

# Effect of Korean Drama on Emotional Expressivity

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## Abstract

Korean dramas (K-Dramas) are renowned for their captivating narratives and portrayal of diverse human experiences, attracting a global audience. This study investigates the influence of K-Drama consumption on emotional expressivity among young adults. Emotional expressivity, the outward expression of emotions, is crucial for social interactions and psychological well-being. Using the Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES), the study analyzed 250 young adults aged 18 to 25, comprising both viewers and non-viewers of K-Dramas (Romantic genre). Results revealed that viewers exhibited significantly higher levels of emotional expressivity than non-viewers. This suggests that exposure to K-Dramas may shape emotional behavior, possibly through mechanisms like observational learning and social reinforcement. Despite providing valuable insights, the study has limitations, including its focus on a specific demographic and sample size. Further research exploring diverse populations and cultural contexts is necessary to deepen understanding. Nevertheless, the findings highlight the significant role of K-Dramas in shaping emotional experiences among viewers and underscore the importance of considering media influences in understanding emotional processes. In conclusion, Korean Dramas serve as a platform for emotional exploration and expression, influencing viewers' emotional behavior. Understanding the interplay between media consumption and emotional expression contributes to the broader field of media psychology. Moving forward, research should explore additional factors influencing emotional expressivity and examine long-term effects across diverse populations and cultures. Overall, this study emphasizes the profound impact of K-Dramas on shaping emotional experiences and behaviors among viewers.

**Keywords:** Korean Drama, Emotional Expressivity, Media Psychology

## Introduction

Korean drama (K-Drama) is a form of television entertainment originating from South Korea, which encompasses a diverse range of genres, including romance, melodrama, historical fiction, comedy, among others. These dramas are characterized by their storytelling format, compelling narratives, well-developed characters, and high production values. The emotional storytelling involving sensitive themes such as love, family dynamics, social issues, personal growth, and psychological difficulties contribute to the widespread popularity both domestically and internationally. K-dramas, in recent times, have become a significant cultural export harboring a diverse fanbase across countries leading to an increase in consumption of Korean products and development of dedicated cultural communities. The appeal of

Korean drama lies in its portrayal of complex human emotions and interpersonal relationships, which are shown with immense depth and nuance, successfully eliciting a range of emotional responses from the viewers who become emotionally invested in the journey of the characters.

Understanding the influence of media on an individual's emotions holds relevance within broader context of media psychology, examining the interplay between media consumption and psychological processes. Media, including television dramas, films, and online streaming platforms, serve as powerful mediums through which individuals encounter diverse narratives and representations of human experience. Studies have shown that exposure to certain types of media content can elicit emotional responses and shape viewer's perceptions and behaviors. Moreover, researches have indicated over the years that exposure to emotional content in media can influence an individual's emotional expressivity.

Against this backdrop, this research study seeks to investigate the effect of Korean Dramas on emotional expressivity among viewers and non-viewers.

Emotional expressivity is defined as a way of externally expressing emotions irrespective of them being either positive or negative, or the medium through which they are being expressed, e.g., face, voice, gesture, etc. There are often times when people are unable to verbally express or communicate some things which are instead better communicated through emotional expressions in an extremely unique manner. As defined by Kring et al (1994), Emotional Expressiveness refers to the extent to which an individual outwardly displays emotions regardless of valence (positive or negative) or channel (facial, vocal, gestural). Emotional expressiveness as defined by the aforementioned definition is exclusive of previous assumptions about the specific type of emotions expressed (e.g., happiness or sadness) or the manner in which the emotion is expressed (e.g. facially).

The concept places an emphasis on a general disposition toward expressing different emotions across various channels. Under this concept, expressivity is suggested to be a stable, individual-difference variable rather than the combination of various skills useful in interpersonal situations. Individuals who tend to express more emotions gain more pleasure from interacting socially. Another model defined emotional expressivity as mainly a behavioral change linked with the emotional experience such as laughing, smiling, crying, etc. This particular definition has placed an emphasis on the behavioral and observable aspects of any reaction for an individual to be considered emotionally expressive. Moreover, emotional expressivity was conceptualized as a trait (Gross & John, 1995).

Media for a long time has been known to have the ability to influence what we feel, how we express what we feel and to what extent. Korean dramas hold the power to evoke a wide range of emotions. Whether cheering with joy, shedding tears of sadness, feeling the sting of anger, or experiencing gripping excitement, viewers become deeply invested in the characters and their journeys. This emotional engagement can surprisingly be beneficial, acting as a platform for exploring and processing individual own emotions in a safe, fictionalized manner. Beyond emotional exploration, K-dramas offer a form of escapism, allowing viewers to temporarily step away from their own realities and delve into captivating narratives. This temporary escape can provide a sense of relaxation and much-needed relief from the daily stresses of life.

The Emotional Expressivity Scale is a tool developed as a general measure of expressiveness and designed to be primarily a measure of expressivity which would be relevant to existing measures of emotional experience. The EES is not associated with trait-based measures of positive and negative affect but instead related to affect intensity.

