

## PERCEPTION AND ADAPTATION OF ‘K-POP CULTURE’ AMONG PAKISTANI YOUTH

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Received: August 28, 2024 Revised: September 26, 2024 Accepted: October 15, 2024 Published: November 09, 2024

### ABSTRACT

The Korean Wave (Hallyu) refers to the popularity of South Korea’s cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, dramas and movies. The Pakistani youth mostly came to like K-Pop during Covid-19 when BTS’s song “Dynamite” was released on August 20, 2020. There is no research related to K-pop culture influence on Pakistani youth. The research is aimed at finding out the perception of Pakistani youth about K-pop culture and the ways in which K-pop culture is influencing the youth of Pakistan. The research design was a quantitative method in which questionnaires were given to people in universities, malls and parks of Rawalpindi. The sample size was 377. Purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample. The demographics included only female youth, aged between 15 to 26, and residents of urban areas. Results show that the relationship between perception and influence is significant and Pakistani youth is following K-Pop culture. Results also show that there is a positive influence of K-Pop culture on Pakistani youth. The perception of Pakistani youth about K-Pop culture affects the influence of K-Pop culture on them. It is recommended that future researches can focus on influence and perception about only one group (musical band) or one drama to get a clear understanding.

**Keywords:** Perception, Adaptation, K-Pop Culture, Pakistani Youth, Influence, Positive Impact, Negative Impact.

### INTRODUCTION

K-pop took influence from Japanese music starting from the late 1980s. The K-pop business began to expand internationally in the later part of the 2000s. Being a peripheral and small country, Korea has attracted many global fans through K-pop who enjoy K-pop on social media and attend concerts (Yong, 2020, pp. 40–70). The term Korean Wave (Hallyu) describes the exportation of popular music through the cultural economy of South Korea which includes music, TV dramas and movies to other countries (“Korean Wave (Hallyu) – The Rise of Korea’s Cultural Economy & Pop Culture,” 2021).

This research efforts to find out the influences on Pakistani youth through K-pop culture in areas including music, makeup, fashion, dressing, food,

and language. This research will contribute towards Sociology as it will give new ideas to cultural transmission and enhance knowledge in the effects of globalization through pop culture. There has been no research in Pakistan on this topic, so this study will focus on giving information about what Pakistani youth think about K-pop culture.

Pakistani youth mostly came to like K-pop music during Covid-19 when BTS’s song “Dynamite” was released on August 20, 2020. Now we can see that K-pop music impacts people a lot especially the youth and they start copying the K-Pop idols in their life. According to Ige (2021), BTS has over 50 million followers and BLACKPINK has 42 million followers on Instagram. While on

YouTube, BLACKPINK has almost 70 million subscribers and BTS has more than 60 million subscribers. BTS Pakistan Official Fan page (BPOFC) is the first ever Pakistani fan base of BTS which is made especially for the Pakistani BTS fans (“*BTS Knows about Their Pakistani Fans*,” 2018).

It’s not just BTS; Pakistani youth are fans of other K-pop boy and girl groups as well. The focus is on the lyrics which impart messages of self-love, family, achieving your dreams and countless others. Ever since ‘Spotify’ (a music streaming site) launched in Pakistan, the consumption of K-pop by Pakistanis has increased. Gen Z accounts for more than 50% of the K-pop’s overall streams in the country, according to data provided by Spotify between March 2021 and March 2022 (Desk, 2022). “Squid Game” is right now No. 1 TV programme in Pakistan, according to the entertainment monitoring service Flix Patrol (“*What ‘Squid Game’ Gets Right and Wrong About Pakistani Migrant Workers*,” 2021).

The beauty standards are also defined by the Korean artists. For example, tint in makeup originated from Korea and many Pakistani actresses incorporate Korean makeup trends. According to Ali (2020), actresses like Kinza Hashmi, Alizey Shah, Yumna Zaidi, Sanam Chaudry, and countless others have been inspired by Korean beauty trends and use lip and cheek tints which is unlike heavy Pakistani makeup. The youth of Pakistan have worked on numerous K-pop related initiatives. The Korean ambassador was the main guest during a celebration for BTS’s member Jimin held in Karachi. LED screens in the Emporium Mall in Lahore and the Centaurus Mall in Islamabad broadcast clips of the K-pop star (“*BTS Knows About Their Pakistani Fans*,” 2018). The BTS fans have also done charitable acts. Sobia Gillani and other BTS fans donated 5,500 Pakistani Rupees to the Afzaal Memorial Thalassemia Hospital (Hussain, 2020).

