
Parasocial Relationship Between Parent Viewers with Korean Drama Actors

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ABSTRACT

The Korean wave has been rapidly growing over the last few decades. *Hallyu* brought South Korean cultures, including Korean dramas, worldwide, including Indonesia. In addition, the rise of technology and *new media* has given more space for content distribution and access to media actors and audiences. Hence, Korean drama is top-rated in Indonesia, with audiences from various demographic backgrounds, including parents. One reason for the high interest in Korean drama is the exciting actors. The high interest in Korean drama actors is often related to parasocial relationships, a one-sided relationship between audiences and media persona.

This research aims to determine the parasocial relationship between parent viewers and Korean drama actors. The research method used in this study is a qualitative case study with a semi-structured interview as the data-gathering technique. The result of this study shows that the parasocial relationship belongs in the entertainment-social value level due to the informants who find the personas entertaining, attractive, and as references for their daily decisions. Furthermore, the parasocial relationship is also found as a form of media effect, especially in media cultivation and third-person effect.

Keywords: *Korean drama; parents; parasocial relationship; mass media; hallyu*

INTRODUCTION

Hallyu, or Korean Wave, comprises any form of South Korean cultural products: music, film, fashion, food, makeup, and drama (Kim, 2015). Korean Wave has received international attention since its initial popularity break-through with Korean Dramas such as *What is Love All About?* (1997) and *Stars in My Heart* (1997) received the love in East and South East Asia (Jin & Yoon, 2016). Since then, Korean Wave has become more prominent, and South Korea did an even more massive cultural export (Jin, 2018). It is even dubbed as a transnational phenomenon that has altered the landscape of the world's popular culture,

which was previously controlled by Western culture (Jin, 2018). The distribution of cultural products happens through the media and is now accessible worldwide.

The Indonesian audience massively enjoys Korean drama itself. In research done by IDN Times, 60.7% of Korean drama Indonesian audiences are 20 – 27 years old. This amount is followed by the age range of 20 – 35 with 17,8% ('Bener Gak Sih', 2020). Korean drama watchers tend to possess revisit intention. Lee (2015) stated that the supporting factor of the said revisit intention is due to the characteristics of the Korean drama actors and the audiences. This statement is supported by Adis et al. (2017), who concluded in their research that the contributing factors to audiences' interest in Korean drama are interest in actors, credibility, commitment to the plot, and the feeling of connectivity— hence making audiences develop loyalty and revisit intention.

Those characteristics are on the same page with the concept of fandom by Jenkins (2006) and its development toward participatory culture. Fandom consists of people with affection bonds towards something, making it one of their identities (Jenkins, 2006). These people are called fans who commit to idols, films, programs, or bands (Hills, 2022, as cited in Fuschillo, 2020).

Fandom and fan activities are the manifestations of fans' bonds towards celebrities. These attachments can grow into a parasocial relationship, a one-sided relationship between an audience and a media persona (Horton & Wohl, 1956) , including Korean drama actors. This relationship between fandom and the parasocial relationship has been studied before. O'Donovan (2016) concluded through his research that the intensity of the parasocial relationship is higher in fans that participate in more fandom activities.

A parasocial relationship is tightly related to parasocial interactions, yet the two concepts differ. Parasocial interaction is a reaction by media audiences towards a particular media persona as if the said persona is an intimate interaction partner (Horton & Wohl, 1985). Those interactions then progress into a parasocial relationship (Giles, 2002). Furthermore, parasocial interaction only happens during media exposure, while parasocial interaction happens within a more extended period, even after the said media exposure (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2015).

Parasocial relationship affects audiences' lives. Its positive impacts include being a way to understand oneself even more (Madison & Porter, 2015), increasing self-consciousness after seeing successful media personas, self-efficacy, satisfaction, and comfort (Hartmann, 2016). Even so, it has adverse effects as well, especially when audiences experience parasocial breakup (PBU), which is a situation where the media persona does not appear any more or has gone off-air (Cohen, 2006). In addition, it creates a similar feeling to the ending of a real relationship (Dibble, 2015).

