



Girls & Korean Romance Drama: Romance Analysis of Teenage Girl Audiences on Korean Romance Drama

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ABSTRACT

Korean romantic dramas have become a very popular phenomenon among Indonesian teenage girls, sparking an interest in researching their impact and perceptions. This article is motivated by previous researches which states that these dramas are considered to lack quality due to the dominance of love stories that are too unrealistic and do not match the reality of everyday life. These researches also criticised the construction of love and romance in Korean dramas that tend not to reflect real life. The researcher in this article examines the interpretations of Indonesian teenage girls after watching Korean romantic dramas. The researcher uses ethnography as a method to get answers to these questions. In addition, to understand how the informants like Korean dramas, the researcher used Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of subject formation. As a result, the researcher found that the act of reading from Korean drama viewers is a momentary release from patriarchal demands by imagining themselves as the characters in the drama. However, on the other hand, the researcher also found a contradiction where the act of watching Korean dramas is a form of resistance to patriarchy, but the narratives presented in Korean romantic dramas often support patriarchy by emphasising women's happiness through relationships with men. Limitation of this study is the limited number of informants involved, causing the results of the interpretation to be less diverse. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended to broaden the scope by increasing the number of informants, to provide a broader and deeper perspective.

Keywords: *Korean Romance Drama, Teenage Girls, Patriarchy, Ethnography, Psychoanalysis*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, currently the fourth most popular country in the world, is home to millions of Korean drama lovers. According to a survey carried out in 2019 by the Statista Research Department in Indonesia, which utilized a questionnaire administered from October 4 to October 20 involving 500 respondents aged 15-59 years, the data reveals that Korean dramas have high popularity in Indonesia, with a significant of 49.2% of respondents indicating their preference (I. P. Putri et al., 2019).

Igak Satrya Wibawa, an expert in cinema studies from Universitas Airlangga (Unair) (in Ihsan, 2021), mentioned that young Indonesian girls constitute the largest fanbase of Korean dramas due to their emotional attachment to the characters and storylines, which encompass not only romance but also about the professional skills, familial warmth, and elements of criminal mystery. Followed by a report from Tirto.id which stated that most of the respondents to Indonesian people's favourite Korean dramas were girls. The most significant percentage is aged 21-26 (54.37%), and the rest are aged 15-17 (4.18%) (Dhani, 2017). In the scientific journal entitled *The Urgency of Revision of the Law on the Welfare of the Elderly* by Hakim (2020), the age classification for late teenagers is 17-25 years. Korean drama fans in Indonesia are known for their deep and excessive viewing habits (Jeong et al., 2017). As stated by Fortunata & Utami (2021), Indonesian girls who love Korean dramas spend a lot of time watching them, and some of them are light viewers in the sense of watching an average of two hours per day, while others are heavy viewers who spend an average of four hours per day or more.

Korean dramas have become part of people's everyday life. As a media, it can entertain and provide imaginative effects for consumers. Viewers often imagine themselves as one of the characters in the Korean drama they are watching. They can feel the emotions and experiences of the character so that they can be emotionally involved with the story (Topan & Febrina Ernungtyas, 2020). Korean dramas also convey both information and life lessons, hence, it can provide new knowledge for the people who watch it. For example, Korean dramas with medical themes provide a lot of information and new knowledge about medical terms that are certainly not widely known by ordinary people. Korean dramas with legal themes also provide indirect knowledge to the public.

Some studies show how audiences interpret Korean dramas. Islamiyati (2017), found how Indonesian female audiences accept the culture and male figures displayed in Korean dramas. Rianto (2019) explains the audience's reading of romance in Korean dramas using Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory which can be divided into three forms, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition. Ningsih (2021) showed various interpretations of the Korean drama "Crash Landing on You" in the

encoding-decoding process of girl audiences using Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory. Based on previous research on audience interpretations of Korean dramas, the three studies have similarities in the theory used: Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory. However, the three studies only focus on audience positioning. A similar study conducted by Radway (1984) explains why girls read romantic fiction, as well as how they interpret romance.

