



## The impact of the Korean cultural wave on the attitudes and practices of Pakistani youth

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### Abstract:

This study delves into the profound influence of Korean culture on the behaviour of young Pakistanis, particularly in Islamabad. Korean popular culture, with its pervasive presence in music, television shows, movies, and other forms of entertainment media, has captivated a global audience. Through commerce, social media, and globalisation, Korean cultural traits have permeated many countries, including Pakistan. However, previous research on the Korean wave has largely overlooked its behavioural consequences in favour of its economic and political components. This qualitative study focuses on young Pakistanis who have been exposed to Korean culture for at least two years. The results of a thematic analysis of ten in-depth interviews revealed that Korean entertainment's originality and aesthetic appeal resonate with a younger demographic. After engaging with Korean cultural goods, they are more likely to invest time and money into Korean cultural events. Additionally, young Pakistanis are influenced by Korean cultural norms and practices through this involvement, which leads to significant changes in their language usage, gender roles, and social behaviours.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in the popularity of Korean popular culture, known as the "Hallyu" or Korean Wave, across various Asian countries such as Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Asian nations. This trend is evident from the increasing consumption of Korean movies, soap operas, and music. Korean popular culture has gained immense traction globally, even reaching distant countries such as Peru and Ecuador. In Pakistan, the influence of Korean culture was noticed between 2006 and 2008, primarily through Korean dramas and K-pop music. By 2018, two Korean dramas were dubbed in Urdu and aired on Pakistani television channels. Initially, people's engagement with Korean culture was limited to passive consumption of entertainment products. However, there has been a shift towards more active participation, with individuals showing interest in aspects such as visiting Korea, learning the Korean language, trying Korean cuisine, and adopting Korean fashion and lifestyle trends. Hallyu represents a subculture of Asians deeply immersed in Korean popular culture, following Korean celebrities and embracing Korean traditions (Kim & Tahira, 2022). This interest in Korean culture serves as a basis for understanding various tourism and leisure behaviours, particularly those influenced by admiration for Korean celebrities.

While previous studies have mainly focused on the economic and diplomatic implications of the Korean Wave, this study explores its influence on the behaviour of young Pakistanis. Qualitative research methodology, employing in-depth interviews, was chosen to gather insights from 10 participants aged between 18 and 24 years, who had been exposed to Korean culture for at least two years and residing in Islamabad. The current research contributes to the existing academic literature on the Korean Wave and the Cultural Diffusion. Another significant fact is that in Pakistan, research has yet to be done on the phenomenon of the Korean Wave from the perspective of behaviour. Practically, this study is important for the people who follow foreign cultures as it will expand their perception about the culture diffused to the recipient country and influence the youth more inclined to the changes. The parents of the K-Culture followers can also attain a great deal of understanding regarding Korean Content and its Cultural products. Lastly, this research can help policymakers get insight or local points of view while making cultural or economic policies.

## 2. Literature review

A word used to describe the surge in popularity of Korean entertainment, K-pop, and K-drama is the "Korean Wave" or Hallyu. "K-pop is a music genre that originated in South Korea and is marked by a diverse array of audiovisual elements"; "K-drama refers to televised dramas in the Korean language, made in South Korea, typically in a miniseries format (16–20 episodes), with traits that distinguish them from other soap operas and television series" (Touhami & Al-Haq, 2017). The number of Hallyu fans has surpassed South Korea's population, with over 60 million admirers worldwide throughout 2017, and the number of fans throughout the Middle East and Africa increased from 170,000 to 190,000. More people are familiar with Korean

branding thanks to the growth of Korean pop culture. Cosmetics brands like Amore Pacific capitalising on the growing demand for Korean beauty goods by expanding their businesses to South Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern nations. With its ability to captivate viewers worldwide, Korean pop culture has become a significant cultural, political, and economic asset for South Korea (Pha & Lhe, 2022).

Korean pop music has "exploded onto the international scene" in popularity recently (Howard, 2015, p. 298). Consequently, foreign interests have been inextricably bound up with the reception of Korean pop culture. However, while dealing with matters of history or politics, it becomes far more challenging to disseminate one's popular culture. One Japanese writer even went so far as to say that Japanese singers needed to leave the country to compete with Korean pop stars, and Japanese periodicals have dubbed the growth of K-pop a "Korean invasion" (Ota, 2011).