Parasocial relationship within the range of show business, especially in the Korean Wave, is not new. However, following certain extreme events involving Korean personas and fans, the parasocial relationship between audiences and Korean media personas is prominent. For example, an event happened after the tragic suicide of a Korean idol named Kim Jong Hyun, where two fans from Indonesia had attempted suicide following the death of their idol (Nurdin, 2017).

Previously, studies regarding parasocial relationships in the Korean Wave had been done. Putri & Yatim (2019) studied parasocial interaction in teenagers who like Korean dramas. It was found that viewers want to feel the sensation and experience shown in Korean dramas. They also become more intense in watching Korean dramas and want to do it more. Hence they binge-watch Korean dramas. Another study was done by Syafrina, Permatasari, & Dara (2016) on parasocial and romantic beliefs in Korean drama viewers. They found a correlation between romantic belief and parasocial relationships in their interview samples which were Korean drama audiences aged 17 – 25.

While those researches prove the existence of a parasocial relationship between Korean drama audiences and its actors, it is also concerning that prior studies mainly highlighted the parasocial relationship between teenagers and young adults. However, a parasocial relationship can happen to anyone, including older people, as they also build parasocial relationships with various media personas (Chorry-Assad & Yanen, 2005, as cited in Bernhold & Metzger, 2018). Older age is a perfect age to study parasocial relationships because older people have parasocial relationships to help them find intimate feelings that they barely encounter in real life for various reasons (Stever, 2011, as cited in Bernhold & Metzger, 2018). Therefore, this research aims to study a parasocial relationship between parents amidst the growth of the Korean Wave, specifically Korean drama actors. The reason for choosing parents as this research's subject is that parents are a specific demographic classification. Therefore, this research aims to provide a clear and distinctive perspective regarding a parasocial relationship in a specific media audience segmentation of a specified kind of media. Furthermore, this research also considers that the average age of mothers in Indonesia giving birth to their first child is 22.4 years old, based on research done in 2017 (CIA, n.d.). That age corresponds to the previous data regarding Korean drama viewers in Indonesia, dominated by those aged 21 and above. Hence the reason for doing this research on the chosen subject is relevant.

Following the knowledge and information about the parasocial relationship, parents, and Korean Wave, the researcher has determined to research the Parasocial Relationship between parent viewers and Korean Drama Actors. The research is done with a qualitative and case study approach. The data gathering technique is a semi-structural interview with three anonymous informants, which will then be developed through coding and triangulated using the theory triangulation method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Effect Theory

Media effect refers to everything that happens due to the influence of media, whether immediate or gradual (Potter, 2017). The referred influence can be positive or negative. There are three to four historical phases of the media effect. Borah (2016) refers to the first phase to occur between 1920 and 1930, where the hypodermic effect of the media is significant. The popularity of movies, radio, and media has integrated with everyday lives following the success of World War I propaganda. The second phase in the 1930s had minimal effect, known as the limited effect model, where personal effects became significant. However, the media effect was not seen as something instant.

The third phase follows the rise of television after World War II, where the exploration of media effects shows the immediate effect of media. Researchers believe that in this phase, no media effect can occur. In the fourth phase in the 1990s, the media effect presents itself more minimally and constructively. The approach towards media effect is egalitarian. Even so, the existence of the fourth phase is still debatable. Potter (2017) argues that there are eight crucial issues in the construction of media theory effect: duration, timing, valence, change, intensity, stages, direct and indirect, and manifestation. Amri (1998, as cited in Fitriansyah, 2018, p. 172) stated that there are three forms of media effects which are (1) cognitive, related to the conscience and addition of knowledge; (2) practical, related to feelings, behavior, and emotion, and; (3) conative, related with the will and behavior to do something in specific ways.

Mass Communication

Mass communication is something that refers to communicating with a large number of audiences at the same time through mass media (Paxson, 2010). Therefore, the number of communicants reached through mass communication shall be highlighted since the focus lies on the number of people receiving the message simultaneously. This is further explained by McQuail (2010), who illustrates that mass communication is at the highest level of organizational communication with society-wide networks.

Hiebert et al. (Nurudin, 2007, p. 105 – 106) have a guide on the characteristics to describe the audiences of mass communication, which includes (1) audiences are individuals that tend to share the effects of their social relationships; (2) audiences are big in quantity and area reach; (3) audiences are heterogenic and come from different social categories; (4) audiences are anonymous and do not know each other, and; (5) communicant and communicator can be physically differentiated.