Radway continued that romance readers interpret their novels as a form of escape and relaxation from daily routines and pressures. Then, readers have a romance ideal for a good romance and a failed romance for the opposite. Radway also discusses the ambivalence of female readers of romance novels, noting that they do not read these novels solely as subjects of patriarchy; rather, reading romance serves as a means to challenge it, reflecting a desire for improved everyday conditions (Sokowati & Yuni-anto, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies show how audiences interpret Korean dramas. Islamiyati (2017) found how Indonesian female audiences accept the culture and male figures displayed in Korean dramas. The study used Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory with a model of three audience readings, namely, dominant hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition. The results of the decoding analysis with different informant backgrounds resulted in a variety of acceptance. When they find similar cultural content, such as being friendly, polite, and hardworking, audiences are dominant hegemonic. However, when they encounter the content of Korean drinking culture, audiences are divided into negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

Rianto (2019) explains the audience's reading of romance in Korean dramas using Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory which can be divided into three forms, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition. Dominant-hegemonic 6 audiences accept romantic Korean dramas with romantic stories that touch the emotional dimension of the audience. In contrast, the negotiation reading accepts romantic Korean dramas if they do not involve social class, while the oppositional reading completely rejects romantic Korean dramas and classifies them as unreal.

Ningsih (2021) showed various interpretations of the Korean drama "Crash Landing on You" in the encoding-decoding process of girl audiences using Stuart Hall's reception analysis theory with three audience reading models, namely, dominant hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition. Based on the construction of Korean male masculinity, Captain Ri, and ideal masculinity, as well as masculinity in terms of profession and appearance, the construction of Korean men in mass media for female audiences is considered to have an attractive and dashing visual appearance, macho, a woman's dream, prioritizing actions, but still gentle, patient, and protective of girls.

Issues

Along with the popularity of romantic Korean dramas among Indonesian teenage girls, this phenomenon is also accompanied by criticism from haters of Korean drama lovers who claim that Korean dramas always have a negative impact on the younger generation. Most people think watching Korean dramas is a bad habit that causes a teenager to become addicted, lazy to move, and anti-social in addition to them already dealing with their gadgets (Nawawi et al., 2021). Not only that, many people view watching romantic Korean dramas as meaningless and uninformative. A study by Kurniawan (2017) revealed that although Korean dramas are interesting to many people because of their storylines, there is also criticism regarding the quality of the content. These dramas are often considered uneducational and focus more on superficial entertainment, which can be seen as worthless viewing. Other studies have shown that many viewers, especially girls, tend to rely more on feelings than logic when watching Korean dramas. This makes them more susceptible to the emotional impact of the content. Research also suggests that Korean dramas can create high expectations of real relationships, which often do not conform to reality (Kedi, 2013).

However, referring to Radway's (1984) previous research, which highlighted how housewives read romance novels not only as reading that was considered inferior, but also as a way to escape from the burdens of life as women. According to Radway, consuming romantic stories is an attempt by women as viewers to escape from their daily routine. The previous studies mentioned did not consider the issue of escapism when discussing Korean drama audiences. Apart from that, they can also learn from these stories. This is what researchers want to see in looking at the popularity of romantic Korean dramas among teenage girls. The researcher assumes that these teenage girls are not only watching, but also that there are other factors that underlie this behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. Qualitative research is a field of research done by collecting information or data about the factual circumstances of the people and behaviour observed, then collected and expressed in words and pictures, or words arranged in sentences, for example, sentences from interviews between researchers and informants. The focus of this study is on teenage girls who are viewers of Korean romance dramas, referred to in this paper as informants. The research will be conducted in Yogyakarta. The age of the participants aligns with findings from Tirto.id, which indicate that the majority of Indonesian respondents who favor Korean romance dramas are teenage girls. The most significant percentage is aged 21-26 years (54.37%), and they are classified as heavy viewers according to

Cultivation theory by George Gerbner's (1998) (in Annisa & Sari, 2023), which claims that heavy viewers are viewers who watch more than four hours of media every day.

The data collection in this research employs ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews, and documentation. Through participant observation, the researcher immerses themselves in the daily activities of Korean drama fans, gaining deeper insights by engaging directly with the community. Interviews are conducted face-to-face to collect primary data on informants' beliefs, experiences, and motivations. Documentation complements these methods by providing supporting data in the form of reports and records. Data analysis follows qualitative techniques, starting with data reduction to focus on relevant themes, followed by data presentation using narratives or visual aids, and concluding with verification to ensure credibility. These methods enable a comprehensive exploration of cultural and behavioral patterns, contributing to the development of new theories and understanding within the study's focus.