Economics professor and head of the European Centre for International Economic Policy Patrick Messerlin claims that K-pop has successfully diversified to appeal to listeners worldwide. Messerlin and Korean scholar Shin Wonkyu attribute K-pop's popularity to the genre's capacity for diversity and integration. For instance, the K-pop group Exo-K formed its twin band to encourage Chinese Korean performers to perform K-pop in China. As another example of diversity, K-pop artists often incorporate traditional Korean instruments into their performances or even cover classical European songs with their energetic K-pop guitars (Messerlin & Shin, 2013, p. 24). According to these academics, K-pop can attract new talent and styles thanks to its global reach (Messerlin & Shin, 2013).

Thus, the ever-changing energies of transparency, transcendence, and trans-locality are supposedly embodied in K-pop. East Asian performance and visual culture specialist Kim Suk-Young notes that American Broadway-style musicals have been a significant influence on Korean pop music videos and that K-pop "flexibly associates itself with old and new, local and global while interweaving both retrospective and anticipatory vectors of cultural modalities" (Kim, 2016).

## **2.1. Korean Wave and its influence on behaviours**

The proliferation of Korean pop culture impacted how people outside Korea saw the country and lived. There has been a recent uptick in international students studying Korean and students traveling to Korea to experience Korean culture firsthand, eat Korean food, and buy Korean goods. a). The country-of-origin effect, which is based on national image; b). The diffusion of preferences; c. Celebrity branding; and d. Product placement, based on the natural exposure of a particular product in TV shows, is one of the four routes' researchers have proposed.

One way of looking at the first two is as indirect channels, and another is as direct channels. First, international viewers who immerse themselves in Korean dramas for extended periods

may develop distorted perceptions about the country, which could influence their choice to buy Korean-themed products. The Japan-Korea 21st Century Association surveyed Japanese citizens in 1990 and found that 51 percent had negative impressions of Korea, and 9 percent had positive ones. A remarkable shift occurred in Japanese attitudes toward Korea following the 2003–2004 smash hit Korean drama *Winter Sonata*, which ran for an unprecedented fifteen encores. From 2004 to 2005, the percentage of respondents who had a positive impression of Korea rose from 66.6% to 77.8%, as reported in the 2005 Report on Korea's National Image by KOTRA (Korea Trade Investment Promotion Agency) (Chang & Lee, 2017).

The question, therefore, becomes whether overseas buyers of Korean brand products consider the country's reputation. No less than two-thirds of Japanese respondents (64.2% to be exact) said "yes" in the KOTRA (2005) poll. In the same way that people all over the globe know that Sony and Toyota are Japanese brands, Korean customers strongly link Samsung and Hyundai with Korea. This phenomenon is related to the halo effect and the nation-of-origin effect. According to Nisbett and Wilson (1977) and Leuthesser et al. (1995), the halo effect occurs when an evaluation of an object is impacted by a single feature, even while other features are also considered. As described by Ozsomer and Cavusgil (1991), Bilkey and Nes (1982) and Elliott and Cameron (1994), the halo effect results in consumers' perceptions of the product's nation of origin while purchasing. There appears to be a three-stage procedure to the impact, according to Obermiller and Spangenberg (1989). As a first step in making an evaluation, the buyer must first be able to identify the nation of origin of the product. A second factor influencing evaluation is the consumer's emotional response to the nation of origin (emotional process). The third step is for the consumer to establish a normative process based on their purchase evaluation and intention. Foreign viewers of Korean dramas may have favourable impressions of the country and, due to the country-of-origin effect, are more likely to buy Korean brand products when they see them (Chang & Lee, 2017).

