of Korean dramas due to messaging, celebrity preferences, and storyline development in Korean dramas. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between Korean dramas, streaming platforms, and binge-watching, with implications for the audience's beliefs, attitudes, and emotions in viewing Korean dramas. Future studies should further explore these topics among Malay Muslim males to better understand the diverse impact of Korean dramas on viewers' lives.

Keywords: Korean dramas, Streaming Platform, Binge-watching, Young adult, Malay Muslim women

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Korean dramas have become a global phenomenon, captivating audiences worldwide with their compelling narratives and

cultural richness. Renowned series like *"Squid Game"* have transcended cultural boundaries, captivating even non-Korean viewers, with Malaysia being no exception.

Indrawan et al. (2022) describe the allure of Korean dramas, highlighting their captivating plotlines interwoven with elements of Korean culture, emotions, and life lessons. The immersive experience they offer often leads to impulsive binge-watching behaviour, as noted by Flayelle (2017). A survey by Yoke and Jamil (2022) underscores the significant presence of female respondents, dedicating considerable time to indulging in Korean dramas weekly.

Moreover, the digital era has revolutionized viewing habits, with online streaming platforms like Netflix gaining preference over traditional television. Over-the-top (OTT) services have attracted a large audience due to their flexibility and convenience.

Despite their widespread appeal, there remains a gap in understanding how prolonged exposure to Korean dramas shapes the behaviour of specific demographic groups, particularly young adult Malay Muslim women. Against this backdrop, this study aims to delve into the influence of Korean dramas, and the emergence of binge-watching behaviour among the young adult Malay Muslim women through semi-structured interviews.

Through these interviews, the study seeks to uncover more profound insights into how Korean dramas influence binge-watching behaviour, exploring facets such as emotion, attitude, and beliefs regarding their content. The approach combines admiration for the cultural impact of Korean dramas with an objective

stance to provide a comprehensive understanding of their influence.

METHODS

This study will use qualitative methodology to analyze and explain phenomena that require exploration. According to Hennick et al. (2011), as cited in Khalid and Wok (2020), qualitative research best describes problems or characterizes processes or behaviours.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be conducted to achieve the research objectives. These interviews, described by Adam (2015), are like friendly conversations, allowing for closed and open questions and exploring unexpected topics.

The study will interview five individuals aged 18 to 25 who have a keen interest in K-dramas, use online streaming platforms to watch these dramas, and tend to binge-watch episodes within a short timeframe. Participant selection will be done through purposive sampling.

The interviews will be 20 to 30 minutes long and conducted in Malay to accommodate the respondents' ethnicity. Virtual interviews will be conducted for participants in Selangor due to geographical distance, while physical interviews will take place with participants in Negeri Sembilan, aligning with the researcher's location.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the results, involving summarizing data and interpreting codes to create themes. Thematic analysis is versatile and can be applied across various research questions, designs, and sample sizes within different theoretical and epistemological frameworks (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Platform Preference

In light of the results, the respondents' choices of streaming platforms to access Korean dramas are notably influenced by cost and accessibility. A noteworthy transition has been observed, with some individuals moving away from the OTT services to embrace websites and free

applications like Loklok, and HiTV attributing this shift to the ease of use and essential features provided. These findings align with prior research, including Rai and Basnett's (2021) study, which identified comparable trends involving platforms like KissAsian. The findings also echo observations made by Mumpuni (2021), revealing that users may unsubscribe from a streaming service if the content fails to captivate them, opting to explore alternative options such as web streaming and illegal downloads.

Interestingly, despite these preferences, some respondents in this study still favoured OTT platforms, notably Netflix, for its user-friendly features, easy downloading, and ad-free streaming. However, Rai and Basnett (2021) stated that the websites are also accessible platforms with fewer ads. The satisfaction derived from features and content may override some viewers' concerns about subscription fees and ads.

Korean Drama Influence on Binge-Watching Behaviour

In the current study, respondents appreciated Korean drama's messages and moral values, shedding light on societal norms. Often drawing inspiration from actual events, these dramas significantly raise awareness and make a meaningful impact. For instance, Korean television dramas provide young Muslims in Indonesia with a modern "imagination," portraying characters who embody discipline and hard work, inspiring the youth to strive for academic excellence (Imron, 2016).