Radway's research on romance stories inspired this research. Unlike the previous research mentioned, this research is not focused specifically on certain episode or series of Korean romance dramas. The researcher will discuss about Korean romance dramas in general, which is most similar to Radway's. The researcher attempts to understand how girl teenagers interpret Korean romance drama: what Korean romance dramas mean to them, why they like Korean romance dramas, and why they are willing to spend so much time watching Korean romance dramas. Therefore, the researcher will complete what was missing in the previous research: a critical analysis of audiences. According to this perspective, the researcher argues that teenage girl viewers are positioned as subversive audiences in interpreting Korean romance dramas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are categorized into three main discussions; The Act of Reading Korean Romantic Dramas; Korean Romantic Dramas as Narrative Fantasy of The Texts; and The Ambivalence of Korean Romantic Drama Viewers. These discussion provide insight into the complex ways teenage girls engage with Korean romantic dramas.

The Act of Reading Korean Romantic Dramas

From the act of reading, there is an underlying reason for the meaning of the act. In the context of Korean romantic dramas, Korean dramas can promote a sense of calm and provide a release effect. Through deep and emotional narratives, Korean dramas can touch the audience's hearts and make them feel deep feelings. Viewers can empathize with the characters in the story, experience joy when happy moments occur, and share sadness when characters face challenges and conflicts. Korean dramas also

often feature stories that highlight universal themes of life, such as love, friendship, family, and struggle, so that the audience can feel a sense of closeness to the story being told.

This process, where the audience engages in an emotional journey with the characters, can provide a release effect that can help reduce stress levels and provide peace of mind (Qorib & Fitri, 2023). In addition, Korean dramas also offer a different world from the audience's daily life. With settings that are often other and exciting, Korean dramas can be a fun means of relieving stress from the daily routine. Viewers can be entertained by diving into characters' lives in stories different from their real lives. This can help take the mind off daily stresses and worries, providing a much-needed break to release tension and fatigue.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in informants who are fans of romantic Korean dramas, where their daily lives reflect various complexities. To illustrate, Informant 1 was looking for internship opportunities but faced challenges, which resulted in him spending more time at home. In addition, Informant 1 felt pressure from her parents to complete her studies in a short period of time, even though she was also focusing on her thesis, which required a lot of time and dedication. Despite their busy schedules, these informants, including Informant 2 and Informant 3, still find time to watch Korean dramas. For them, this activity serves as a means of escape from reality, allowing them to momentarily forget about their daily pressures and immerse themselves in the storylines offered by the dramas.

Ashfia (2023) said that the factors that influence students who watch Korean dramas are stress-coping strategies. Teenagers make Korean dramas a means to unwind from their daily studies (Topan & Febrina Ernungtyas, 2020). Similarly, research conducted by Prasanti & Dewi (2020) explains that Korean dramas can be an escape to calm down from the many duties and obligations of someone pursuing an education. In this study, teenage girls revealed that they not only involved themselves in watching Korean dramas to release fatigue from the daily learning routine. Moreover, the pressure from parents is the main reason why many of them feel high levels of stress. Thus, they feel the need to find a means to release that stress. Korean dramas become an outlet they rely on to find comfort and stress relief from the psychological burdens they experience, creating an opportunity to relieve pressure and find a moment of calm in such a stressful world.

Jiang & Leung (2012) said that factors influencing a person to watch Korean dramas include entertainment. In addition to Korean dramas as a form of stress release, these teenagers also recognize that Korean romantic dramas are a form of entertainment or pleasure. As stated by Ien Ang (in Junaedi & Sokowati, 2023), pleasure or displeasure with Soap Opera Dallas is closely related to 'realism.' To a certain extent, Dallas viewers find that the goodness or badness of the program is strongly related to whether they

perceive it as 'realistic' or 'unrealistic.' This interpretation aligns with Mel's view of romance in Korean dramas. Although she does not hate the romantic stories in Korean dramas at all, they are not realistic for her. The romance in Korean dramas is too fantastic and unrealistic. Nonetheless, she sincerely admits that she enjoys watching Korean dramas. For her, Korean dramas have the unique ability to bring experiences that she cannot find in real life, including but not limited to the alluring moments of romance, the warmth of affection, and other criteria that suit her desires.

In research on preferences for Korean dramas, most informants favored romantic dramas featuring strong, independent female characters, such as "Fight for My Way," "My Name," and "It's Okay Not to Be Okay." These dramas portray beautiful actresses with admirable careers, attractive partners, and happy endings, representing an aspirational ideal. While informants aspire to emulate these characters, they recognize that societal patriarchal norms hinder their freedom to pursue their dreams. They face pressure to conform to expectations regarding appearance, household responsibilities, and balancing careers with marriage, which complicates their efforts to shape their own identities.