The point is that Korean dramas provide an indirect window into Korean culture and lifestyle for overseas viewers, who may change their purchasing habits. Based on surveys of more than 6,500 international participants from all around the globe who have seen Korean pop cultural content, the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE) presented some concrete evidence of this in 2015. Curiously, 54.2% of the overall sample stated that their interest in Korean cuisine was significantly enhanced after watching Korean dramas and movies or listening to K-pop. This paper presents concrete proof that the Korean Wave sparked the worldwide spread of consumer preferences. This is significant because subjective factors like taste and cultural desire than objective ones like technological advancement influence product demand. In addition, after being exposed to Korean pop culture, 51.6% of respondents said they wanted to visit Korea, and 41% said they wanted to buy Korean technology and cosmetics. These agree with the findings of Stigler and Becker (1977), who state that when two countries actively participate in foreign direct investment (FDI), international trade (goods and services), or immigration, their consumer preferences will converge (Chang & Lee, 2017).

Third, using a well-known celebrity to market a product or service is a great strategy to boost sales in many Asian countries. Famous athletes, singers, and actors in Korea, Japan, and China promote anything from branded detergents and drinks to vehicles and branded residences. As a result of the Korean Wave, many Korean superstars, including K-pop singers and actors, have achieved enormous fame in Asia. Consequently, several Korean multinational corporations use globally famous Korean celebrities to increase sales overseas. This includes Samsung, LG, Hyundai, and numerous other enterprises associated with beauty and fashion. Two Korean multinational brands, J. Estina and Laneige of Amore Pacific, which sell jewellery and skincare/makeup products, experienced a sharp uptick in sales and substantial gains in their stock prices during the airing of the 2016 Korean drama *Descendants of the Sun*, which was a smash hit in China, Taiwan, and Singapore from February to April. The drama's lead actress, Hye Kyo Song, was being used in ads by the two firms. To advertise in their home markets, popular Korean celebrities frequently sign contracts with international brands based in other Asian nations (e.g., China, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, etc.). These Korean Wave celebrities have marketing clout, especially regarding non-Korean products (Nathan et al., 2023).

Fourth, as a kind of product placement advertising, Korean companies frequently fund the making of TV dramas, stipulating that specific item be included in the shows. This often piques the interest of the target demographic in many Asian nations, prompting them to spread the word about the product online, which in turn causes sales to spike unexpectedly. Many viewers of Asian dramas look up to the actors and actresses and try to model their lives after theirs. People are more likely to buy a product if they see their favourite celebrities using it or wearing it on television. For instance, in February 2016, the Chinese government forbade broadcasting 17 Korean dramas on TV networks in China. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, however, the Chinese online video website Iqiyi released each episode of *Descendants of the Sun* simultaneously with the drama aired in Korea. According to every Korean news outlet and publication, the drama reportedly attracted over 2.6 billion viewers in China in just two months. The same period also saw a surge in sales for several of the products worn by the film's leading ladies in China. For instance, according to the Korean news outlet *Kookmin Ilbo*, the actress's compact powder sales skyrocketed tenfold compared to the same period last year. The drama's lipstick went viral, selling out on one of the biggest Korean e-commerce sites in just three days (a Korean firm runs the site called SK Planet) (Pha & Lhe, 2022).

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

According to Winthrop (1991), “cultural diffusionism as an anthropological school of thought, was an attempt to understand the distribution of culture in terms of the origin of culture traits and their spread from one society to another. Versions of diffusionist thought included the conviction that all cultures originated from one culture centre (heliocentric diffusion); the more reasonable view that cultures originated from a limited number of culture centres (culture circles); and finally, the notion that others influence each society but that the process of

diffusion is both contingent and arbitrary” (Winthrop, 1999). “Diffusion may be simply defined as the spread of a cultural item from its origin to other places” (Titiev, 1959). “A more expanded definition depicts diffusion as the process by which discrete culture traits are transferred from one society to another, through migration, trade, war, or other contact” (Winthrop, 1991, p. 82). The diffusionist research originated in the middle of the nineteenth century as a means of understanding the nature of the distribution of human cultural traits across the world.

