

# Cultural Flows of Korean Drama in Changing the Orientation of Indonesian Cultural Identity in the Younger Generation

Mira Aulia Afifah<sup>1</sup>, Firman Aziz<sup>2</sup>, Ryan Ferdiana<sup>3</sup>, Fatimah Azzahra NF<sup>4</sup>,

Ronald Yehezkiel Sitompul<sup>5</sup>, Rizqya Aufa Nuraini<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1,2,4,5,6</sup>Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, <sup>3</sup>Universitas Pasundan

<sup>1,2,4,5,6</sup> 229 Dr. Setiabudhi Street, Bandung 40154, West Java, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>6–8 Tamansari Street, Bandung Wetan, Bandung City, West Java 40116, Indonesia

miraauliaaf@upi.edu(\*)

## ABSTRACT

Globalization has triggered cross-cultural exchanges across countries, with Indonesia as a multicultural country also experiencing the impact. One significant global phenomenon is the Korean Wave, including the popularity of Korean dramas among Indonesians. Korean dramas are more than just entertainment, they have the potential to influence the cultural identity orientation of the younger generation who are the main consumers. With this, the main focus of the research is to analyze how the impact Korean dramas have on changes in cultural preferences among the younger generation of Indonesia. This research uses an interview method with a qualitative approach. This research involved 5 informants with the criteria of Indonesian young generation aged 18-19 years who actively consume Korean dramas. The results showed that the flow of Korean culture through Korean dramas has the potential to influence the orientation of the cultural identity of the Indonesian people, but the sense of pride and dominance of Indonesian culture still has the potential to be maintained and developed. The contribution of this research lies in its understanding of the interaction between the Korean Wave and the formation of cultural identity among Indonesia's younger generation. The findings show that despite the strong influence of foreign cultures, the younger generation still demonstrates cultural resilience. In addition, this research opens up strategic opportunities for the revitalization of local culture through a more creative and relevant approach to popular media that appeals to young people's tastes.

Keywords: Korean Drama, Cultural Orientation, Young Generation, Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

The current rapid changes in world culture are caused by globalization. This has resulted in an unprecedented exchange of cultures between countries. One form of globalization that is widely known is what is referred to as cultural globalization. The definition of cultural globalization is the

spread of ideas, meanings and values throughout the world in a certain way to expand and strengthen social relations (Paul, 2010). Indonesia is one of the countries with the greatest cultural diversity in the world, which is reflected in its complex, multifaceted and wideranging socio-cultural conditions and geographical areas. Indonesia consists of

a large number of ethnic groups, cultures, religions, etc., each of which is plural and at the same time heterogeneous (Kusumohamidjojo, 2000).

Over the past decade, the global entertainment scene including Indonesia has been dominated by K-Pop and Korean dramas. Korean culture began to be recognized in Indonesia along with the airing of Korean dramas on television. Referring to Larasati's opinion in an article entitled *Globalization of Culture and Identity: The Influence and Existence of Hallyu Korean Wave* versus Westernization in Indonesia, it is stated that a *Korean* drama entitled *Endless Love* on a national television station in 2002 became the entry point of the *Korean Wave* in Indonesia. Korean drama is a cultural art that refers to Korean TV dramas in the form of miniseries and in Korean, where Korean dramas tell stories of human life with Korean as the language of instruction (Prasanti & Dewi, 2020). Korean dramas are present and become an important part of the routine life of the world community, including Indonesians who make Korean dramas as a type of entertainment media that is able to provide entertainment and imagination by watching Korean dramas which are usually inseparable from aspects of life (Topan & Ernungtyas, 2020).

The fame of K-dramas is used as a basis for spreading Korean culture to the world community. K-dramas are a form of soft power in action: they subtly promote Korean values, images, and tastes to their international audience (Herlina, E., 2018). The presence of the Korean Wave has also given some major impacts especially on countries that have long accepted Korean culture. Explained by R. Maliangkay that the PRC (People's Republic of China) as one

of the countries that accepted Korean pop culture began to view this as a cultural invasion so that the PRC had an appeal to prioritize local products, cut as much as half of Korean broadcasts, and even Taiwan banned foreign dramas in the country. Japan also experienced the impact of Korean cultural imperialism with the stunting of the development of Japanese blogs and manga due to the Korean Wave (Maliangkay, 2006).