Teenage girls face the dual pressures of busy daily activities and the expectation to look good, influenced by parents, siblings, friends, and societal beauty norms like having a slim figure and fair skin. This burden stems from societal ideals and reflects an attempt to escape patriarchal standards, limiting females ability to express themselves. They are not allowed to define themselves, think about themselves, or understand themselves; girls are always portrayed through the medium of males (Indriani, n.d.). As explained by Alam & Alfian (2022) girls feel a negative impact due to the construction of a patriarchal culture that systematically provides support for the view that males have superiority over females. Especially in the campus environment, patriarchal culture is increasingly entrenched, causing female students to experience inequality in available spaces and options compared to male students.

In this context, girl students encounter obstacles in expressing themselves and managing their appearance. Males often have greater freedom in choosing their dress style without significant risk of social judgment, while girls face specific standards demanding a decent appearance. This creates additional pressure for females to adhere to certain norms that do not necessarily apply to males. In escaping patriarchy, teenage girls try to avoid the burdens and expectations that are usually placed on them by patriarchal norms. This act becomes a form of resistance or escape from expectations that can limit female freedom and identity. In this way, escaping patriarchy becomes a strategy to gain independence and maintain female autonomy in constructing the meaning of their own lives (Triani, 2021).

These informants revealed that the experience of watching female characters in Korean dramas gave them a sense of happiness. They find pleasure in seeing representations

of females they admire in Korean romantic dramas. For them, these dramas were not just entertainment but also an alternative form of release from the pressure of patriarchal norms in their environment. Through these romantic stories, these female characters feel they can immerse themselves in moments of freedom and inspiring existence, thus providing a space to step away from the patriarchal realities they may face daily. This is in accordance with the findings in a study by Herlina et al., (2022), which showed that romantic Korean dramas can function as alternative spaces that allow audiences, especially girls, to experience freedom from social restrictions. These dramas, with plots and characters that present these opportunities for freedom, are instrumental in offering ways to cope with real-life pressures, while introducing relevant and inspiring forms of female empowerment.

This analysis can be related to Radway's (in Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006) understanding; although the way of reading is different, it has similar contradictions. These contradictions are relevant to Radway's study in the context of housewives, where novels become an escape channel for housewives who feel burdened by the demands of their roles as mothers and wives. Correspondingly, today's teenage girls find a means to forget tension for a moment through watching Korean romantic dramas. As university students, they face academic pressures and the demands of daily routines. However, more than that, they are also faced with social burdens that force girls to look good, have a body shape that meets beauty standards, and even face expectations to get married and build a career at the same time. As also discussed in the study by Romadhon (2019), Korean dramas often offer narrative alternatives that are not only entertaining but also give viewers a chance to see different aspects of life, allowing them to forget about the social burdens or pressures of living in the real world. In this sense, Korean dramas function as a medium that not only provides entertainment, but also plays a role in providing forms of emotional escape that can help reduce stress and enrich the emotional experiences of teenage girls in dealing with the demands of their lives.

Korean dramas are a way of releasing tension that provides leisure, reduces stress levels, and provides a space to release tension from the expectations imposed by society. As also discussed in the study by Kristanty et al., (2022), Korean dramas often offer narrative alternatives that are not only entertaining but also give viewers a chance to see different aspects of life, giving them a space to forget the social burdens or stresses of living in the real world. In this sense, Korean dramas function as a medium that not only provides entertainment, but also plays a role in providing forms of emotional escape that can help reduce stress and enrich the emotional experience of teenage girls in dealing with the demands of their lives. The picture of a perfect life shown in romantic Korean dramas with supportive partners, harmonious relationships, and satisfying conflict resolution provides them with a sense of comfort and pleasure, which allows them to feel as if they could also achieve similar happiness.

Furthermore, the presence of role models is a result of the tension release process. Korean drama characters, often idolised by the informants, serve as inspiration and guidance in dealing with life's problems. Informants absorb the story and character development as a source of motivation, learning from how the characters face and overcome challenges. The researcher concludes that the importance of Korean dramas as a source of inspiration is found in the connection between what is shown in the story and their personal experiences. When the narratives of Korean dramas reflect or depict problems like those they face in their daily lives, informants will feel more connected and encouraged to find similar solutions.