The diffusion of cultural traits occurs rapidly between nations because we live in a globalized world where people can easily enjoy and adopt every invention or culture. In this research, a researcher takes support from the Theory of Diffusion to elaborate on the diffusion of Korean Culture. This massive diffusion, formally known as “Hallyu: Korean Wave, " is hitting Western countries after securing its base in Asian countries. Many Korean artists are currently working with Western artists. On the other hand, American Korean artists have received much recognition over the years in award ceremonies like the Oscars just because, nowadays, Korean Culture is devotedly followed by many people. In this way, Korean Cultural traits can diffuse quickly, and people come in contact with a brand-new culture that directly and indirectly shapes their behaviour.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how Korean culture influences youth behaviour. Through in-depth interviews, participants were encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences regarding engagement with various aspects of Korean culture, including music, drama, and fashion trends. These interviews provided an opportunity to delve into the nuances of individual behaviours and attitudes toward Korean cultural influence, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. An interview guide with open-ended questions was developed to facilitate data collection, allowing participants to express themselves freely. Additionally, participant observation during Korean cultural activities supplements the interview data, providing valuable insights into the real-life manifestations of Korean cultural influence. Purposive sampling was used in this study's participant selection process, prioritizing people who had actively participated in the Korean culture for at least two years. Ten young people from different regions of Islamabad, aged 18–24 years, were included in the sample: three were male and seven were female. This criterion ensured pertinent and perceptive contributions to the research by reflecting on a varied sample of the city's youth. The researcher faced challenges that included building rapport to encourage open discussions, scheduling interviews with busy participants, and navigating cultural events for observation. The ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and consent, were maintained throughout the study to ensure participants' privacy and comfort. This methodological approach, conducted in the vibrant setting of Islamabad Pakistan aims to shed light on the complex interplay between the Korean culture and youth behaviour in a dynamic urban context.

## 4. Result and discussion

The data gathered from the selected sample was analysed using Thematic analysis in the current study. The researcher gathered themes from literature, and the data was analysed considering those themes.

### 4.1. Level of involvement

A person's level of exposure and involvement in a particular culture determines its impact on the person. To study the role of the Korean wave in changing the behaviour of young Pakistanis, the researcher first asked the respondents about the duration of their exposure and involvement in Korean cultural-related activities. One of the male participants stated that:

“It has been almost eleven years. I usually follow Korean Pop Music and Korean Movies. I have participated in and won two of the ‘K-Pop World Festivals’ that were held in Pakistan. There was competition in many categories of Korean Culture, and I secured positions in the category of dance.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

One of the female participants said that.

“My exposure to Korean culture is more than three years and I mostly watch Korean Dramas because I like the theme of the dramas. I also listen to K-Pop Music. I have taken part in activities that involve Birthday projects or Anniversary projects for my favourite Korean Band.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Another female participant said:

“I started listening to Korean Pop Music somewhere around 2009/10, so I have approximately nine years of exposure. I just listen to Korean Music and watch reality shows or Korean makeup tutorials. The most I am involved in is just to the extent of watching shows, listening to songs and I am also a little bit engaged in learning the Korean language.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

The researcher tried to gather the respondents with as much exposure to the Korean wave as possible. Some respondents have been following Korean Culture for around five to six years and shared their experiences related to their level of involvement in Korean Cultural activities. Firstly, the researcher wants to highlight that respondents with many years of exposure know more about international Korean Festivals and competitions. Many students in fine arts and graphic design take part in Korean cultural competitions held in Pakistan or online.

‘Talk Talk Korea’ has the biggest level of annual festivals from August to December for all international fans of K-Drama, K-Food, K-Beauty, and K-Pop, with fantastic prizes. Another female participant told the researcher:

“I began following Korean culture in 2015, so it has been four years since then. I devotedly follow K-Dramas, and a K-Pop Group named ‘Seventeen’. My involvement is to the point where I know all about the past and upcoming dramas and I also took part in an online competition of Korean webtoon designing as I am a graphic design student. I also follow every activity of my favourite K-pop group. I also watch K-Beauty Channels on YouTube. They are fun to watch.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Some other devoted young Pakistani fans engage in cake-cutting ceremonies to celebrate their favourite Korean Artist’s Birthday and Debut Anniversary, where the surroundings are all about Korean themes. It’s a type of Activity where Korean culture can be easily depicted by banners written in Korean by Pakistani fans. Here, all the fans bring their Korean Products, usually music albums and other accessories, to share with other fellows. “Interestingly, though every Asian country initially had a similar reaction toward the Korean wave, each had a slightly different outlook. This is because “each country has a different ethos, and based on this, its audience decodes and responds to cultural products in different ways” (Kim, 2007, p. 24). For example, Daejangguem received the best reception of any Korean drama in Taiwan, whereas in Japan, the Korea Herald was the most popular (Kim, 2007).