Parasocial Relationship

Parasocial interaction is a reaction by media audiences towards a particular media persona as if the said persona is an intimate interaction partner (Horton & Wohl, 1985). Interaction between the audience and media persona eventually creates parasocial relationships (Giles, 2002). It is called media persona because people in media show characteristics that audiences want to see, not their real personality (Brown, 2015, as cited in Putri & Yatim, 2019). A parasocial relationship is a one-sided relationship created by someone with a media persona (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This relationship creates an intimate connection without face-to-face or direct connection (Rojek, 2016). It is a condition of the mental relationship caused by parasocial interaction due to media exposure (Hartmann, Sschramm, & Klimmt, 2004, as cited in Hartmann, Stuke, & Daschmann, 2008).

After “spending some time” with a media persona, the intimate feeling occurs to the point where audiences believe that they know and understand the persona (Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008). Media users also perceive parasocial relationships just like any other social relationship (Gilles, 2022). A parasocial relationship can look like a real one; hence, people who are in it can learn something without having actual exper, science such as feeling love without real experience (Putri & Yatim, 2019). A parasocial relationship has aspects that are included within it. For example, Maltby et al. (2005, p. 20-21) perceive that there are three aspects that can work as levels within a parasocial relationship between a fan and their idols which are (1) entertainment-social value, the motivation a fan has to look for information about the celebrity they like by using the media; (2) intense-personal feeling, fans have intrinsic feelings that are intensive and compulsive towards their idols that drives them to need to know everything about their idols, and; (3) borderline-pathological tendency, this is the most extreme part of a parasocial relationship, where fans are willing to do anything irrational and law-breaking just to satisfy their needs regarding their favorite media persona.

Korean Drama

Korean drama is a part of the Korean wave that has been growing significantly. Korean dramas have been widely exported all over the world. This includes Indonesia, and its success has been proven for decades-long, seeing that in 2012 Indonesia aired 40 Korean dramas through conventional television channels (Syafriana, Permatasari, & Dara, 2016). Its popularity has continued to expand throughout the years.

The contributing factor to this success is that the plot is easy to understand and usually takes up the romance genre (Jin & Yoon, 2016) alongside family and life concepts (Topan & Ernungtyas, 2020) has taken up people’s interest. Moreover, cultural aspects can easily be found in Korean dramas, like dramas that use traditional Korean settings called *sageuk*, which has gained much interest (Hassim, Jayasainan, & Khalid, 2019) amidst many genres in the industry.

METHODOLOGY

Research Conceptualization

This research focuses on the parasocial relationship between parent viewers and Korean drama actors. This research sticks to Horton & Wohl's (1986) definition of a parasocial relationship, a one-sided relationship between someone with a media persona. Parasocial relationship happens because of parasocial interaction. Audiences understand that the parasocial relationship they have is not accurate.

This research uses the descriptive qualitative research method with a case study approach. The descriptive qualitative method aims to describe a phenomenon in a systematic, accurate, factual, and explainable way regarding the phenomenon (Rukajat, 2018). Meanwhile, the case study approach is an intensive study regarding someone, a group, or a unit to generalize other units through intensive investigation by doing deep data examination regarding the existing variables (Heale & Twycross, 2017).

Research Subject

The subject of this research is parents who like Korean drama actors, while the object of this research is the parasocial relationship between those parents and the actors. The sampling method done in this research is purposive sampling, where the researcher predetermines what needs to be known first before using it to find informants willing to give information based on the preset criteria (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). The criteria to be an informant for this research are (1) parents who already have children; (2) located in Indonesia; (3) active watcher of Korean drama; (4) like Korean drama actors, and (5) has a parasocial relationship with Korean drama actors by identifying themselves with at least one of the forms of parasocial relationships which are (a) seeks guidance from persona; (b) views persona as a friend; (c) views themselves being in a fictional world in a favorite show, and; (d) desires to meet persona (Rubin et al., 2004, as cited in Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2015)

Data Analysis

The data gathered through semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using qualitative coding techniques. The transcripts from the individual interviews will be translated into codes, phrases, or words that symbolically represent data. This research uses an inductive coding technique. This technique is done based on the data that has been acquired prior to the coding process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semi-structured interviews were done with three different informants to complete this research. The three informants, namely L, J, and IS are parents who match at least one of the four forms of parasocial relationships. L is a 45-year-old mother with three children. L has been watching Korean dramas since the 2000s. J is a 41-year-old father with two children, J have been watching Korean dramas since 2004. Finally, IS is a 43-year-old mother with one child and has been watching Korean dramas since around ten years ago.