## Rationale

The consumption of Korean dramas, renowned for their emotionally resonant narratives, has the potential to influence individuals' ability to express their emotions effectively. This study aims to investigate whether regular viewers of Korean dramas exhibit heightened levels of emotional expressivity compared to non-viewers, potentially as a result of the emotional depth and themes depicted in these programs. Viewers of Korean dramas often display increased emotional expressiveness when compared to individuals who do not engage with this form of media. The poignant and emotionally charged scenes, coupled with the intricate dynamics of characters portrayed in these dramas, provide viewers with templates for observing and internalizing expressive behaviors. Through processes such as observational learning and social reinforcement, viewers may incorporate these emotional expressions into their own lives, thereby fostering greater emotional expressivity.

## Method of Study

### Objective

This research study aims to understand the potential effect of Korean Drama consumption on emotional expressivity among viewers and non-viewers.

### Hypothesis

Individuals who watch Korean dramas of romantic genre (viewers) will have a higher level of emotional expressivity than those who do not watch anything (non-viewers).

### Method

The sample population for this study consisted of 250 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years, who were either dating, engaged or married. Purposive sampling technique was employed which targeted individuals meeting specific criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of participants both male and female, aged 18-25 years, graduates, and who were either dating, engaged or married. Criteria stated for individuals to be considered as viewers consisted of viewing Korean drama (Romantic Genre) for a minimum of 2 hours every day and had been watching Korean dramas for a minimum of 2 years. Individuals who did not watch anything were categorized as non-viewers.

Alternatively, participants who were single, beyond age 25 years and below 18 years, and consumed Korean dramas of other genres were excluded from the study. These criteria ensured that the sample was representative of the general population. The research design employed in the present study is Expo Post Facto.

### Tool

For the purpose of this current study, the following tool was utilized:

**Emotional Expressivity Scale:** The Emotional Expressivity scale is a 17-item self-report measure designed to assess the extent to which people outwardly display or express their emotions across diverse channels. It is rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = never true to 6 = always true). The higher score is interpreted as a higher level of emotional expression. The EES has been shown to have high internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The EES was found to be highly reliable, with an average alpha of .91 across seven administrations. The 4-week test-retest correlation was .90.

**Procedure**

The researcher conducted their study by approaching individuals aged 18 to 25 years from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The individuals were briefed regarding the purpose of the study along with informed consent being taken for the collection of data. The study included a sample of 250 individuals who qualified based on the inclusion criteria. Each participant was provided with the Emotional Expressivity Scale which is the tool used in this particular study to assess emotional expressivity among the sample population. The responses obtained from the participants were scored following the guidelines provided for the mentioned scale, and these scores were subsequently utilized for statistical analysis, providing valuable insights into the effect of Korean Drama on Emotional Expressivity. The obtained data were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20. Descriptive statistics (Mean and SD values) were calculated, and a t-value was obtained through the t-test for the purpose of understanding the effect.

**Result and discussion**

**Table 1: Mean, SD, T-Value of Korean Drama Viewers and Non-Viewers on Emotional Expressivity**

Korean Drama	N	Mean	SD	t
Viewers	125	57.1920	11.82786	4.211**
Non-viewers	125	51.1280	10.92052	

**Korean Drama:** This column shows the variable (Korean drama) with two sample groups being compared, which are the viewers and non-viewers.

**N:** This refers to the sample size, which case reflects the number of participants involved in this study. In the current study, each of the two groups consist of 125 participants, with a total of 250 participants.

**Mean:** The average value of variable across data for viewers is 57.1920 and non-viewers is 51.1280.

**SD (Standard Deviation):** The standard deviation indicates the degree of dispersion or variability of values relative to the mean. A smaller standard deviation implies that the values are more tightly clustered around the mean, whereas a larger standard deviation indicates greater dispersion of values away from the mean. SD for viewers is 11.82786 and for non-viewers is 10.92052.

**T-value:** The t-value of 4.211\*\* obtained through a t-test indicates the level of significance between the means of the two groups.

**Table 1** shows a comparison of emotional expressivity between viewers and non-viewers of Korean drama, with each group comprising of 125 participants. Viewers of the Korean drama exhibit a significantly higher level of emotional expressivity, with a mean score of 57.1920 as compared to mean of non-viewers of 51.1280. The calculated t-value of 4.211,  $p < 0.01$  indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This suggests that watching Korean drama is associated with heightened emotional expressivity compared to those who do not watch it.

The statistical findings on emotional expressivity (Table 1) among viewers and non-viewers provide evidence that viewers of Korean drama (Romantic genre) exhibit a higher level of emotional expressivity than the non-viewers, supported by the higher mean value of viewers (57.1920) and a statistically significant t-value of 4.211. This finding aligns with the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura,

1986) which states that learning takes place within a social framework characterized by a dynamic and mutually influential interaction among the individual, surroundings, and actions.