Regarding cultural domination, there is one phenomenon that also shows the dominance of Korean culture in Indonesia presented by a journal entitled *Appropriating South Korean popular culture: I-pop and K-drama remakes in Indonesia*. This journal provides an explanation of how the Indonesian media industry has remade Korean dramas into Indonesian soap operas (Tambunan, 2017). The process of imitating foreign cultures to be implemented in a local culture indicates that the great interest and dominance of these foreign cultures in an area due to the process of globalization.

This phenomenon, known as the Korean wave, has spread and influenced the daily lives of young people in Indonesia. One of the factors causing the entry of South Korean culture into Indonesia is the current globalization that occurs, and Indonesia is an easy target for market expansion of capitalist countries, especially South Korea. The impact of the widespread *Korean wave* in the international world has changed the lifestyle of the global community. Indonesia, especially teenagers, also feel the strong influence of this *Hallyu* phenomenon (Wijayanti, 2012).

In 2021, Indonesia ranked fourth as the country with the most fans of Hallyu culture in the world (Henry, 2021). The rapid spread of Korean culture in Indonesia has led to an increase in public interest, especially

among teenagers, to learn the Korean language. Through media such as Korean pop music (K-Pop), Korean dramas, and Korean movies, teenagers find fun and interesting ways to absorb the language and get to know more about Korean culture." (Sulastri & Hasby, 2017). In addition, K-Drama viewers, whether consciously or unconsciously, will recognize some of the culture and habits of

Koreans by themselves (Widana & Hermanu, 2021). The things that are highlighted such as, saluting by bowing, Korean specialties, appreciating art in everyday life (in terms of Korean culture), drinking alcoholic beverages, recognizing traditional Korean clothing (hanbok), to recognizing Korean writing (hangul) and even learning it (I. P. Putri et al., 2019).

Teenagers, or the younger generation in Indonesia, are the main consumers of Korean dramas, experiencing a striking change in their cultural identity orientation. This change can be seen in the adoption of new lifestyles such as ways of dressing, eating patterns, and social values inspired by Korean culture. Korean drama is more than just entertainment, it has turned into a tool to shape the collective and individual identity of the younger generation through a process of cultural negotiation between local and global elements (Wirna et al. 2023).

Data from a survey by the Ministry of Communication and Information (2022) shows that more than 60% of teenagers in Indonesia watch Korean dramas regularly every week. Research by Lestari (2021) noted that 45% of teenage respondents admitted that they started eating Korean food after watching Korean dramas. This phenomenon raises crucial questions about the way Indonesian youth express their cultural identity amidst the growing wave of globalization.

If the influx of foreign culture into the Indonesian socio-cultural sphere is not managed wisely, it will become a potential threat to the cultural identity of the Indonesian nation. With this, the main focus of the research is to analyze how much impact Korean dramas have on changes in cultural preferences among Indonesia's younger generation.

## METHOD

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to deeply understand the influence of Korean dramas on the cultural identity orientation of Indonesia's younger generation. The qualitative approach was chosen to understand the meaning, experience, and subjective interpretation of informants related to the phenomenon under study.

This study involved five (5) participants who met the criteria, namely Indonesian young people aged 18-19 years who actively consume Korean dramas, consisting of Laeny Nur Hirdzatur Robbani (LNHR), Fiyya Najia Hunafa (FNH), Mira Putri Aulia (MPA), Nayla

Salma Juwita (NSJ), and Shalsabilla AzZahra (SA). The participants were selected using a *purposive sampling* technique, in which the researcher intentionally selected individuals who had characteristics relevant to the focus of the study, namely active experience in watching and being exposed to Korean drama content.

Participants were considered to have rich knowledge and experience related to the phenomenon under study, so as to be able to provide in-depth insights into the influence of Korean dramas on their cultural identity orientation. Participants' involvement was voluntary and with informed consent, where they understood the purpose of the research and their rights as participants.