Motivation	Quotes from Informants
Escapism	"It helps me forget my stressful day."
Inspiration	"I admire how strong the female leads are."

Table 1. *Informant's Response*

As explained by Ramadhan & Hadi (2022), this phenomenon is referred to as character identification or vicarious identification, where the audience feels as if they are also experiencing the journey of the characters in the drama, which in turn gives them the understanding and drive to overcome their own challenges. This identification process leads to the formation of a more positive mindset and self-empowerment, as viewers see that solutions to their problems can be found through the experiences depicted in the story. Thus, watching Korean dramas not only provides a release of tension from reality, but also offers real inspiration and guidance in dealing with various life situations. It is not just a release of tension from the burdens of life but also a realistic way for them to express their feelings and desires amidst the pressures they face. Therefore, Korean romantic dramas are not just entertainment but also a form of catharsis that helps them cope with pressure and find solace in inspiring and liberating narratives.

Korean Romantic Dramas as Narrative Fantasy of the Texts

Based on the data collected through observations and interviews, researchers put a special spotlight on the habits and behaviors of girl fans of Korean romantic dramas in determining their viewing preferences. The informants were seen to play a very active role in keeping up with the latest developments in the world of Korean dramas. The observation and interview process allowed for a deeper investigation into their choices, providing a richer understanding of how they engage in the Korean drama scene and why they are attracted to certain types of viewing.

They like Korean dramas not only because of the genre but also because the actors and actresses also play a role in determining their preferences. These informants have a habit of identifying themselves with the characters in Korean dramas. These informants see themselves as girls in the female roles in Korean dramas. They have a desire to be like the characters in the dramas, with attitudes that match the characters.

Some informants emphasized their interest in independent female characters who do not merely pursue love in a clichéd manner. They liked the resilience of the female characters in this drama, which evoked sympathy and provided inspiration. The desire to be an "independent woman," like the female characters who are independent and not dependent on male, reflected the role models that most of them desired. However, in the romance narratives presented in Korean dramas, even independent female characters always involve male characters to achieve a happy ending in the story.

Meanwhile, in terms of choosing favorite actresses, some informants liked Han So Hee, Seo Yea Ji, and Han Hyo Joo. The reasons behind this choice include the beauty seen in the figures and the character roles that are always independent and brave and have a clear stance. These actresses bring an independent female dynamic and are unafraid to fight against injustice, creating a strong and assertive female image. It is also important to note that this choice is not just about preference but also about the desire to mirror the characters they admire.

This is in line with the statement of one of the informants who said, "I want to be like that." This statement makes them believe that if they want to be like the characters in Korean dramas, they must follow the same fashion style. In other words, as Lacan (in Mansfield, 2000) said, there will always be demands (The Big O) that follow when there is desire. The statement reflects a clear trend regarding Korean dramas' huge influence on girls' fashion styles. This statement is key to understanding that to realize this desire, fans tend to adopt fashion styles like their idol characters.

In addition, these informants built an idealized image of their relationships with the dramas through Korean romantic dramas. They stated that the male characters in these dramas represent the ideal type that they dream of. Through good Korean romantic dramas, these informants build an idealized image of their relationship with the dramas. They stated that the good looks of the male characters in these dramas represent the ideal type they dream of. These actors have their concept of good looks, as explained by Yusanta (2019) in his study, said that South Korean male good looks have their standards involving an attractive physical image and are often related to prevailing beauty trends, especially those related to the entertainment industry such as K-pop and Korean dramas. This standard of good looks usually involves a clean, smooth, youthful appearance, with features like fair skin, a sharp nose, and a firm jaw.

The informants choice comes on actors such as Park Seo Joon, Song Joong Ki, and Kim So Hyun. The reason behind this selection revolves around the good looks that can be seen in the figures and the actor's ability to portray characters that are not only cool and powerful but also loving and show a gentle attitude towards females. Watching Korean dramas with such romance evokes a desire for imagination as the subject of

the drama "I want to be treated like that" is a phrase to describe how memorable the experience of love shown in the drama (Rianto, 2019).

The informants' desire to have a partner, like in Korean dramas, made the ideal partner of the participants change. Islamiyati (2017) said that the opinion of Korean drama viewers in having a partner such as a male who has a tall posture, athletic and handsome face but looks firm, with an ignorant and quiet but caring nature makes the audience have an ideal partner as shown in Korean dramas. The informants imagined the male in Korean dramas as a "complete package" of ideal couple characters. The compromise makes them negotiate with the hope of having the characteristics of male characters in Korean dramas in their partners. As described in the study B. M. S. Putri & Yatim (2019), this indicates that they indirectly want a partner who fits the image of the man to provide a romantic experience as seen in the drama.