Parasocial Relationship in Entertainment Aspect

a. Persona is entertaining

All three informants find Korean drama actors alongside Korean drama as a source of entertainment. L mentioned that she likes her favorite Korean drama actor, Lee Min Ho, mainly because of his excellent acting skills. She also said that the professionalism shown by Korean drama actors is a form of entertainment; hence she does not worry too much about choosing Korean dramas.

“I do not see it as a problem. It is entertainment, right? So, when I watch [Korean dramas], [I see it] as a form of entertainment. I don’t worry too much; if the film (drama) is good, I will watch it, if I don’t feel too interested in the film (drama), then I don’t. I find something that matches, the one that is starred by an actor that I like, then I will watch it.” (L, personal communication, 7 November 2022).

Informant, J mentioned some of the reasons why he is interested in Korean dramas. He mentioned that he likes mystery and comedy dramas. Furthermore, he finds one of the dramas he watched recently, titled Extraordinary Attorney Woo, to be funny. Aside from that, I also stated that his favorite drama of all time is a romantic comedy titled Full House (2004). Therefore, according to the context of the communication, it can be seen that I am interested in funny content.

A similar thing was stated by IS, who dropped the title of the only drama she can watch twice: Reply 1988. She likes drama because she can watch it during her leisure time. She can watch it when she wants a laugh and to relax. The drama humors her, as she states that she watches it explicitly to laugh.

“Yes. I like that too. But what I mean is that [I watch] Reply [1988] when I have leisure time, [to do] refreshing, [when I] watch it sometimes [I] can laugh. That is what I meant. Yes.” (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

b. Persona is attractive

All three informants mentioned the word “handsome” and/or “beautiful” at least once during the interview period. They think those words describe the Korean drama actors they are interested in. Informant L stated that she got hooked on Korean dramas due to the excellent storyline and strong visuals of the actors in ‘Women of the Sun’, the first Korean drama she has ever watched. She continued watching Korean dramas because of it. Afterward, she also stated that she likes Lee Min Ho because he is handsome and tall.

“The film (drama) is really good, the first time I watched Korean dramas was [the drama] Women of the Sun. Because the story is interesting, err, the people (actors) are beautiful and handsome, so I continued [to watch] Korean films, I mean, Korean dramas.” (L, personal communication, 27 September 2022).

Something similar was said by informant J. J mentioned that the reason he liked his first Korean drama, Full House, was because the actors were attractive. This includes his favorite actress, Song Hye Kyo.

As for informant IS, she did not enthusiastically express the reason she watched Korean dramas. However, she agreed that Korean actors are handsome. IS mentioned that she talks about the actors’ attractiveness with her friends.

c. Fandom

In the interview, all informants were asked regarding their opinion on fan groups or fandom. All three informants have similar answers, saying they are not part of that kind of fan. For example, L mentioned that she does not care that deeply about her favorite persona, J says that those fan groups are ridiculous, while IS says that fan groups are normal for younger fans but not for people her age.

Informants barely engage in any activities that could be classified as fandom behavior. L said that as her friends are already too occupied with their own families, she does not talk about Korean dramas with her friends. Out of the three, only IS still talks about Korean dramas and actors with her friends. She has a group of friends that recommend the newest Korean dramas to one another. Even so, the group is not solely for Korean drama talks, as they also talk about other things.

