

PHENOMENOLOGY OF IMITATION BEHAVIOR AMONG TEENAGE KOREAN IDOLS FANS WITHIN THE KOREAN WAVE CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the phenomenon of imitation behavior of Indonesian teenagers who are fans of K-pop idols in the Korean Wave culture. The background of this study emerged from the popularity of the Korean Wave among teenagers who later found the process of integrating Korean culture into their daily lives. This study focuses on how this imitation behavior is reflected in aspects of lifestyle, such as appearance, habits, and social patterns. Using a constructivist paradigm and a transcendental phenomenological approach, the theories applied include the Theory of Cultural Adaptation, Acculturation, and Social Learning. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with six teenage informants aged 15–25 years, consisting of four women and two men. Qualitative methods were used to explore the subjective experiences of informants in understanding, adopting, and integrating elements of Korean culture into their identities.

The results of the study showed many similar things in which informants adopted elements of Korean culture such as fashion, food, and self-care habits, while still maintaining their local culture. The findings of the study showed that all of informants interpreted K-pop culture as a space of inspiration in self-development, such as discipline and increasing self-confidence. In addition, involvement in fandom communities provides space for self-expression, building social networks, and expanding cultural insights. This study concludes that the Korean Wave is not only an entertainment phenomenon, but also a place for cultural integration that forms a combined identity in Indonesian teenagers. Recommendations are given for further research on the role of digital media in the process of adolescent cultural adaptation, as well as educational approaches that direct balanced cultural adoption.

Keywords: Korean Wave, imitation behavior, teenagers, Korean culture, phenomenology, K-pop.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas fenomena perilaku imitasi remaja Indonesia yang merupakan penggemar idola K-pop dalam budaya Korean Wave. Latar belakang penelitian ini muncul dari popularitas Korean Wave di kalangan remaja yang nantinya menemukan proses integrasi budaya Korea ke dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana perilaku imitasi tersebut tercermin dalam aspek gaya hidup, seperti penampilan, kebiasaan, dan pola sosial. Menggunakan paradigma konstruktivis dan pendekatan fenomenologi transedental, teori-teori yang diaplikasikan meliputi Teori Adaptasi Budaya, Akulturasi, dan Belajar Sosial. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan enam informan remaja berusia 15–25 tahun, yang terdiri dari empat perempuan dan dua laki-laki. Metode kualitatif digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman subyektif informan dalam memahami, mengadopsi, dan mengintegrasikan elemen budaya Korea ke dalam identitas mereka.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan banyaknya hal serupa di mana para informan mengadopsi elemen budaya Korea seperti mode berpakaian, makanan, dan kebiasaan perawatan diri, sambil tetap mempertahankan budaya lokal mereka. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa semua informan memaknai budaya K-pop sebagai ruang inspirasi dalam pengembangan diri, seperti disiplin dan peningkatan kepercayaan diri. Selain itu, keterlibatan dalam komunitas fandom memberikan ruang untuk ekspresi diri, membangun jejaring sosial, dan memperluas wawasan budaya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Korean Wave tidak hanya menjadi fenomena hiburan, tetapi juga wadah integrasi budaya yang membentuk identitas gabungan pada remaja Indonesia. Rekomendasi diberikan untuk penelitian lebih lanjut mengenai peran media digital dalam proses adaptasi budaya remaja, serta pendekatan edukasi yang mengarahkan adopsi budaya secara seimbang.

Kata Kunci: *Korean Wave, perilaku imitasi, remaja, budaya Korea, fenomenologi, K-pop.*

INTRODUCTION

The Korean Wave or Hallyu phenomenon has become a global trend, including in Indonesia, especially among teenagers. Hallyu encompasses various aspects of Korean culture, such as music, drama, food, and lifestyle, which are now part of the daily lives of its fans. Based on a survey by IDN Times (2019), around 80% of K-pop fans in Indonesia are aged 15–25 years, reflecting the high appeal of Korean culture to the younger generation. Indonesian teenagers show a strong interest in K-pop and Korean dramas, even making them an inspiration in lifestyle, such as fashion, self-care routines, and food choices. The presence of social media and digital platforms also plays an important role in spreading this culture, allowing fans to interact globally while maintaining their local identity.