The research instrument includes questions:

1. When it comes to fashion, do you feel inspired by the styles featured in Korean dramas? Can you give an example?
2. How often do you eat Korean food? Do they replace traditional Indonesian food in your habits?
3. Are you more interested in Korean culture than Indonesian culture? If yes, why?
4. Do you feel there is a change in the way Indonesian youth view local culture after being exposed to Korean culture? If so, in what aspects?
5. How do you see the difference between the social values taught in Korean culture and Indonesian culture? Is there a value shift happening among young people?
6. What do you think about the rise of Korean culture-based businesses and products in Indonesia? Is this a challenge for the sustainability of Indonesian cultural products?
7. Which of the Indonesian and Korean cultures are you more proud to wear? Why?
8. What do you think the government and educators can do to keep Indonesian culture strong amidst the globalization of Korean culture?
9. Is there a way that you think is effective for young people to keep loving Indonesian culture while still enjoying Korean culture?
10. What are your hopes for Indonesia's young generation in facing the influence of foreign cultures such as Korean culture?

Data collection in this study was conducted through an online survey using the Google Form tool. The questionnaire

contained open-ended essay questions designed to deeply explore the perspectives of young Indonesians regarding Korean drama consumption and its potential influence on their cultural identity orientation. Open-ended questions were chosen to give respondents the freedom to convey their experiences, thoughts, and interpretations in a narrative and detailed manner, without being limited by predetermined answer options.

Data processing of the open-ended essay answers collected through Google Form will be done through several systematic stages. First, all answers will be exported and organized into a single document or spreadsheet by grouping by respondent number to facilitate analysis. The next stage is data reduction, where the researcher will select, focus, simplify, and abstract the raw data. This process aims to filter out answers that are less relevant or repetitive, so that attention can be focused on the parts that directly answer the research problem regarding the influence of Korean dramas on the cultural identity of Indonesia's younger generation. Although the data is already in text form, the researcher will also conduct repeated readings to identify crucial points and important quotes that emerge from the respondents' answers, which can be considered a non-verbatim transcription process that emphasizes the essence of the information conveyed.

The qualitative data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a way to analyze data in order to identify patterns or to find themes through the data that has been collected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews conducted with a number of young Indonesians revealed an interesting

phenomenon regarding the influence of foreign popular culture on their identity formation. The results of these interviews show that intensive consumption of Korean dramas or K-Dramas plays a role in shifting the cultural identity orientation of young Indonesians. They begin to adopt the lifestyles, values and aesthetics displayed in K-Dramas, from the way they dress, eat, to their outlook on life.

#### **A. K-Drama's Role in Lifestyle Formation**

According to Sumarwan (2011: 57), lifestyle is often described by *activities, interests, and opinions* of a person. A person's lifestyle is usually not permanent and changes quickly. A person may quickly change his clothing model and brand because it adapts to changes in his life. According to Armstrong, the factors that influence a person's lifestyle are attitudes, experiences and observations, personality, self-concept, motives, perceptions, reference groups, social class, family and culture (Nugraheni, 2003: 15).

This is relevant in the context of the influence of Korean dramas, where young people or adolescents are an age group that ranges to foreign cultural infiltration. Research on Korean Wave has been conducted including by Kurniasih (2023) which shows the influence of Korean Wave on the lifestyle of ARMY teenagers in Banyuwangi which encourages cult behavior in the form of drama shows, dances, clothes, and even food. This also encourages his behavior to imitate everything related to Korea to consumptive behavior (Putri, 2021).

Fans of Korean dramas will unconsciously see, understand, and feel the time, space, and identity of others (Appadurai, 2004). They adopt elements of Korean culture shown in dramas, such as style of dress, food, and even language. This change is driven by factors identified by

Armstrong (Nugraheni, 2003:15), such as experience and observation, where watching K-Dramas provides a strong visual and emotional experience. Reference groups, in this case the K-Drama fan community, also play an important role in reinforcing the adoption of Korean culture. In addition, factors such as personality, self-concept, and the younger generation's perception of Korean culture as modern and attractive, contribute to their changing cultural preferences.

As the results of the interview with informant 5 show that the informant's dressing style imitates the style of the actors and actresses in Korean dramas:

"Yes, I am always interested in fashion in Korean dramas even though they are not hijab-wearing but can be mixed and matched for the color or style of their clothes. Like in the drama *Lovely Runner*, Im Sol always wears clothes that can be a hijab reference" (SA).

Likewise, informant 3 experienced the same thing as informant 5 regarding the inspiration for dressing styles through Korean dramas:

"Yes, for example, when buying clothes or looking for ootd recommendations, I like to search: ootd Korean style" (MPA).