This is in line with what Lacan explained, that needs, demands, and desires are not determined by ourselves but are determined by others through language, and language is determined by something outside ourselves or the subject (Mansfield, 2000). When we talk about culture, this indicates a desire often rooted in a strong drive to achieve something desirable, but that desire is also always tied to demands (The Big O). When someone has a desire to resemble an actress in a Korean drama, it means that they are also involved in a set of demands that come with it. For example, they must follow the same beauty standards, for which they have to adopt a similar style of dressing and even use the same cosmetics and skincare products. On the other hand, some individuals want a partner who looks like the actors in Korean dramas. This implies that they must also adhere to the standard of a partner who looks like the Korean actor they like. So, how informants want to be their perfect themselves cannot be separated from what others think of them.

Our identity is largely shaped by the perceptions of those around us. Our ideal self often aligns with how others perceive us. The "other" in the mirror is not truly someone else but a reflection of ourselves. However, our identity also influences how others perceive us. Ultimately, who holds the power to define? Lacan refers to the concept of "The Big O," defined as culture or rules. The presence of culture gives rise to desire. Self-identity certainly has a desire, which is always followed by cultural norms. In the context of this desire, there are specific demands. Therefore, to achieve a certain identity, one must comply with the prevailing norms (Mansfield, 2000). For example, to be Korean, one must follow the dress and rules of Korean culture, referred to as a demand.

According to Lacan (in Murti, 2016), no matter how much demand you want to achieve, it will not be able to fulfill desire. When the desire cannot be fulfilled, there will be an emptiness called lack. According to Lacan, the lack can be likened to the condition of a newborn infant. The infant cries because there is a lack in him. The infant is not ready

to accept the fact that it has to part with its "comfort zone" in the mother's womb. He must face the cold and heat of the surrounding temperature and move all body organs to survive. So crying is the only way a baby can express the lack he feels.

It is clear why these girls are obsessed with Korean dramas. Watching Korean romantic dramas gives them happiness, a substitute for lack. They express their pleasure by imagining themselves as the characters in Korean dramas. Entering the dramatic world, the beauty represented by the characters they admire provides a very satisfying experience for them. These girls were not only mesmerized by the physicality of the characters but also by the personality characteristics and values they represented. They created imaginative worlds where they could mirror the traits and personalities of the characters in the drama. Through this imagination, they expressed a desire to be like the character by saying, "If only I could be like them, it would be so much fun."

Sometimes, after watching a desire fulfilled, humans will feel another desire again. This was what Lacan calls *Jouissance* or temporary pleasure, which makes these girls continue to watch Korean romantic dramas for a long time. This emptiness then enters the unconscious, and in reality, this will never be achieved because there is no emptiness between the other and the self unless the two become separate entities. Lacan refers to the concept of "the Real" as something beyond language's limits. The Real is beyond the ability of language to describe, so it is real but not actually real. Unrealizable desires, such as wanting to be beautiful and rich, having a handsome partner, and being treated like a princess in Korean dramas, are examples of "the real," which is something that cannot be achieved. However, these desires are never fulfilled because of cultural norms; we would only have desires with language.

The fear of lack makes people try hard to fulfil their desires. However, the happiness they experience is created to fulfil the happiness of "the other." The term "the other" here refers to the Korean drama film industry, including production companies, producers, directors, and various collaborating platforms such as Netflix, Viu, Disney Hotstar, and so on, which will benefit from the happiness felt by the audience. The more intensely these informants watch Korean romantic dramas, the more profitable it is for the film industry to get ratings from viewers who like the dramas they make.

The Korean drama film industry also has a set of rules in their drama production process. One of the rules that comes into focus is about the appearance of the actors and actresses, who are expected to have beauty and good looks that match the set standards. Additionally, there is a distinctive narrative pattern in Korean romantic dramas, where romance stories often follow a similar pattern to Cinderella stories. This means that in many cases, elements such as conflict and character development present in Cinderella stories can be found in popular Korean romantic dramas.