Now, the Pakistani youth follows their idols in everything they do. The Korean singers engage and communicate with their fans through social media easily and conveniently. They also have apps such as Weverse and VLive through which the artists chat and holding live meetings. Weverse also has an online shop in which K-pop merchandise. Sophia Mujahid competed in a K-pop dance

competition sponsored in Islamabad by the Embassy of Korea in Pakistan. She shares dance performances by Korean musicians and gives makeup tutorials on YouTube (Ahmed, 2018). In 2021, the fans of BTS paid homage to BTS on Eid-ul-Adha. The females wrote terms in Hangeul and singles of artists through henna designs (Mushtaq, 2021).

Korean music, K-dramas and tourism have brought in great advantages for South Korea’s economy. “Parasite” earned \$258 million globally, making it the highest grossing movie of South Korea of the year 2019. A Korean music company named BigHit Entertainment earned approximately \$114.5 million in revenues from merchandise. Numerous endorsement deals with Korean artists are thought to bring in roughly \$3.6 billion for South Korea (Sajnach, 2021).

K-pop culture has been increasingly becoming popular in many other Asian countries. In India, there are countless K-pop followers that are quite active. Since 2013, India has hosted a yearly competition of K-pop. India is among the first five nations with the most Korean learners, according to a 2020 language report by a language learning programme Duolingo (Lohia, 2021). When bands like TVX garnered a sizable Chinese fanbase in the 2000s, the K-pop fascination in China became apparent. Since then, young people in China have progressively gotten used to chart success, fundraising for albums, and expensive birthday festivities (Han, 2021).

Internationally, K-pop culture has spread its wings around the globe as well. The amount and extent of K-pop events in Austria significantly got greater after the music video for “Gangnam Style” got on top of the charts there in October 2012 (Sung, 2014, pp. 56–71). Through performers like JYP, Wonder Girls, and BoA, - who had their American debuts - Korean pop music first made its impression in American media. Yet, it wasn’t until “Gangnam Style” triumphed over the U.S. in 2012 that K-pop truly took off (Bonada, 2021).

### **Literature Review**

In his book “Globalization and Popular Music in South Korea,” Fuhr (2015) provided an analysis of the globalization of modern South Korean pop music. The author investigated the causes, consequences, and power dynamics in the

production and consumption of Korean music. He claimed that South Korean nationalizing and globalizing forces and imaginations coexist in the cultural space that is, K-pop.

Korean singers and dramas are garnering viewers from all over the world through YouTube. The world of popular entertainment has been globalized owing to Hollywood. However, because it is run by non-Asians and features Western ideologies, it is boring to people in Asia. Globalization is evident in Korean films, dramas, and in the song lyrics where English is used. The Korean Wave can be viewed as an Asian response to the globalization of popular culture (Hogarth, 2013, pp. 135–151).

A chapter of the book “Korean Wave in South Asia” debates how fan culture and transcultural exchange in South Asia have altered how people perceive their identities. The respondents support maintaining cultural traditions but also aspire to be a part of a new identity. The urge to explore and establish identities is evidenced by the urge to build personas on social media platforms (Roy & Das, 2022, pp. 59–78).

Apart from social media, the fans also create identities by watching Korean dramas. Fibrianto et al. (2020) examined the effects of Indonesian youth fanaticism on Korean culture as watching Korean dramas make a person fanatic. The impact of K-pop culture’s existence increases the presence of K-pop fandoms. The phrase “K-pop fans” has emerged as a result of the rapid growth of Korean music among young people. According to the respondents’ responses, embracing K-pop culture does not imply that people have forgotten their own culture.

The study of Kozhakhmetova (2012) has aimed to determine if Japanese teenager’s intake of Korean pop culture impacts how they view South Korea. Japan has become one of Korean Wave’s main marketplaces. The attitude and perspective of Korean popular music enthusiasts toward South Korea were examined in this study. The findings suggested that the Korean Wave had a significant impact on those Japanese fans who became really involved with Korean pop music.

Japan, Bangladesh, and India are just a few of the South Asian nations where the epidemic has spread. Akter (2019) investigated the extent of the Korean Wave’s influence on Bangladeshi youth. The study concentrated on four areas: K-pop as

entertainment, language impact, cultural values, and fashion trends. According to the study, the appeal of Korean pop culture in Bangladesh is being boosted by the hybridization of Bangladeshi and Korean cultures.