Educational and informative content shown by Korean dramas can be of moral value to the viewers, such as the medical genre *Romantic Dr Kim*. The results from the respondents' responses found that the medical and law drama can be informative to the viewer, and it also can gain the viewers' knowledge about the term medical as well as the situation on handling critical patients.

Regarding the unpredictable plotlines that always occur in Korean dramas, the

respondents said that although they are K-dramas fanatics, the storyline is unpredictable. Compared to the local dramas that are predictable and always present the same genre, it makes the audience bored. However, previous research results contrast with this study, where participants highlighted the recurring themes in Korean dramas, often involving love triangles or romances between individuals from different social backgrounds (Hassim, 2019).

The contribution of the actor and actress in developing a character is crucial because it can influence the audience's attraction towards Korean dramas. In this finding, the respondents respond that an actor's appearance and acting skills are the first aspects they look into before streaming Korean dramas. The audience must have their favourite actors or actresses that make them want to watch the dramas.

Signs of Binge-watching Behaviour After Being Exposed to Korean Dramas

The research findings highlight that binge-watching Korean dramas can deeply engage the audience's emotions, leading to obsessive thoughts and anticipation about the content. The immersive experience enables viewers to feel the emotions conveyed by the characters, and the strategic use of cliffhangers in Korean dramas keeps the audience curious about upcoming episodes. This context aligns with a previous study by Hidayati and Saputro (2017) that watching Korean dramas is an enjoyable experience, captivating the audience with each episode and prompting them to continue watching.

This study highlighted the audience's attitude in viewing Korean drama, such as extended viewing sessions, preference for binge-watching and influence towards their culture. An extended viewing pattern can be presented as the viewing duration in a marathon of the dramas in one session. Some respondents said they would marathon the dramas during long breaks or at weekends. According to Rai and Basnett (2021), it takes two to three days, on average, to watch a whole drama. It is also

noted that if the drama was engaging and there was a chance to bond and find a way to unwind and escape, viewers may watch up to ten episodes in one day.

In this study, the respondents discuss the influence of Korean dramas on language interests, food, and lifestyles. This context is also slightly similar to the previous research examining Korean drama and culture. According to Khalid and Wok (2020), the findings suggested that after years of engaging with Korean content, many respondents shared that they've picked up some Korean words, feeling more connected to the Korean wave. They use these words in their daily lives.

The findings also indicate that many respondents see religious content in Korean dramas as a chance to learn about new cultures and beliefs. However, they are concerned that it might not align with Islamic beliefs. This matches what previous studies, like Hidayati and Saputro (2017) found that diverse religious content isn't a problem. The potential issue arises when there's competition for identity in public space, causing conflicts between different groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that Korean dramas significantly contribute to binge-watching behaviour among young adult Malay Muslim women in Malaysia. Participants cited their interest in Korean dramas, driven primarily by the conveyed message or moral values, storyline development, and celebrity favouritism. Additionally, platform preference plays a role in binge-watching Korean dramas.

While most participants expressed positive sentiments towards Korean dramas, there may be exceptions or challenges faced by specific individuals. Cultural differences, personal preferences, or external influences could impact viewers' engagement with Korean dramas and binge-watching behaviour.

These findings underscore the importance of understanding the cultural and media consumption patterns of young adult

Muslim women in Malaysia. Korean dramas are a significant source of entertainment and cultural influence, shaping viewers' attitudes and behaviours. This highlights the necessity for media researchers to consider audiences' diverse preferences and experiences in content creation and distribution strategies.

In conclusion, the study suggests that Korean dramas influence binge-watching behaviour among young adult Malay Muslim women in Malaysia. Recommendations for future research include exploring the phenomenon of Korean dramas and binge-watching among Muslim males. Understanding their perspectives and influences could provide a comprehensive understanding of this cultural phenomenon. Additionally, employing alternative analytical approaches, such as reception analysis and focusing on individual dramas, could provide more in-depth insights into specific content and its impact.

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