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THE INFLUENCE OF KOREAN DRAMA STORYLINE ON *EMOTIONAL ESCAPE* IN GENERATION Z AGED 18-23 YEARS (STUDY AT RW 06 GUNTUR, SETIABUDI, SOUTH JAKARTA)

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Abstract

This study aims to determine and measure the influence of Korean drama storylines on emotional escape among Generation Z aged 18-23 years in RW 06, Guntur, Setiabudi, South Jakarta. The Korean Wave phenomenon, which has become increasingly widespread in the era of digital streaming, has made Korean dramas one of the most popular forms of entertainment among Generation Z, often serving as a means of emotional escape from academic, social, and work-related pressures. This research employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design and was grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, in which Korean drama storylines were positioned as the stimulus and emotional escape as the response. A sample of 143 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula and selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS version 27. The results showed the regression equation Y = 4.006 + 0.673X, with a t-value of 10.954 and a significance level of < 0.001, indicating that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.460, indicating that Korean drama storylines explained 46.0% of the variance in emotional escape, while the remaining 54.0% was influenced by other factors outside the scope of this research model.

Keywords: *storylines, Korean drama, emotional escape, Generation Z, Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R)*

Abstrak

Generasi Z usia 18-23 tahun sebagai *digital native* kerap menghadapi tekanan akademik, sosial, dan ketidakpastian karier yang mendorong mereka mencari pelarian emosional melalui konsumsi media hiburan, khususnya drama Korea. Fenomena *Korean Wave* yang semakin masif di era *streaming* digital menjadikan drama Korea sebagai pilihan utama hiburan Generasi Z karena kemampuannya membangun keterlibatan emosional secara mendalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan mengukur pengaruh alur cerita drama Korea terhadap *emotional escape* pada Generasi Z usia 18-23 tahun di RW 06, Kelurahan Guntur, Kecamatan Setiabudi, Jakarta Selatan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain *explanatory survey* yang berlandaskan teori *Stimulus-Organism-Response* (S-O-R). Sampel sebanyak 143 responden ditentukan melalui rumus Slovin dengan teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner berskala Likert dan dianalisis menggunakan regresi linear sederhana dengan bantuan SPSS versi 27. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan persamaan regresi Y = 4,006 + 0,673X dengan nilai t hitung sebesar 10,954 dan signifikansi <0,001, sehingga H_0 ditolak dan H_1 diterima. Nilai koefisien determinasi (R^2) sebesar 0,460 menunjukkan bahwa alur cerita drama Korea berpengaruh sebesar 46,0% terhadap *emotional*

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escape pada Generasi Z, sedangkan 54,0% sisanya dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain di luar penelitian ini.

KataKunci: alur cerita, drama Korea, emotional escape, Generasi Z, teori Stimulus Organism-Response.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes in the way people access and consume entertainment. In the midst of this rapid flow of digitalization, the phenomenon of *the Korean Wave* or *Hallyu is* getting stronger as a wave of Korean culture that permeates various parts of the world, including Indonesia (Mamonto-Shrestha, 2026). Korean dramas are one of the most in-demand cultural products because of their ability to present narratives that *are relatable*, entertaining, and at the same time deeply touch the emotions of the audience. The main factor underlying the popularity of Korean dramas lies in their superior narrative qualities, including deep conflicts, organized emotional plot structures, *surprising plot twists*, and detailed character development (Park & Jo, 2023). This narrative quality is designed to produce *a narrative transportation effect*, where the audience experiences a deep immersion as if directly involved in a fictional world (Wang *et al*., 2024)

Generation Z aged 18-23 years, as *digital natives*, actively consume *streaming content* and utilize media as a means of entertainment as well as emotional regulation (Siahaan, 2025). This age group is in the emerging *adulthood phase* which is characterized by academic pressure, career uncertainty, and complex social relationship dynamics (Brito & Soares, 2023). This condition encourages them to actively seek out content that is able to provide *mood boosters*, *catharsis*, and the sensation of escape from everyday reality. *Emotional escape* is a *coping* mechanism that is prevalent in the digital age, especially for urban individuals who face high pressure. This phenomenon places Korean dramas not just as spectacle content, but as a crucial instrument in maintaining emotional balance (Gabbiadini *et al*., 2021). However, research that specifically examines the influence of storylines on *emotional escape* in Generation Z in the local context of Indonesia is still very limited. Most preliminary studies place more emphasis on the general impact of Korean dramas on lifestyle or consumption levels. This gap is the main justification for this research. Based on this background, this study aims to (1) determine the influence of Korean drama storylines on