The Korean pop culture has extended beyond Asia to the Middle East, Europe, America, and Africa. The study by Yoon (2017, pp. 373–389) looks at how Canadian K-pop lovers interact with various forms of global imagination. The paper focuses on cute, cosmopolitan, and participatory globalization. The study discovered that Korean music’s hybridity is amusingly re-appropriated by its fans.

South Korean culture has extended to Pakistani audiences as well due to the Korean Wave. To explain the influence of Korean Wave on Pakistani students, this study examines their perceptions. According to this study, the inclusion of cultural items affects service quality, which in turn affects consumers’ behavioral intentions to travel to or suggest Korea to others (Kim & Tahira, 2022, pp. 157–190).

### **Research Methodology**

The research design was a quantitative method in which self-administered questionnaires were given to female youngsters. The sample was taken from public places of Rawalpindi including a few universities, malls, parks, restaurants etc. In the present study, the sample size was 377 which include young people, only females, aged between 15 to 26 years of age, residents of urban areas, and belonging to the upper middle and middle class. In this study, purposive sampling technique which is a type of non-probability sampling was used to choose the sample. Only people who know about K-pop culture and follow Korean music, drama, fashion and beauty were the focus of this research. After data collection from participants, the data was then put in SPSS. Bivariate analysis (chi-square test) was applied between two variables to distinguish the categories from one another.

**Results and Discussion**

**Alpha Reliability**

**Table 4.1.1**

Cronbach’s alpha reliability of the instrument (n=10)

N	No of items	Alpha Reliability
10	32	.857

Table 4.1.1 displays the questionnaire’s Cronbach’s alpha reliability. The alpha reliability was 0.857 and there were 10 participants. The

questionnaire’s alpha reliability was determined to be sufficient for use in the final study. No questions on the questionnaire needed to be changed.

**4.2 Demographic Characteristics**

**Table 4.2.1**

Frequency and percentage distribution of the demographics (n=377)

Demographics		<i>f</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	377	100
	Male	0	0
<b>Age</b>	15-18	107	25.7
	19-22	188	45.1
	23-26	82	19.7
<b>Educational Level</b>	Below Matric or O/A Levels	40	9.6
	Matric or O/A Levels	46	11.0
	Intermediate	24	5.8
	Undergraduate	225	54.0
	Masters & Above	42	10.1
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	331	79.4
	Housewife	3	0.7
	Part-time Job	9	2.2
	Full-time Job	14	3.4
	Self-employed	12	2.9
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Unemployed	8	1.9
	Below Rs. 10,000	62	14.9
	Rs. 10,000- 20,000	33	7.9
	Rs. 21,000-30,000	12	2.9
	Rs. 31,000-40,000	47	11.3
Above Rs. 40,000	223	53.5	

Table 4.2.1 shows that out of 377, all of the respondents were females. Table 4.2.1 indicates that out of 377, majority 188 of the respondents were of the age group 19-22. Table 4.2.1 indicates that out of 377, majority 225 of the respondents

were undergraduate. Table 4.2.1 shows that out of 377, majority 331 of the respondents were students. Table 4.2.1 indicates that out of 377, majority 223 of the respondents had above Rs. 40,000 household monthly income.

4.3 Perception with Influence

Table 4.3.1

Chi-square relationship between perception and influence

Perception and Influence		
Chi-square: 1462.018 Lambda: .226	Df: 369	Significance level: .000

Table 4.3.1 shows the chi-square relationship between perception and influence. There is a significant relationship between perception and

influence,  $\chi^2(369, N = 377) = 1462.018, p=.000$ . The test statistic is at  $p < .05$ , so rejected the  $H_0$ .

4.4 Positive Influence with Negative Influence

Table 4.4.1

Chi-square relationship between positive influence and negative influence

Positive Influence and Negative Influence		
Chi-square: 706.383 Lambda: .175	Df: 187	Significance level: .000

The chi-square relationship between positive and negative influence is depicted in Table 4.4.1. Positive and negative influences are significantly related to one another,  $\chi^2(187, N = 377) = 706.383, p=.000$ . The test statistic is at  $p < .05$ , so rejected the  $H_0$ .

female. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 22. The majority of respondents were students. Majority of the respondents had above Rs. 40,000 household monthly income.