“Although there are many things [that are] talked about, one of the topics is [Korean] dramas. So if there is a [good] Korean drama, [we will get] notified. Especially because [they are] friends from university, from younger [days]. So what we like is similar, we know each other’s likes. This is this, if there are things that are [disliked], then it won’t recommend[ed].” (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

d. Receives information about persona

There are different ways for the informants to receive information regarding their favorite personas. For example, L follows her favorite persona—Lee Min Ho’s social networking accounts; hence she knows what is happening with him. Meanwhile J and IS tend to only find out about their favourite personas through accidental crossovers on the internet. Even so, J and IS mention that they are interested in new information about their favorite Korean drama actors and would like to know more when they see anything.

e. Mild reaction to critics towards the persona

It is usual for celebrities to receive criticism. However, in facing the criticisms thrown at their favorite actors, all three informants have rather mild reactions. L said that it is not a problem and does not affect her daily life. She perceives Korean dramas and actors as entertainment; therefore, there is no problem with critics because she does not even force herself to watch Korean dramas starred by her favorite actors.

“The way I see it, it is not a problem. It (drama) is only entertainment, right. So, when I watch [Korean dramas], it is only for entertainment. No problem if the film (drama) is good, then I watch it, if [I] feel not interested with the film (drama), then I do not watch it. I look for [something] that fits and look for the [drama] star that I like, and then I will watch it.” (L, personal communication, 7 November 2022).

J said that criticism is normal and would not defend his favorite actress. J stated that he would still watch contents that were not so good and receive criticism. J understand that not all the content his favorite actors produce will be good.

IS says that the furthest she feels when faced with her favorite actors being criticized is sympathy and nothing more. She only gives comments that state her pity. She feels no other deep emotions.

Parasocial Relationship in Reference Source Aspect

a. Persona does not affect daily life

Following their opinions on the critics, it is not surprising to find that persona does not affect their daily lives. All three informants stated that there is no significant actions done by Korean drama actors in their daily lives.

IS has previously stated that she just feels pity when actors face criticism, elaborated on her statement, saying that she feels sympathetic to what the actors have to go through. She also mentioned that she feels happy when there is clarity about a scandal that involves an actor.

Unlike IS, L says that she is able to separate an actor's drama and his personal life. She thinks that the drama and the plot are more important to her than the actors' personal lives. In liking a Korean drama actor, L thinks that an actor's ability to deliver a story is more important. L also firmly stated that bad news regarding actors does not affect her daily life.

"It does not matter. What matters for a drama [is] the story. He can deliver the story well. Problems behind [the scene], we have no problem [with it]." (L, personal communication, 27 September 2022).

J also blatantly mention that news about Song Hye Kyo does not affect his daily life at all. When asked about whether there are decisions made by Korean drama actors that affect his daily life, specifically in terms of fashion and mode, he also said that there is no effect.

b. Watches Korean drama because of persona

Choosing Korean drama titles because of the actors that star in them is a form of seeking guidance from actors. All three informants have similar answers on this topic. Informant L shared that she always definitely tries to watch new drama releases by her favorite actor, Lee Min Ho. She then elaborated in the second interview that after she tries watching the new dramas, it is possible that she might not continue watching them because the drama does not fit her taste. She confirms that she does this even with dramas that are starred by her favorite actor.

A similar thing was stated by informant IS. IS is also an avid Korean drama watcher that chooses titles based on the actor that she likes. She admitted that when she likes a certain actor, she will look for and watch other dramas that the said actor stars. Like L, if she deems the drama does not fit her taste, then she will stop watching that drama.

"As an example, the other day, I was watching Jirisan [drama]. Then there is an actor that I like. I just look for his name, though, where [in other dramas] he starred. I only look, oh this film (drama). That is it, until that point only. A week later if [I were] asked who his name was, I would forget it already." (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

"Then in a position [where] there is a new drama, other film, that is [starred by an actor I like]... Oh this is an actor I like! I will definitely try watching it first. But if I do not deem the drama fitting at all, [I will definitely] drop it." (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

Meanwhile, informant J has a slightly different answer compared to the other two informants. J stated that he will watch the new drama releases of Song Hye Kyo with a big chance of 90%. He elaborated that even if there are dramas that are not publicly well-liked, he will still watch the Song Hye Kyo drama.

c. Travel references from persona

As a part of the Korean Wave, Korean dramas alongside the actors bring various kinds of South Korea's cultures and traditions. Korean drama watchers are exposed towards the South Korean cultures and environments. This exposure can be a reference or guidance received by the audiences from media personas.