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emotional escape in Generation Z aged 18-23 years in RW 06, Guntur Village, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta, and (2) measure how big the influence.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

Teori Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R)

This study uses the *conceptual framework of Stimulus-Organism-Response* (S-O-R) developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). This theory explains that external stimuli *influence* an individual's behavior through internal processes *(organisms)* before producing a response *(*Jeong *et al*., 2022). In the context of this study, the storyline of Korean dramas plays a role as *a stimulus*, Generation Z as *an organism* that processes the *stimulus* through emotional involvement and *narrative transportation*, and *emotional escape* as *the resulting response* (Samudro *et al*., 2024).

Korean Drama Storyline

The storyline is a fundamental element in a narrative work that regulates the course of events from the introduction to the resolution of the conflict (*Plot Definition*, 2026). In Korean dramas, there are three main dimensions of storylines that are relevant as *a stimulus* within the framework of S-O-R. First, the coherence and consistency of the plot. The storyline of Korean dramas is built with a clear and consistent cause-and-effect relationship so that it creates a logical narrative that is easy for the audience to follow (Park & Jo, 2023). Second, *the plot twists* and dramatic tensions. Korean dramas often use surprising *plot twists* to keep the audience engaged until the end of the story (Yoon & Lee, 2024). Third, character development and *emotional payoff*. Deep character development and satisfying *emotional payoffs* make the audience feel emotionally attached (Kim, 2022). These three dimensions synergize to create an immersive viewing experience that has the potential to trigger *emotional escape*.

Emotional escape

Emotional escape is a condition in which individuals psychologically escape from real-life pressures through the consumption of entertainment content (Gabbiadini *et al*., 2021). In contrast to physical escape, *emotional escape is* more psychological in nature, where individuals seek comfort or the sensation of "forgetting the real world" through involvement with stories (Marques *et al*., 2023). There are three dimensions *of emotional escape*: (1) *self-suppression escape*, which is an escape to suppress negative emotions (Annisa *et al*., 2025); (2) *self-expansion escape*, which is the search for positive experiences

and inspiration (Ramadhani *et al*., 2025); and (3) *emotional relief*, which is a feeling of relief and improved mood after consuming entertainment content (Norhidayah & Surawan, 2025).

Generation Z and *Emerging Adulthood*

Generation Z born between 1997 and 2012 grew up in a digital environment that forms unique characteristics as *digital natives* (Rayaninansih *et al*., 2024). Various studies show that this generation faces fairly high levels of stress, anxiety, and academic pressure (Wong *et al*., 2024). At the age of 18-23 years, individuals are in an *emerging adulthood* phase characterized by intense exploration of self-identity, career instability, and future uncertainty (Brito & Soares, 2023). This condition makes Generation Z the most responsive group to strong narrative *stimuli* and the most potential to experience *emotional escape* as a *coping mechanism* (Gabbiadini *et al*., 2021)

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with *an explanatory survey design*. The positivism paradigm is the foundation that emphasizes hypothesis testing and explaining the interrelationships between variables through numerical data and statistical analysis (Prof. Dr. Sugiyono, 2023). The research was carried out in RW 06, Guntur Village, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta, in the period April to June 2026. The research population is all Generation Z aged 18-23 years who live in RW 06 Guntur Village, totaling 222 people based on data from the DKI Jakarta Provincial Population and Civil Registration Office (accessed April 29, 2026). The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with *a margin of error* of 5% so that a sample of 143 respondents was obtained. The sampling technique used is *purposive sampling* with the following criteria: (1) Generation Z aged 18-23 years; (2) domiciled in RW 06 Guntur Village; and (3) have watched Korean dramas in the last 6 months. Data was collected through a Likert 1-5 scale questionnaire distributed online via Google Form. The Korean drama (X) storyline variable questionnaire consists of 10 items that include the dimensions of plot coherence, depth of character development, *plot twist strength*, *emotional pacing*, thematic relevance, and *emotional payoff*. The *emotional escape* (Y) variable questionnaire consists of 8 items that include the dimensions *of self-suppression escape*, *self-expansion escape*, and *emotional relief*. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics version 27