4.5 Discussion

The present study was on “Perception and Adaptation of “K-Pop Culture” on Pakistani Youth.” The study’s aim was to find out the perception of Pakistani youth about K-pop culture, and the ways in which K-pop culture is influencing the youth of Pakistan. First objective was ‘to find out the perception of Pakistani youth about K-pop culture.’ Second objective was ‘to find out the ways in which K-pop culture is influencing the youth of Pakistan.’ For this said purpose, participants from a few malls, parks and universities of Rawalpindi were selected as samples. In this study, purposive sampling was employed. The consent form and questionnaire were given to the participants who completed the paper form. The responses were analyzed quantitatively in SPSS, where the Pearson Chi-Square was used to measure the perception and influence of K-Pop.

In the present study through SPSS analysis, the researcher finds the effect of perception on influence and the research shows a secure link between them. The link is significant according to the chi-square test, where the value of  $c$  is 0.00. Literature also supports this result as the study about Japan of Kozhakhmetova (2012) proved that Japanese fans who become intensely involved with Korean popular music have experienced a profound change in how they view the world thanks to the Korean Wave. The considerable result of the chi-square test tells that the perception of youth about K-Pop culture has an influence on them and this influence leads to fanaticism. According to Fibrianto et al. (2020), the impact of K-pop culture’s existence increases the presence of fans and a significant number of K-pop communities known as fandom. The phrase “K-pop fans” has emerged as a result of the rapid growth of Korean music among young people. To explain the enormous appeal of the Korean Wave and its influence on Pakistani students and alumni, this study of Kim and Tahira (2022, pp. 157–190) examines their perceptions. According to this study, the inclusion of cultural items affects service quality, which in turn affects consumers'

Total 377 participants were selected from different public places in Rawalpindi. this is a brief description of the frequencies of the socio-economic variables. All of the respondents were

behavioral intentions to travel to or suggest Korea to others. So, the perception of Pakistani youth about K-Pop culture affects the influence of K-Pop culture on them.

Further chi-square test showed the relationship between positive influence and negative influence of K-Pop culture where the results are significant, K-Pop culture has a positive influence. The findings refute Pha and Lhe's (2022, pp. 7–14) assertion that it is getting easier for people to locate Korean dramas online as technology develops. Drama serves as a starting point for gradual cultural education and interest in all things Korean. As a result of seeing the food in Korean dramas, viewers are inspired to eat Korean cuisine. After viewing the dramas, viewers often experience increased levels of emotion and behavior including dejection, fury, excitement and happiness. Korean dramas encourage empathetic behavior and discourage rivalry. There are negative impacts as well. People who watch Korean dramas with fictional plots could have a sense of reality and identification with the scenario. This study states that there are both positive and negative impacts of K-pop culture. Because a fanatic's ideas render him blind, he will stop at nothing to uphold them. On social media, this hostile conduct is prevalent (Fibrianto et al., 2020). This conclusion is supported by one of the research. K-pop has sweet and sappy undertones that are evident in the lyrics, which are free of any references to sex, violence, or drugs (Yoon, 2017, pp. 373–389).

Hybridization refers to the blending of global and local practices. K-pop is defined as a blend of Korean characteristics (such as the Korean language, musicians who were born in South Korea and businesses based in Seoul) and Western elements (like popular music genres originating from the US, using English in songs). Korean popular music is merging cultural boundaries and joining fans from around the globe (Boman, 2021, pp. 354–370). The Pakistani fans of K-pop culture connect to each other through Korean music, dramas, fashion, food and festivals. They find similarities in their own and Korean culture so that they can link and relate with the music and dramas easily. This is why they are following K-pop culture.

The results will be helpful to media students as they will get to know how and why people get

influenced by another culture, sometimes at the expense of their own culture and other times blending both. The results will also change the perception of Pakistani youth about K-pop culture and the impact it will have on them. The results will help to understand the positive impacts of K-pop culture.

### Limitations of the Study

There was a lack of prior literature on this research topic.

The data was collected from Rawalpindi due to limited time constraints; therefore the findings cannot be generalized on the whole population of Pakistan.

Along with universities, the data was collected from malls, and parks which are busy places and people are in a hurry so there is a possibility that they might have answered wrongly.

The data was collected from a city of urban area so the findings cannot be generalized to rural areas.

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