Informants L and J stated that they are interested in coming to places that are related to their favourite personas. L, especially, is very interested in Korean culture, which is one of the reasons why she likes to watch Korean drama. L wishes to try everything out, even mentioning that she desires to visit South Korea and learn its culture.

“Yes, [I] wish to learn what the Korean culture is like. Like, what, the food. But right now [I am still] collecting the money to join tours to there (South Korea).”
(L, personal communication, 7 November 2022).

Not only that, L wants to do things that are related to the actors that she likes. She aims to try out places that have been used as Korean drama sets. Aside from that she also would like to try out activities that her favourite actors have done before.

“[The desire to] go to Korea exists. [I] think about, oh, [a certain] drama shot in this place back then. Maybe [I] want to take a photo in that location, in front of that [location]. Of course [the desire] exists. But yeah, [it is] still unreached.”
(L, personal communication, 7 November 2022).

“It exists. Like a Korean drama has [shot] in this place, that place, and has walked through, oh this was used to shot this, this scene, like that. About food, a certain Korean artist had eaten here [before], maybe [I] also want to try it out. Oh, what is this food like.” (L, personal communication, 7 November 2022).

Informant J has a similar idea. He shared his desires about wanting to go to places related to Song Hye Kyo. He also elaborated on how he is interested to look for souvenirs related to his favourite actress. Even so, J does not want to force that he has to do it all.

“Yeah, [the desire] exists it’s okay. It’s okay, but no force. One thing for sure in Korea, we go look for the souvenirs. But if not, it’s also okay.” (J, personal communication, 30 September 2022).

Informant IS has the most different answer. She said that when she goes abroad, especially South Korea, there is a time limit. Activities related to Korean dramas and actors are not interesting, in fact, she finds it weird. IS also thinks that those kinds of activities tend to waste time.

“There is no way I will force it. When I go abroad right... accidentally, so it is accidental... seems like no. Because there is no way I go abroad alone, that’s first. Secondly, I think that when I go abroad I’s time has a time limit, right. So it is a pity if it is used for things like that. Time wasting. So I [choose] not to.” (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

“According to the tour that I joined before, they have a tour package to go to those drama places. But when I see those promotions, seeing it, I think it’s weird, I mean, actually taking pictures in front of buildings of this drama... like this time period (inside the drama), is just weird. It is not something that is interesting to see, right?” (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

Yet although IS is not interested in doing those activities, she understands people who want to do it.

Parasocial Relationship in Desire to Meet Aspect

a. Desire to meet

All three mentioned that they would like to meet their favourite actors. L even says that she wants to meet Lee Min Ho even in her dreams. J said that he wants to ask for a photo together with Song Hye Kyo, his favourite actress. He thinks that taking a photo together is enough, because he cannot converse with her due to the language barrier. IS says that if there is a chance then she would want to meet Korean drama persona. However, she mentioned that she will only go if there is a certain scenario.

“Woah if there is a chance, suddenly my friend ask me out to go, woah I have the ticket! Go! Yes I would want to [go], I mean. But if there is no one asking me out like that, then I purposefully [go], ‘Ah I want to go to Jakarta, I want to see that [actor]’ [it is] impossible, impossible.” (IS, personal communication, 1 November 2022).

b. No extensive effort

Although they all had expressed their willingness and desire to meet their favourite actors, they do not want to give extensive effort in attempt to meet those actors. Extensive effort means the motivation of the informants to do things that need effort and big sacrifice in terms of time and energy to meet Korean drama actors. In the interviews, the example used is by mentioning Meet & Greet events and seeing if informants wish to attend.

IS and J mentioned that they are interested in coming to events such as Persona's meet and greet, but only if they receive an invitation or free ticket. IS will not put a big effort into coming, she even thinks that it would be weird if she had the personal initiative to go by herself to a Meet and Greet event. She will only go if there is an extra ticket and a friend who asks her out to go.

Something similar was also stated by J, who shows no interest in coming if the event is too crowded. Even so, he will still only come if there is an easy way, like a special ticket or invitation. J stated that he was willing to attend even if it was out of town.