Informant 1 stated that there is a change in young people's interest in local culture after learning about Korean culture:

"Yes, that's right, they are exposed to fashion (including make-up), cuisine, and socialization" (LNHR).

Similarly, informant 2 found indications of a paradigm shift in values among young people:

"In social hierarchy, Korea strongly emphasizes social hierarchy based on status and age. in Indonesia, although they also respect their elders, they are more flexible. Also Korea is very individualistic in

contrast to Indonesia where gotong royong is still strong. The value shift that occurs may be that individualism increases." (FNH)

The results of interviews with several informants indicate a significant influence of Korean drama culture on the lifestyle and cultural orientation of Indonesia's young generation. In the aspect of fashion, informants 5 and 3 specifically stated that they imitate the dressing style of actors and actresses in *Korean* dramas, even looking for OOTD (*Outfit of The Day*) inspiration with the keyword "*Korean style*". Informant 1 acknowledged a change in young people's interest in local culture, where Korean culture has penetrated fashion, culinary and social aspects. Furthermore, informant 2 found indications of a value paradigm shift among young people. The difference in social values between Korean culture, which emphasizes hierarchy and individualism, and Indonesian culture, which is more flexible and promotes gotong royong, could potentially lead to an increase in individualism among

Indonesian youth. This finding indicates that the cultural influx of Korean dramas does not only affect appearance, but also has the potential to change the social values of young Indonesians.

## **B. The Appeal of Korean Drama**

The appeal of Korean culture reflected especially in Korean dramas has spread globally to reach Indonesia. Korean dramas have become very popular among Indonesians, especially the younger generation. There are various reasons underlying young people's interest in Korean dramas. Korean culture reflected in Korean dramas provides an overview of socializing, dressing, and making friends. The habit of watching, listening to, and watching idols such as K-Pop and Korean dramas will lead

to acts of imitation (Tumiwa Et al. 2024). Imitation actions occur because idols, figures, role models, and others are used as references to be imitated (Pradita, 2019).

The visual charm and strong narratives in Korean dramas, with all the glamor and romance on offer, successfully create an emotional connection with the audience. However, this attachment does not automatically shift or negate the cultural identity that has been embedded in them. The younger generation still makes Indonesian culture the main foundation. Interest in Korean culture through Korean dramas is better understood as a form of appreciation for the diversity of world cultures, not as an attempt to replace local culture.

However, it should be noted that young people's interest in foreign content, including the Korean Wave phenomenon, did not arise out of nowhere. One of the contributing factors is the lack of a strong local pop culture that is able to compete both internationally and domestically. In Indonesia, culture has not been widely introduced through popular media such as music and drama, which are part of young people's daily lives. Supported by Larasati's research findings, Korea has successfully replaced Westernization as the dominant global culture in Indonesia due to its strong contributions through dramas and K-Pop. However, this also reflects that local pop culture has not yet emerged as an equally appealing alternative capable of competing symbolically and emotionally (Larasati, 2018).

Unlike countries such as Japan or China, which have strong pop culture industries capable of counterbalancing or even counteracting the dominance of the Korean Wave, Indonesia still lacks equivalent local alternatives. This causes the younger generation to tend to look abroad for entertainment that suits their tastes. In this

context, foreign cultural influences such as those from Korea are indeed more easily absorbed and become part of the daily lives of young Indonesians.

As a result, there is a void in the provision of entertainment that can represent local culture in a fresh and relevant way to contemporary tastes. This void is then filled by foreign cultural products, particularly from South Korea, which have successfully packaged their cultural elements into attractive and easily accepted entertainment offerings. In a study on the popularity of Hallyu Wave art among teenagers, it was found that while some young people enjoy the Korean Wave, they still love their national culture. However, they perceive local culture as "outdated" and "behind the times" due to a lack of engaging promotion and development. This study emphasizes that the weakness of local cultural branding facilitates the dominance of foreign cultures (Nita & Masriah 2023).

As informant 1 stated, interest in Korean culture does not shift the love for Indonesian culture:

"No, when compared to Indonesian culture, because when it comes to culture, I am still more interested in diving into Indonesian culture, but just for the sake of being interested, it is true that I am interested in Korean culture as well." (LNHR).

Then Informant 4 also reiterated the statement from informant 1:

"Yes because I am a big fan of k-pop and k-drama but it is possible that I don't like Indonesian culture." (NSJ).