In the context of the present research, viewing Korean Dramas which depict various themes including intense emotional experiences and interpersonal relationships, viewers may learn and adopt expressive behaviors reflected in the characters they observe. Viewers are exposed to a range of emotions in various situations where due to repeated exposure they may acquire new emotional responses or refine existing ones based on observational learning such as witnessing characters express sadness, joy, or anger in response to specific events may lead them to adopt similar expressions in their own lives where they relate with the situations portrayed. This can lead to an increase in emotional expressivity among viewers compared to non-viewers.

Korean dramas may function as a model for viewers where characters who openly express their emotions can be identified as role models, especially for those individuals who connect with their struggles and may lead to viewers internalizing and imitating these expressive behaviors and become more comfortable expressing their own emotions. The reciprocal interaction between individuals, their environment, and their behavior occurring in the context of Korean drama viewing highlights the social influence and social reinforcement. Consumption of Korean dramas as a social activity often involves co-viewing with family members, friends, or online communities. Through discussions, sharing reactions, and exchanging interpretations of the drama's plot and characters, viewers engage in social interactions that reinforce and validate emotional expressions portrayed in the media. These social exchanges provide opportunities for feedback, social comparison, and emotional contagion, further shaping viewers' emotional expressivity in line with the norms and values depicted in Korean dramas. By immersing themselves in the emotionally rich narratives of Korean dramas and engaging with the others in the viewing process, viewers undergo a dynamic process of social learning that shapes their emotional expressivity in accordance with the portrayals and norms presented in the media. In a study conducted by Burgin et al. (2012) to explore the relationship between daily psychological functioning and emotional expressivity, individuals with higher emotional expressivity experienced more positive affect such as happiness and satisfaction and were related to better social functioning. Kring et al. (1994b) demonstrated in their research that the individuals who exhibited higher levels of emotional expressivity enjoyed and were more satisfied with social interactions due to their sociable nature.

### **Summary**

Korean dramas (K-Drama) are renowned for their emotionally compelling narratives and diverse genres, captivating audiences with their well-developed characters and resonant storytelling. This study investigates the impact of Korean drama consumption on emotional expressivity among viewers and non-viewers. Emotional expressivity, the outward expression of emotions, plays a crucial role in social interactions, and viewers of Korean dramas often exhibit heightened levels of emotional expressivity compared to non-viewers.

Using the Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES), the study analyzed a sample of young adults aged 18 to 25, consisting of viewers and non-viewers of Korean dramas. The results revealed significant differences in emotional expressivity between the two groups, with viewers demonstrating higher levels. This suggests that exposure to Korean dramas influences emotional behavior, potentially through processes such as observational learning and social reinforcement. Overall, this research sheds light on the role of



media consumption, particularly Korean dramas, in influencing emotional expressivity among viewers, highlighting its importance in understanding the interplay between media and emotions.

### **Conclusion**

This study explores the relationship between watching Korean dramas and emotional expressivity, revealing that young adults who regularly engaged with Korean dramas, particularly those of the romantic genre, demonstrated heightened emotional expressivity compared to non-viewers. These findings suggest that exposure to Korean dramas, renowned for their portrayal of diverse emotions and intricate interpersonal relationships, may significantly influence viewers' emotional expressivity. This influence is likely facilitated by mechanisms such as observational learning, where viewers observe and imitate characters' behaviors, and social reinforcement, through interactions with others who share similar viewing experiences.

Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into the impact of media consumption on one of the most important psychological variables, emotional expressivity. By utilizing the Emotional Expressivity Scale (EES) and analyzing a sample of young adults aged 18 to 25, comprising both viewers and non-viewers, significant disparities in emotional expressivity were evident between the two groups. The higher emotional expressivity observed among viewers underscores the potential role of Korean dramas in shaping emotional behavior.

Moving forward, further exploration of factors influencing emotional expressivity and long-term effects of media consumption on emotional behavior could provide deeper understanding. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of considering media influences in comprehending psychological processes and behaviors, highlighting the significant role of Korean dramas in shaping emotional experiences among viewers.

### **Suggestion and limitation**

The findings reported in this study shed new light on how aspects of emotional behavior can be influenced by media consumption. However, the scope of this study was limited in terms of the sample size of 250 participants and focusing solely on young adults between the age of 18 and 25 years which might restrict the understanding of the topic to some extent. This study has implications for our understanding of how Korean dramas may act as a tool for emotional exploration of expressions particularly beneficial for those individuals who struggle with understanding and expressing emotions. The availability of limited literature and research into the topic of current study necessitates a cautious interpretation of the findings and highlights the need for further investigations to solidify the understanding of this emerging area of inquiry. More work can be done in the areas of media consumption behavior, particularly Korean dramas, and the extent of impact across diverse populations including different age groups and cultures to promote better understanding of the complex interplay between emotional expression, social learning, and cultural exchange.

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