Meanwhile, L simply has no interest because she does not like to be in crowded places and would rather stay at home. From her point of view, it is better to watch through the television rather than to face a crowd.

“For me, the other day someone came.. [to] Jakarta, in Central Park, in a mall. For Meet and Greet [I] also do not think too much about it because, one, maybe the amount [of people] is too crowded. A lot like that. I do not like things like that. So, too [much], the fans are too many, crowded. [I would] rather watch TV. No need to go to a Meet and Greet like that. Till I saw on Instagram that meeting at the mall, the first, second, and third floors were all crowded. Duh, I would rather stay at home.” (L, personal communication, 27 September 2022).

Discussion

Process of Parasocial Relationship Formation

It was found that informants started watching Korean dramas in different time periods. Even so, they all have been watching dramas for more than ten years. Therefore, the time period they are exposed to the content is more than a decade. During that time period, informants were involved in parasocial interactions. Since parasocial interaction can be seen through the reactions of media users towards media personas (Horton & Wohl, 1956), informants show these reactions as showing interest and attraction towards the personas. This is where parasocial interaction occurs.

Afterward, it can be seen that informants' involvement towards Korean drama actors carried on even after the exposure period towards Korean drama. This can be seen in the way informants look for information and are interested in knowing more information or updates regarding Korean drama actors.

Then, it developed even more into behaviors such as informants that watch Korean dramas because of their favorite actors or personas. This correlates to Horton & Wohl's (1956, as cited in Rubin & McHugh, 1987) explanation of how if after the show ends and the audience likes the parasocial interaction that happened, there is a chance that audiences will continue to watch the said show. And when audiences watch the show more and more, then the parasocial relationship eventually develops as well.

All informants also mentioned that they seek travel references from their favorite actors as well. This has become a clear form of parasocial relationship as a form of guidance-seeking by informants. Not only that, but all three informants also expressed their desire to meet their favorite actors.

The parasocial relationships that the three informants have are in the social-entertainment value level. They see their favorite actors as a form of entertainment only. This is seen by their reluctance to make extensive efforts to go and see Korean drama actors, as well as their disinterest in fandom.

Parasocial Relationship as a Mass Media Effect

Parasocial relationship happens with tight involvement with the mass media. Content distribution and consumption are done through mass media. Nowadays, Korean dramas are distributed through streaming platforms as well.

Parasocial interaction happens during exposure to media; therefore, what happens after that parasocial interaction is the effect of media exposure. Parasocial relationship happens due to parasocial interaction; hence the effect of this media exposure is a parasocial relationship.

There are deeper dimensions to this media exposure effect. Two informants mentioned that they are interested in visiting places related to their favorite actors, even informant L said that she watches Korean dramas to see what South Korea is like with the hopes she can come to Korea one day. This correlates to media cultivation theory, which is how media can portray something that affects the general perspective (Borah, 2016). Although informants had never been to South Korea, they had an idea of what it was like.

This research also finds that there is nothing similar to a prior founded theory of the effect of media violence which is used to explain how humans may adapt to violence after being exposed to violence in media (Borah, 2016). In this research, informants do not wish to change themselves because of the media they consume. They even do not feel affected by their favorite Korean drama actors.

This research also finds that as an effect of media, the duration of media exposure is similar to the depth of parasocial relationships. Informants L and J, who have watched Korean dramas since the 2000s are more interested in doing things that are related to their favorite actors compared to IS, who has only watched Korean dramas since the 2010s. IS showed no interest at all in visiting places related to her favorite actors.

This research also finds that the subjects match the third-person effect theory, where they think that others are more affected by the media than they are (Johansson, 2005). This is seen by how they react to fandom. L simply thinks that she is not someone who is that interested, followed by IS, who thinks that fandom is for younger people. Meanwhile, informant J think that fandom is ridiculous.

CONCLUSION

This research finds that the subject of the research has an entertainment-social valued parasocial relationship with Korean drama actors. They see the actors simply as entertainment and references to choose Korean drama to watch and travel destinations. The parasocial relationship that exists can be correlated to mass media and media effect theories such as cultivation theory, the effect of media violence, and third-person theory.

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