#### **4.2. Motivational factors**

The researcher wanted to explore the motivational factors behind the following Korean Culture and whether they recommend or persuade others to follow Korean Culture Products. All respondents shared their experiences that motivated them to try Korean cultural products. One of the female participants said that:

“When I first discovered Korean Pop Music (through television) I was fascinated by the vibrant colours and fashion in their videos and for the twelve-year-old me it did not matter that I couldn’t understand the language when the videos were so interesting and the songs so catchy. K-pop then led me to other genres of Korean Music, K-dramas, and shows which made me want to understand the culture and language even more.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

When the researcher asked her about recommending this content to other people; she replied:

“I do recommend a lot of Korean content to other people, but this type of content is for some reason not for everyone’s liking. For some people, it’s an acquired

taste but others are hesitant to them and the language barrier also matters to them. But I think Korean Culture is very vast and with the right exposure everyone could find something they can involve themselves with to their liking.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Another female participant stated that:

“I was reading a novel and one of its characters was addicted to Korean Dramas and cultures. It became the motivation for me to check out Korean content and it proved to be very entertaining and different. There are many different cultural entertainment materials that I have seen but never wholeheartedly recommended but I do recommend and persuade my closest friends to listen to K-Pop and watch Korean Dramas because they are very different from our day-to-day entertainment shows. They are diverse and energetic.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

A male participant said:

“There was no such proper motivation. I just wanted to try something different. I came across a K-pop video and after that, I just went on. I do recommend Korean Content to the people in my circle who want to try new stuff.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Another female participant told the researcher:

“Six years ago, Korean culture was all the hype, though I didn’t pay much attention then. I got to know more about it through Japanese culture. I used to read Anime Mangas (Japanese comic books or webtoons) and watch anime a lot. This was my prime motivation in following the Korean Cultural content because many Korean dramas are based on Japanese scripts, so that’s how I got in. Well, in the case of recommendations, to my friends I do that all the time because I want them to like it too. Watching K-dramas makes me happy so I would recommend them to a friend who always tells me they have nothing to watch at home.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Under this theme, the researcher explored the factors driving young people to follow Korean Culture and its cultural products. Most respondents shared that the concepts and themes of K-dramas and K-Pop are very refreshing for them to watch. Korean culture promotes the concept of minimalism and is very different from our indigenous culture. From the researcher’s point of view, the unique, vibrant, affectionate, and energetic vibes of the Korean culture motivate young people to follow it. Young people always try new and different things and can quickly adapt to it.

Many other people follow Korean content because they are following something already familiar, for example, the people who follow Chinese and Japanese culture eventually try Korean Culture and its several products. The devoted followers also recommend and persuade other people, especially their close friends and cousins. They, directly and indirectly, promote their favourite artist and vote for them in many awards shows so that others notice them.

Ryoo wrote, “Regional cultural affinities also help explain this phenomenon in the sense that the success of the Korean wave is closely related to the ability of South Korean culture and media to translate Western or American culture to fit Asian taste” (Ryoo, 2007). “Western popular cultural artifacts will not likely succeed because of a certain non-negotiable cultural heterogeneity,” Ryoo (2007) predicted. South Korean popular culture is much more readily relatable and accepted by Asian audiences. The cultural affinity between South Korea and neighbouring countries in the region may thus function as an effective bridge or buffer between the West and Asia (Ryoo, 2007). South Korean television shows and movies portray themes that Asian audiences can relate to more easily than those of Western entertainment because Korean “dramas typically deal with family issues, love, and filial piety in an age of changing technology, and often reinforce traditional values of Confucianism” (Ryoo, 2007).