Similarly, the reason why these informants like Korean romantic dramas is because they feel that their favorite characters in Korean dramas reflect the ideal version of themselves. So, this makes them identify themselves: "I want to be like this character" to fulfill their desires; it is the result of being a subject that cannot be separated from the other. In Lacan's analysis, there is The Big O called The Name of The Father that controls them, so how can they not be released by it? When someone desires to resemble an actress in a Korean drama, it means that they are also involved in a series of demands that come with it. For example, they must follow the same beauty standards, for which they must adopt a similar style of dressing and even use the same cosmetics and skincare products.

On the other hand, some want a mate who looks like the actors in Korean dramas. This implies that they also must adhere to the standards of a partner who looks white, has a sharp nose, a tall body posture, and a firm jaw, just like the Korean actors they like. So, informants want to be their perfect selves, and they cannot be separated from the culture and norms in society and other people's opinions about them.

The Ambivalence of Korean Romantic Drama Viewers

The researcher observed a contradiction between the activity of watching Korean romantic dramas and their understanding of the Korean dramas' narratives. The contradiction can be seen from two different perspectives. Firstly, the audiences watch Korean dramas to challenge or even fight the patriarchy that still exists in their culture. As female informants, the informants face various demands that emphasize aspects of their femininity. They must maintain an attractive appearance, handle domestic work, pursue a career, and are also expected to get married. As a result of these pressures, they find pleasure in watching Korean romantic dramas. However, more than just entertainment, watching such dramas also has an empowering effect. The informants accessed helpful information and gained strategies to deal with their life problems through the Korean romantic dramas they watched.

However, on the other hand, the romance narratives that are often the focus of Korean dramas can be seen as an endorsement of patriarchy. Korean romantic dramas often present plots that follow classic patterns, such as the Cinderella story, where the female often depends on the male to reach a happy ending. This confirms the convention of portraying females as passive subjects who need to be rescued or protected by males. While these narratives may entertain, they indirectly reinforce the views attached to traditional gender roles, which can reinforce female inequality and dependence on males in a society saturated by patriarchal norms.

Until now, the narrative has also been attached to the story displayed by Korean dramas with romantic themes. For example, the phenomenal dramas favoured by teenage girls, *Crash Landing on You*, *Descendant of the Sun*, and so on, also feature romance

narratives called "Cinderella Complex." Syarif (2016) says that such story narratives describe the psychological conditions experienced by females, who consistently become dependent and always expect protection from males.

This preference has a relation to the type of characters they choose in enjoying Korean dramas. Thus, the choice of characters that emphasise female strength and independence in the story holds a special appeal for them. In this context, characters that explore female courage and independence can create an emotional and inspirational bond for the audience. This process thus involves a complex negotiation between individual expectations for freedom and exploration and the norms that have been instilled by the surrounding culture (Malewa, 2019).

This is in line with why they are interested in watching Korean dramas. On one hand, they pioneer resistance to the patriarchal system and desire to be independent females, without relying on the presence of males. This belief reflects the spirit of engaging in more liberated and autonomous roles. However, on the other hand, a paradox emerges when they find an attraction to patriarchal romantic narratives in Korean dramas. In Utami (2018) study, she explained that romance narratives in Korean dramas such as Cinderella stories, which emphasise that female happiness can only be achieved through relationships with males, show a deep cultural influence.

Based on Radway (1984) analysis of housewives, women in Smithon regard romance novels as a means of escape from the heavy burden of motherhood and wifehood. For them, reading novels became the most realistic option to create a space of escape from the exhausting daily routine. However, ambivalence arises when they realise that the narrative structure in romance novels supports the existing patriarchal ideology. In the same context, this situation has significant relevance in the study of teenage girls today. They face the burden of routine as students, coupled with parental pressure. Ironically, the support that should be provided by parents turns into pressure to be able to handle everything. In addition, teenage girls also face pressure to fulfil beauty standards defined by societal norms, including having an attractive appearance and body shape that conforms to existing beauty standards. This burden is even more complex as they are also faced with the dual role of being a female. They are expected to get married but are also likely to have a career.

In this situation, an urge is to become an "independent woman." Watching Korean romantic dramas is entertainment and a space to release tension for a while. Through the drama, they can create an imaginary world where they can manage and resolve the various expectations placed on them. However, ambivalence arises when they realize that the narrative structure in Korean romantic dramas supports the existing patriarchal ideology. Despite their aspirations for independence and self-determination without dependence on males, they recognize that the representations of females in these dramas are still bound by patriarchal norms that limit their space. As a result,

these young females must navigate the complexities between their personal aspirations and cultural influences that sometimes conflict with their aspirations for independence. The analogy between the experiences of housewives and teenage girls today provides a deep insight into how social and patriarchal pressures continue to influence the way females seek escape and manage the various expectations placed on them.