Although Korean drama (K-Drama) culture has a strong appeal among Indonesian youth, the interview findings show that the love for Indonesian culture remains dominant. Informant 1 emphasized that interest in Korean culture has not shifted

his love for Indonesian culture. He stated that his interest in diving into Indonesian culture is much greater, even though he acknowledges an interest in Korean culture. This opinion was reinforced by informant 4, who stated that although he is a big fan of K-Pop and KDrama, it does not hinder his love for Indonesian culture. This finding indicates that young Indonesians are able to balance their interest in foreign culture with their local cultural identity. In other words, the flow of Korean culture does not necessarily replace or erode the love for Indonesian culture, but rather comes as an additional form of appreciation.

### C. Economic Value of Foreign Cultural Influx

Foreign culture has penetrated many facets of life in Indonesia, such as language, fashion, music, movies, food, and technology. South Korea is constantly developing its cultural product production strategy, in an effort to maintain the acceptance of *Korean wave* in various countries. One of the efforts made is by pursuing a localization strategy by approaching local markets in other countries (Suryani, 2015). The presence of Korean cultural products through the development of media technology and the massive use of the internet has provided a major impetus for Korean Wave to continue to grow in Indonesia and even in the world (Mahardika Et al., 2020).

This may pose a challenge to local industries that may struggle to compete with foreign products that are more desirable and backed by stronger resources. Heavy competition with quality and visually appealing Korean products may jeopardize the sustainability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia.

The changing consumption trends of the younger generation, who tend to adopt

the Korean lifestyle, also affect the demand for local products and services. Through the Korean Wave, it can be seen that the magnitude of Korean culture is present in the world, especially in Indonesia through various kinds of media both mass media and online media. The presence of popular culture in Indonesia in the context of the *Korean wave* gives Indonesia the opportunity to be able to have cooperation or collaboration with South Korea in the field of culture, but it can be seen from the exposure of several existing journals that cultural penetration is only one-way from Korea, which can be referred to as imperialism using cultural products as commodities (Mahardika Et al., 2022).

This further supports the statement based on informant 2 below regarding the rampant competition of Korean products in Indonesia.

"Yes, there will be fierce competition between local products and Korean products and a lack of appreciation for local products." (FNH).

Informant 3 gave a concrete example:

"Yes, for example in the production of textiles/convection companies in Indonesia, which are now rivaled by second-hand clothes from abroad (trift) that are Korean style or rich in Bangkok." (MPA).

Informant 4 sees opportunities arising from the rise of Korean culturebased businesses and products in Indonesia:

"Yes, because Indonesia will be competing against Korean products that have quality and competitive prices. But with the rise of Korean business and cultural products in Indonesia, it is an opportunity to improve the quality of local products and expand market reach as Indonesia cooperates with Korean countries." (NSJ).

Informant 5 added that this phenomenon has both positive and negative sides:

"Yes, but maybe you can take the positive and negative sides, for the positive side it can be used as a product reference for the negative side to be a challenge from sales and there is a comparison between which product is better." (SA).

Based on the data above, informant 4 sees the rise of Korean culture-based businesses and products in Indonesia as both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity lies in the potential to improve the quality of local products and expand market reach through cooperation between Indonesia and Korea. Meanwhile, the challenge is competition with Korean products that are considered to have quality and competitive prices. Similarly, informant 5 also highlighted the duality of this phenomenon, seeing it as a positive reference for local product development, but also as a sales challenge due to comparisons with Korean products that may be considered superior. This finding is relevant to Mahardika et al's (2022) statement regarding the potential for cultural cooperation between Indonesia and Korea due to the Korean Wave. However, informants' perspectives also underline the concern of one-way cultural penetration from Korea, which can be a form of cultural imperialism through the commodification of cultural products, thus posing challenges for local products to compete in the domestic market.

#### **D. Korean and Indonesian Cultural Assimilation Efforts**

According to (Kustiawan et al. 2023) the Korean Cultural Wave in the process of assimilation of Indonesian culture occurs generally among adolescents and adults. This can be seen from the following aspects: (1) Mass media and online media that have been so familiar, especially with the lives of teenagers and adults, are a source of Korean



cultural assimilation in Indonesia. (2) Korean cultural campaigns that enter Indonesia are mainly through Drama, Fashion, Music, Food and Language materials. These materials enter Indonesian youth culture through the stages of diffusion, and acculturation, and only a little to the assimilation stage. (3) All diffusion and acculturation materials are accepted by teenagers and adults except music which is only loved by early teenagers. (4) The diffusion and acculturation of *Korean waves* to Indonesian culture has two sides of consequences, both positive and negative.