### **4.3. Influence of Korean cultural products on behaviour**

#### **4.3.1. Time and money usage**

The researcher included questions regarding the duration of time spent watching Korean Content (immaterial culture) and the amount of money spent on purchasing Korean merchandise (material culture) to understand the level of involvement of the respondent. These two phenomena are highly important in understanding the behaviour of Korean Culture fans. One of the male participants stated that:

“I watch the shows approximately for 2 hours and listen to the audio songs for at least 3 hours in one day. I almost spent ten thousand to twelve thousand Pakistani Rupees on Korean Music Albums and its related merchandise.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

A female participant said:

“There’s no fixed schedule but say if I am watching a lot of shows and movies then half of them is Korean or if I am listening to songs then the majority of them would be Korean Pop songs. When I am surfing YouTube, I spend more than two hours watching Korean Videos. I don’t spend a lot of money because I don’t usually buy Korean music albums which are the most expensive form of Korean product. I only buy Korean makeup products, which make four thousand to five thousand annually.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Another female participant said:

“I usually spend three hours watching and listening to Korean Music and Dramas. I don’t spend much, just approximately seven thousand per year.” Another male participant told the researcher: “There is no fixed time for watching and listening to Korean stuff but when I am practicing dance with my friends for the university’s dance society, we all binge-watch Korean music videos for choreography because Korean choreography is very different and more energetic from the western style.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

A female participant also shared:

“I do spend at least 1 hour listening to songs per day. It depends on how free I am from work. If I don’t have anything to do at all then it is two hours maximum or perhaps three hours. In Pakistan, there is no original Korean brand instead of Miniso, so I cannot say I spend a lot of money but sometimes I spend two to three thousand by ordering merchandise online from Thailand or South Korea.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

According to the data collected, the people who watch the Korean dramas usually spend an average of two hours daily. The people who listen to Korean Pop music have no fixed time but they spend approximately one hour per day on YouTube. As the dramas are only available on Korean websites people access those sites and it takes time to run smoothly. Other than K-dramas and K-pop music many female respondents also watch reality shows and skin care and makeup tutorials regularly. According to the female respondents, the Korean skincare routine is very beneficial. The young followers of Korean Culture not only spend time watching and recommending Korean Content but also spend a lot of money buying the Korean products. All of the respondents are university-going students, but they still manage money to buy Korean cultural products like Music albums, posters of music bands, makeup and skin care products, and electric gadgets and accessories. In the current globalized world access to Korean products is not difficult. The average money young Pakistanis spend on the Korean products is five thousand annually. People also prefer the products that are promoted by their favourite artists and singers.

#### **4.3.2. Communication patterns and appearances**

Under this broad theme of communication patterns and the appearance, the researcher first asked the respondents about what type of Korean Cultural products they mostly purchase and how these products have inculcated the values of Korean cultural traits in the micro level of their behaviour or lifestyle. These cultural traits were measured by the communication patterns and appearances of the respondents.

One of the male participants stated that:

“I only buy Korean Music Albums and wall posters of my favourite band. I do think that Korean Culture has become a part of my lifestyle because dance is my major hobby and for that, I follow Korean Music Content, and their choreographies help me to grow more consistent in my passion. In case of my behaviour, has influenced me in many ways. I started dancing after following the Korean Content and now I lead a dance society where I teach Korean pop dance to many university fellows, it has become a big part in shaping my behaviour. My domain for cultural preferences has been modified, I interact with my friends by using many Korean language jargon and idioms which has become my habit. The most prominent impact of Korean culture other than on my activities and personality is on my buying behaviour. I buy Korean products a lot that sometimes even I am surprised by myself.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

One female participant said that:

“I usually buy music albums and other merchandise like light sticks of the band I follow and jewellery. I also buy their skin care products. Korean Culture has been integrated into my life by watching a lot of Korean content on the internet. I use words, phrases, and idioms with my friends regularly (e.g. “Kamsahmida” a Korean term that means thank you, “Gomawo” which means sorry, and “Anneyong” which means Hi, and many other terminologies such as well). I also regularly use Korean skincare products; they are very amazing, and I am routinely with them. I prefer Korean Skin care products instead of makeup products which are also quite popular among young females. The change I felt in my behaviour is that I think I became more understanding and have grown acceptance of different cultures after coming across Korean Culture. I read the Korean zodiac which is based on Chinese mythology and is completely different than Western zodiac. My interaction patterns have also changed since I started following Korean Culture.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