The ambivalence that emerges in the viewing experience signifies that the audience has an active role in making decisions, interpreting, accessing, and responding to artworks (Pandjaitan & Nando, 2012). Especially in the context of romance narratives, which may dominate the storytelling but still provide openings for resistance. These spaces of resistance reflect the audience's strategy to negotiate the dominating patriarchal norms while pursuing their desire to transcend the conditions of the present. Therefore, ambivalence is not simply confusion or uncertainty, but a conscious strategy used by audiences, particularly Korean romantic drama audiences, to shape and negotiate their understanding of the world, including the relationship between gender and power. In this context, the audience is a passive recipient and an active agency that finds spaces to negotiate and define new meanings within existing narratives. This illustrates that audiences can transcend the power structures that may dominate them, emphasizing their position as subjects not only shaped by narratives but also shaped and influenced by them. Thus, ambivalence becomes a tool to open the door for reflection, change, and resistance to norms that may limit or direct their experience.

Implication

The findings of this study reveal intricate patterns of media consumption and its impact on teenage girl audiences, particularly regarding their engagement with Korean romantic dramas. These dramas serve not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a form of emotional escape and a tool for navigating societal pressures, such as patriarchal expectations. The dual role of Korean dramas as both a site of resistance and a reinforcement of traditional gender norms highlights their complex socio-cultural implications.

This section explores the broader implications of these findings, emphasizing their relevance to understanding media's role in shaping identity, coping mechanisms, and gender dynamics. By analyzing how audiences negotiate empowerment within patriarchal narratives, we can derive insights into the cultural and psychological factors influencing their media consumption behaviors. The implications extend to various stakeholders, including media producers, educators, and policymakers, offering recommendations to enhance the representation of diverse and empowering narratives in popular media.

Based on this explanation, the researcher concluded that the limitation of this study is limited by the number of informants involved, causing the results of the interpretation to be less diverse. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended to broaden the scope by increasing the number of informants, to provide a broader and deeper perspective.

This study also contributes to the understanding of media consumption among teenage girls by highlighting their nuanced engagement with Korean romantic dramas. It demonstrates how viewers negotiate empowerment within patriarchal narratives. Media producers could incorporate more diverse and empowering storylines to reflect and encourage independence among teenage girl viewers. Future studies should expand the sample size and include male viewers to explore gendered reception.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been conducted, the researcher concludes:

1. Teenage girls love Korean romantic dramas because they are a means of escaping patriarchal demands and catharsis. In line with Radway's understanding, although *The Act of Reading* is different, it has similar contradictions. Where romance novels become an escape channel for housewives from the demands of the role of mother and wife. Today's teenage girls, however, turn to Korean romantic dramas to escape the demands of being a girl.
2. Teenage girls watch Korean romantic dramas to escape patriarchal demands and gain pleasure. According to Lacan, watching the drama provides pleasure through imagining themselves as the characters in the story, but their desire to resemble the characters raises patriarchal demands such as beauty standards and expectations of an ideal mate. This creates a temporary pleasure that encourages them to continue watching, showing that their aspirations are not detached from existing norms and culture.
3. The researcher found an ambivalence between the act of watching Korean romantic dramas with the narratives in Korean romantic dramas. Teenage girls watch Korean romantic dramas as a form of resistance to the patriarchy that influences their culture. They use the dramas to reinforce girls' values and develop strategies to deal with everyday challenges. However, romance narratives in Korean dramas often emphasize female's dependence on males, indicating consent to patriarchal structures. Although narratives of strong girls are emerging in popular culture, male influence remains significant, suggesting that patriarchal culture has not disappeared completely.
4. Limitation of this study is the limited number of informants involved, causing the results of the interpretation to be less diverse. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended to broaden the scope by increasing the number of informants, to provide a broader and deeper perspective.

5. This study contributes to the understanding of media consumption among teenage girls by highlighting their nuanced engagement with Korean romantic dramas. It demonstrates how viewers negotiate empowerment within patriarchal narratives. Media producers could incorporate more diverse and empowering storylines to reflect and encourage independence among teenage girl viewers. Future studies should expand the sample size and include male viewers to explore gendered in reception.

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