The Korean Wave, known as Hallyu, has grown into a global phenomenon that has captivated Indonesian teenagers, evidenced by surveys showing that 15-25-year-olds dominate K-pop fandom in Indonesia. The Korean Wave encompasses various aspects of culture, including music, drama, fashion, food, and lifestyle. These elements have become integral to the daily lives of teenagers, sparking interest in learning the Korean language, adopting Korean idols as role models, and even inspiring new career paths. This phenomenon highlights the

blending of global and local cultures, with Korean idols serving as cultural ambassadors through media such as social platforms, music, and dramas.

The Korean Wave has also contributed to commercial and tourism growth, with Korean products and destinations gaining popularity in Indonesia. Additionally, Indonesian K-pop idols like Dita Karang and Zayyan highlight how this cultural phenomenon inspires career aspirations. This research aims to explore the experiences of Indonesian teenagers as K-pop fans, focusing on how they internalize and adapt Korean culture into their lives. It examines identity formation, consumption behavior, and the role of social media in spreading the Korean Wave while identifying shifts in cultural perspectives and social interactions among Indonesian youth.

This study aims to explore the imitation behavior of Indonesian teenagers who are fans of Korean idols, with a focus on the integration of Korean cultural elements into their daily lives. A transcendental phenomenological approach is used to understand the subjective experiences of six informants aged 15–25 years, consisting of four women and two men. This study provides insights into how cultural adaptation takes place, how new identities are formed through the process of imitation, and the social and cultural

impacts of the Korean Wave phenomenon among adolescents.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research employs three key theoretical frameworks to analyze the phenomenon of Korean Wave cultural integration among Indonesian teenagers. The first framework, John W. Berry's (2005) theory of acculturation, identifies four strategies. There are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization that explain how individuals interact with new cultures. Integration is where both local and external cultural elements coexist, while assimilation involves fully adopting the external culture. Separation emphasizes the preservation of local culture, rejecting the new, and marginalization occurs when neither culture is embraced.

The second framework, Gudykuntz and Kim's (2003) cultural adaptation theory, explains how individuals adapt to new cultural environments through stages of cultural and cross-cultural adaptation. These include adjusting to norms and values, acculturating through socialization, and potentially integrating new cultural elements into existing identity and behavior. This dynamic process allows individuals to navigate challenges and changes within new cultural contexts.

Lastly, Albert Bandura's (1997) social learning theory focuses on modeling behavior through observation. It outlines four stages there are attention, representation, behavioral production, and motivation, that describe how individuals learn and imitate behavior. In this research, Bandura's theory provides insights into how teenagers internalize and replicate K-pop idol behaviors in lifestyle, habits, and identity. Together, these frameworks allow for an in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences of cultural imitation and adaptation among Indonesian teenagers within the context of the Korean Wave

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the phenomenological exploration of Indonesian teenagers' experiences in integrating Korean Wave culture into their lives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The study uses a transcendental phenomenology approach to uncover how teenagers internalize elements of Korean culture such as fashion, music, and language into their identity and daily routines. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, incorporating horizontalization, clustering of meaning, and the synthesis of textural and structural descriptions, following Moustakas' framework.

The study targeted Indonesian teenagers aged 15-25, selected purposively based on their active engagement in K-pop fan communities and platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Primary data were obtained through direct interviews, while secondary data were sourced from credible journals, articles, and media to support analysis. The validity of the findings was ensured by evaluating socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts related to the topic. This study aims to provide insights into how Korean Wave culture contributes to identity formation and social behavior among Indonesian youth.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. Experience in Korean Wave Research on Indonesian Teenagers Who Are K-pop Fans

K-pop is not only entertainment but also plays a role in shaping the identity and social interaction patterns of Indonesian teenagers. Based on Berry's acculturation theory, informants show a process of cultural integration by maintaining local values while adopting elements of Korean culture, such as music trends, clothing styles,

and attitudes of K-pop idols. Digital media accelerates this adaptation process through virtual interactions and consumption of global content. K-pop becomes a medium for building social networks and expanding identity, creating a balance between local and global values.