Another female participant told the researcher:

“The K-pop band that I follow, I buy their music albums and other merchandise like badges and similar accessories. There are many products one can buy if they follow K-Pop.” (Personal communication, October 2023)

When the researcher asked about their view on Korean culture; she replied:

“I must say I admire their culture a lot. I like how they are polite with everyone

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and have a human conscience in them which is very hard to find these days or maybe that's how they portray their characters in K-dramas and their music videos. They portray both masculine and feminine ideals. I also appreciate how they dress up and how they do their makeover. I try to copy those methods because I want to follow them. Korean culture has influenced my behaviour in many ways. I cannot say it was Korean culture only, because I am highly influenced by Japanese culture as well. It has somewhat influenced how I dress up, slightly how I act or appear among my friends, and of course, my likes and preferences have changed as well. I am more organized now as well because I always see how organized they are in K-drama's every sphere which makes me love them even more. I also read about their mythologies and stories which I share with my little cousins. I am planning on learning the Korean language in my summer vacation." (Personal communication, October 2023)

A female participant also shared that:

"I don't purchase any Korean products regularly since there are not many authentic stores or retailers in Pakistan that you can go and shop at and shopping online does not seem that much reliable either. If there were more easily accessible Korean stores, I would buy stuff. I suppose in a way Korean culture has become a part of my lifestyle because it does not like a big deal at first but when you think about how long you have stuck with it and how in a minuscule small way it influences your preferences and does seem to play a part in shaping your lifestyle. I think it has made me more open and accepting of new ideas, other cultures, and different types of content. It has made me appreciate all the effort and hard work that goes into creating something that is loved and accepted all over the world. The similarities and dissimilarities between Korean culture and our culture have created for me a better understanding of both. It has greatly influenced my interaction patterns; I commonly use Korean kinship terms (e.g. Unni for my elder sister and Oppa for my elder brother. So not just in my friend's circle, I also interact with my family by using these kinship terms that I grow accustomed to." (Personal communication, October 2023)

The researcher analysed that the respondents mostly purchase Korean products (music albums, makeup, and accessories), a material part of Korean culture. On the other hand, people engage themselves in watching Korean content on television and the internet, where they come across the values, customs, food patterns, etiquette and language of Korean culture, which are a immaterial or hidden culture which further becomes part of one's behaviour when people use the products. It is a type of cycle where material culture introduces immaterial culture, and in return, immaterial culture further provides a base to buy the material items of the culture. The researcher has seen the influence of both types of Korean culture on the micro-level behaviour of young Pakistanis.

Many respondents said that following Korean culture had inculcated many new activities and behavioural changes in themselves. The researcher has observed significant influence in the language. The people who meet the Korean language Hangul daily indirectly adopt many Korean interactive and kinship terminologies and use it frequently among their peers. They said that these terms are now part of their daily conversation. A few respondents also said that they now don't want English subtitles to watch Korean Dramas because they can easily understand most of the dialogues and it's like an exercise to learn the Korean language further. "International fans are non-Korean fans whose native language is not Korean, yet they surpass the language barrier and are obsessed with K-pop and K-drama. Algerian fans are part of international fans of the Korean Wave who create an environment whose language only they can speak" (Touhami & Al-Haq, 2017).

The Korean wave has also expanded the cultural preferences of the young generation. They have a variety of new content to follow, and it also helps in understanding the distant culture. Many respondents also focused on how they used to read anime Mangas and Korean webtoons. They now read Korean mythologies, shaman practices, and zodiac signs derived from Chinese culture. Many respondents are interested in South Korea's international relations with other countries because of its colonial history with Japan. The values, attitudes, and behaviour people see in Korean dramas try to do it as well because the overall image of Korean culture shown in the dramas is very polite, affectionate, and soft. People commonly try the local food of Korea and wear Hanbok (Korean traditional Dress) on different occasions of cultural representations. "Ota (2011) stated that people start searching, knowing, and liking culturally symbolic items, such as food, and enjoy related events. For example, one Korean drama fan said, "From the way they talk to their food, they are close to culture" (Mariani, 2008). Another effect is that people become interested in learning the language demonstrated in the media.