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents and Instrument Test Results Of the 143 respondents, the age distribution was dominated by the age group of 22 years (32.9%), followed by the age group

of 23 years (24.5%) and 21 years (21%). The majority of respondents were female (88.8%) and students (83.9%). Most respondents watched Korean dramas 2–3 times per week (51.7%), with the main platforms Netflix (37.8%) and Viu (16.1%).

Validity and Reliability Tests

All statement items of the Korean drama storyline variable (X) and *emotional escape* (Y) were declared valid because they had a value of r calculated > r of the table (0.164) with a significance of <0.001. The results of the reliability test showed *that Cronbach's Alpha* value of variable X was 0.842 and variable Y was 0.879, both of which were above the threshold of 0.60 so that the instrument was declared reliable (Sugiyono, 2023).

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

The results of simple linear regression analysis produced the regression equation Y = 4.006 + 0.673X. The *constant* value (a) of 4.006 indicates that if the Korean drama storyline variable is 0, then *the emotional escape value* is predicted to be 4.006. The value of the regression coefficient (b) of 0.673 indicates a positive relationship direction, meaning that every 1 unit increase in the Korean drama storyline variable will increase *emotional escape* by 0.673 units.

T Test and Coefficient of Determination

Based on the results of the t-test, a calculated t-value of 10.954 was obtained with a significance value of <0.001. Because the significance value is <0.05, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Thus, the storyline of Korean dramas has a significant effect on *emotional escape* in Generation Z aged 18-23 years in RW 06, Guntur Village, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta. The value of the determination coefficient (R^2) of 0.460 showed that the Korean drama storyline variable was able to explain the variation *in emotional escape* by 46.0%, while the remaining 54.0% was influenced by other factors outside the variables studied. An R correlation value of 0.678 indicates a strong and positive relationship between the two variables.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the storyline of Korean dramas has proven to have a positive and significant effect on *emotional escape* in Generation Z aged 18-23 years in RW 06, Guntur Village, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta. The results of the t-test showed a significance value of <0.001 so that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. The regression equation Y = 4.006 + 0.673X shows a positive influence direction, namely the better the storyline presented, the higher the level of *emotional escape*

felt by the audience. The level of influence is quite strong, as shown by the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.460, which means that the storyline of Korean dramas is able to explain 46.0% of the variation in *emotional escape* in Generation Z, while the remaining 54.0% is influenced by other factors outside of this study.

Based on these findings, several suggestions can be made. Theoretically, further research is recommended to examine other factors that have the potential to affect *emotional escape*, such as character characterization, genre, production quality, and viewing intensity, while still using the S-O-R theoretical framework as a conceptual foundation, as well as expanding the scope of the research area and sample to improve the generalization of findings. Practically, for Generation Z, it is advisable to use Korean dramas as a means of entertainment and release emotions wisely while maintaining a balance between academic, work, and social life responsibilities. For RW 06 and Guntur Village, the results of this research can be used as a basis for designing programs that support the emotional well-being of the younger generation, such as media literacy and popular culture-based stress management activities. For the media industry and *streaming platforms*, strong narrative elements such as plot coherence, depth of character development, and *emotional payoff* have proven to contribute significantly to the *emotional escape* of young Indonesian audiences, so that they can be used as a reference in content development and curation

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the storyline of Korean dramas has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on *emotional escape* in Generation Z aged 18-23 years in RW 06, Guntur Village, Setiabudi District, South Jakarta. The results of the t-test showed a significance value of <0.001 so that H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. The regression equation $Y = 4.006 + 0.673X$ shows a positive influence direction, namely the better the storyline presented, the higher the level of *emotional escape* felt by the audience. The level of influence is quite strong, as shown by the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.460, which means that the storyline of Korean dramas is able to explain 46.0% of the variation in *emotional escape* in Generation Z, while the remaining 54.0% is influenced by other factors outside of this study.

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