2. Experience Related to Identity Changes and Adaptation Experienced by Informants After Becoming K-pop Fans

The identities and adaptations of informants as K-pop fans reflect the integration and assimilation strategies in Berry's acculturation theory. Some informants incorporate Korean cultural values, such as self-care routines and clothing styles, without neglecting local culture. These identity changes are enriched by participation in fandom communities that provide emotional support. Based on Bandura's social learning theory, this behavior begins with attention to models (idols), followed by representation in memory, behavioral reproduction, and motivation from the social environment.

3. Experience Based on Involvement in Activities as K-pop Fans

Fandom activities, such as streaming music, buying merchandise, and interacting on social media, show the integration of local and global activities. Informants feel connected in a fandom community that offers togetherness and support. Although there are aspects of separation, especially for informants who are more comfortable in the fandom community, these activities strengthen their identity as K-pop fans. These activities reflect how informants interpret cultural messages and build identity through active involvement.

4. K-pop Experience on Preferences and Daily Life and the Process of Adapting Korean Wave Culture

The process of cultural adaptation is seen in how informants integrate elements of Korean culture, such as food and clothing styles, into their daily lives. Integration and assimilation strategies create a more complex identity, where they are not only passive consumers but also active agents in defining their involvement. Bandura's theory suggests that this behavior is adopted through observation, representation, and motivation from the social community, creating a new lifestyle pattern that reflects the fusion of local and foreign cultures.

5. Imitation on Korean Wave Culture

The informants' experiences show a gradual pattern of cultural adaptation, where they are able to integrate Korean culture without abandoning their local identity. This process involves understanding new cultural symbols and applying them in everyday life, such as learning Korean autodidactically and following lifestyle trends. The fandom community plays an important role in providing social support, strengthening identity as a K-pop fan, and creating space for identity exploration.

6. Informants' Experiences Related to Social Relationship

Involvement in the K-pop community strengthens informants' social relationships, both with fellow fans and with environments that are not interested in K-pop. Integration strategies are seen in their ability to establish good relationships with various social backgrounds. Based on Bandura's theory, this behavioral pattern is driven by motivation and reinforcement from the fandom community, creating a space that

supports self-expression and social connectivity.

7. Reflection on Korean Wave Culture

Informants' reflections show harmonious cultural integration between local identity and Korean culture. The integration strategy in Berry's acculturation theory is seen in how elements of Korean culture, such as self-care routines and clothing styles, are applied without abandoning local values. Bandura's theory highlights how these behaviors are adopted through the processes of attention, representation, and reproduction. K-pop is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a medium for finding new meaning in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

This study explains how teenage K-pop fans in Indonesia internalize Korean culture in their daily lives. The identities formed show the integration of Korean culture, such as music, fashion, food, and values introduced by K-pop idols, without leaving behind local cultural elements. This process occurs through cultural adaptation that is not only in the form of imitation, but also re-conceptualization according to the local social and cultural environment. Social media plays an important role as the main means to access K-pop content, build cross-cultural communities, and open up space for teenagers to combine new cultural elements with their original identities.

The findings show that teenage K-pop fans are able to balance Korean culture with local culture, creating a unique hybrid identity. Inspiration from K-pop is seen in lifestyle, beauty standards, and self-development, such as discipline and self-care. Through fandom communities, both online and offline, teenagers find space to express their identities, expand their cultural horizons, and build social networks. The Korean Wave phenomenon, especially K-pop, is not only an entertainment trend, but also a place for

self-exploration and cultural interaction, creating a rich identity with a blend of local and global values.

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