## 5. Analysis

Through the lens of diffusion theory, the subject of this research analysis offers insightful information about how young Pakistanis are involved in Korean culture. The information from the focus groups and interviews demonstrates how Korean cultural items have influenced Pakistani society and the variables driving this artistic exchange. The reasons for young Pakistanis' engagement in these cultural items play a significant role in shaping their level of involvement in Korean culture. Many interviewees admired Korean dramas, music, and fashion, frequently mentioning relatability and emotional resonance as their main driving forces. This is consistent with the notion of innovation adoption in diffusion theory, which holds that their perceived value highly influences the reception of cultural products. The popularity of Korean cultural content among younger audiences is rising owing to its increased accessibility through digital platforms, underscoring the function of mass media in the dissemination process.

The engagement of young Pakistanis with the Korean culture indicates a broader phenomenon

known as cultural globalization, in which the media crosses national boundaries and promotes intercultural dialogue. Analysing the driving forces behind the adoption of Korean cultural products showed that social influence is a significant factor. Several participants emphasized the influence of group behaviour on individual decisions and cited social media and peer groups as major motivators for their participation. This dynamic is critical when considering diffusion theory, which holds that innovations have a higher chance of spreading when supported by early adopters in social networks. A powerful cue to action that inspires people to investigate and embrace this cultural phenomenon is sharing Korean cultural content between friends and family. Furthermore, investigating how time and money are spent on Korean cultural goods demonstrates how young Pakistanis are dedicated to this interaction. The participants reported a significant amount of time to be spent viewing Korean dramas and studying the language frequently, at the expense of other recreational activities. This investment shows a strong desire to fully immerse oneself in Korean culture, indicating that the motivations are likely personal identification with content and perceived cultural value.

Diffusion theory states that when people put money toward things that they think are worthwhile or desirable, it is a sign of successful cultural penetration. Another aspect of this cultural interchange is the impact of Korean cultural products on young Pakistanis' micro-level behaviour. Participants talked about how their social interactions, dress choices, and even personal values changed due to Korean dramas and music exposure. Adopting certain Korean cultural practices and aesthetics demonstrates the transforming power of cultural products, supporting the idea that internalizing cultural aspects is as essential as consumption in the process of cultural dissemination. This is consistent with diffusion theory, which holds that cultural norms and individual behaviours impact one another and gradually assimilate new patterns. Using diffusion theory as a framework, this study concludes by highlighting the important role of young Pakistanis in Korean culture. Through an analysis of behavioural impacts, resource allocation, and motivational factors, the results show how dynamic cultural interchange benefits young people in Pakistan. Future studies could examine the long-term implications of this kind of cultural involvement on identity formation and social cohesiveness to expand our understanding of this phenomenon and gain a better grasp of how local cultures are affected by globalization.

## 6. Conclusion

From the data gathered in the current research and great support from the theory of cultural diffusionism, the researcher concluded that the Korean Wave hit the borders of Pakistan almost six to seven years ago and that its unique content grasped the attention of many young Pakistanis. The people of Pakistan have experienced cultural diffusion (for example, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish); however, the intensity of Korean cultural integration is very different. It has influenced the young generation from every perspective, including entertainment, cultural products, food and dress patterns, and language. The formulated hypothesis of this research was also proven to be positive by the gathered data. We can easily

observe behavioural changes among people who devotedly follow Korean culture. The findings show that people follow and are involved in Korean content because they find it very different, complete with aesthetic themes, and exclusive. The more youth follow the content, the more they are involved in their time and money in Korean cultural activities. The results show that when the young generation uses Korean products in their daily lives because they are fascinated by them, it opens the door to Korean cultural values. The products and language are containers of the entire culture and bring cultural values within itself. In return, these Korean cultural products and values influence and shape the behaviour of young people and influence the younger generation's language. Korean cultural followers adopt many cultural traits, such as gender appearances, changes in interaction patterns, and usage of the Korean language Hangul jargon and terminology. They also try to dress like Korean celebrities because they admire them. In the entire continuity process, they learn about their real and ideal cultures.

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