The findings of interviews with several informants provide an overview of the strategies that can be applied. Informant 2 upholds Indonesian culture as a proud identity:

"If I had to choose, I would be more proud to wear Indonesian culture. The reason is because Indonesia's cultural diversity is incredibly rich, with a variety of traditional clothing that has deep meaning and a long history.

However, I also acknowledge that Korean culture has managed to popularize their style in an interesting modern way. Indonesia can actually learn from Korea in packaging local culture to make it more relevant to today's trends."(FNH).

Informant 2 emphatically expressed his pride in Indonesia's rich culture, which he believes is far superior in diversity and historical significance. However, he also acknowledged the superiority of Korean culture in modernizing itself, a valuable lesson for Indonesia to revitalize local culture to make it more relevant to today's trends.

Informant 5 argued about efforts to strengthen Indonesian cultural roots amid the onslaught of Korean culture:

"In my opinion, it is more modernizing the cultural culture in Indonesia, maybe there will be a difference between the old days and now but because it is already a modern era, in my opinion, cultural culture in

Indonesia can also be modernized but it does not reduce the values in it." (SA).

How to keep young people loving Indonesian culture while still enjoying Korean culture according to informant 2:

"There are effective ways to keep young people loving Indonesian culture while still enjoying Korean culture. Adapting Korean strategies to make Indonesian culture more attractive and relevant to the younger generation" (FNH).

Informant 5 emphasized the importance of modernizing Indonesian culture without losing the noble values in it. He argued that in this modern era, Indonesian culture also needs to adapt and collaborate to remain attractive to the younger generation, without sacrificing the essence of tradition. Collaboration is the combination of one with another so that it becomes something that has new characteristics (Pandanwangi & Dewi, 2016).

Similarly, informant 2 suggested adapting Korean strategies in making Indonesian culture more attractive to the younger generation.

Informant 4 hopes that Indonesia's young generation can filter the influence of foreign cultures:

"To stay within reasonable limits in viewing Korean culture so that we can still be proud of Indonesian culture." (NSJ).

Furthermore, informant 4 reminded the importance of being selective in absorbing the influence of Korean culture. He hopes that the younger generation of Indonesia will be able to enjoy Korean culture within reasonable limits, so that they can still uphold and be proud of Indonesian culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

The flow of Korean culture as part of the *Korean wave* phenomenon has the potential to influence the orientation of the cultural identity of Indonesian society,

especially in the younger generation, a sense of pride and dominance of Indonesian culture still has the potential to be maintained and developed. Similar to research conducted by (Syifa et al. (2024) said that although the level of interest in Korean Wave is high, it does not dilute the national identity of their individuals.

This study not only provides a deep understanding of how the Korean Wave—particularly through Korean dramas— influences the process of cultural identity formation among Indonesia's younger generation, but also opens up strategic possibilities for the development of local culture through a similar approach. By highlighting that the younger generation is selective and maintains its cultural identity, this study offers hope that local culture can be reintroduced more effectively if packaged in a format relevant to their media and tastes. This also serves as a foundation for designing innovative media-based cultural strategies, developing a more resonant cultural approach model, and formulating policies that can integrate educational and entertainment elements to strengthen national identity amid the tide of globalization.

The novelty of this research lies in its understanding of how the *Korean Wave*, particularly through Korean dramas, interacts with the cultural identity formation process of Indonesia's young generation. In line with the concept of cultural globalization as the spread of ideas and values (Paul, 2010), this research further shows that this process is not oneway. Young Indonesians are not only exposed to, but also actively negotiate their identities, demonstrating cultural resilience in the face of globalization. The contribution of this research specifically highlights how Korean dramas, as part of the Korean Wave, have the potential to change the

cultural preferences of Indonesia's younger generation.

As a follow-up, future research needs to explore mechanisms and strategies that are effective in reintroducing and strengthening appreciation of Indonesian culture among adolescents, especially those who are exposed to foreign cultures.

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