Representations of Korean Dramas in Indonesian Audience Discourse: A Topic Modeling Analysis of YouTube Comments

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Abstract

Korean dramas (K-Dramas) have become extremely popular among Indonesian audiences, offering an often idealized and romanticized depiction of Korean culture. This study examines the dynamics of Indonesian audiences' perceptions of Korean dramas (K-Dramas) by analyzing comments on YouTube videos. This study uses topic modeling analysis to examine Indonesian audiences' reactions through YouTube comments (85,840 comments from 720 videos). The study began with 15 topics generated by a topic modeling algorithm. Upon further analysis, the study found that several of these topics were closely related, leading to the consolidation of these topics into four broader main topics: (1) K-Drama as Entertainment, (2) Cultural Representations and Social Issues, (3) Personal Relationships and Family Dynamics, and (4) Social Reactions and National Dignity. This research implies that the findings can be used by policymakers and media industry players to develop strategies that support constructive cultural dialogue and develop content with more culturally sensitive narratives.

Keywords: *Audience Perceptions, Indonesia, Korean Drama, K-Drama, YouTube*

1. Introduction

Korean dramas, known as K-Drama or *Drakor* (popular term in Indonesia), have developed into an influential global cultural phenomenon, including Indonesia. K-Dramas are not only enjoyed through traditional media such as television, but viewers can also enjoy them through popular digital platform channels such as YouTube (S. Park & Hong, 2023). YouTube allows viewers to access content while actively

interacting through comments, which reflect their views, feelings, and interpretations of various aspects of K-Drama. Various comments from K-Drama viewers become an interactive platform to convey their reactions to the storyline, characters, and cultural values that appear in the drama (Baldacchino & Park, 2021; Ju, 2020; Messerli & Locher, 2021). This dynamic interaction through viewer comments has become an important area of scholarly interest, prompting various studies to explore how audiences engage with K-Dramas in digital spaces.

Previous studies have examined viewer comments on K-Dramas. For example, a study by Messerli and Locher (2021) examined how viewer comments on the Viki platform represent a form of active engagement with K-Dramas, creating a sense of pseudo-synchronicity that makes viewers feel as if they are watching simultaneously. This study emphasized the importance of humorous elements and emotional expressions in comments and analyzed how viewers use humor indicators to respond to certain moments in the drama. In addition, cultural aspects also shape this interaction, as comments reflect a collective process of constructing meaning towards foreign cultures (Messerli & Locher, 2021).

While these studies focus on viewer interactions within digital platforms, other research has taken a broader perspective by examining the wider impact of the *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) phenomenon in Indonesia, particularly how Korean culture is appropriated and localized in everyday life through digital media. For example, Jeong et al. (2017) highlighted the important role of social media in accelerating the diffusion of Korean culture. They explore how audiences actively understand "Koreanness" through negotiation between Korean cultural symbols and local experiences. The study also reveals intergenerational differences in consumption patterns and underlines criticism of local content that is considered too imitative of foreign culture. Theoretically, the *Hallyu* phenomenon is analyzed as a form of South Korea's symbolic power that helps enhance the country's image and influence on the global stage (Jeong et al., 2017).

Another study examined the motivations and impacts of K-Drama consumption among Indonesian viewers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducted by Chandra (2022), the study identified four main factors motivating viewers: fresh substitutive choices, easy access, engaging stories and visuals, and cultural factors. The impacts of K-Drama consumption include enhanced cultural understanding, new perceptions of Korea, increased motivation to learn Korean, educational pursuits, and entertainment or stress relief. The growth of streaming services has

further facilitated the rise in K-Drama consumption, positioning it not only as a source of entertainment but also as a tool for identity formation and fostering cross-cultural understanding among Indonesian audiences (Chandra, 2022).

Amidst the various studies conducted, there is still a significant gap in examining Indonesian audiences' responses to K-Drama, especially in understanding how local values interact with foreign cultural elements displayed in the dramas. Although several studies have discussed the popularity of K-Drama and its impact on media consumption patterns, few have in-depth highlighted audience comments on digital platforms such as YouTube as a data source to study their perceptions and interpretations. This study attempts to fill this gap by exploring how Indonesian audiences interpret K-Drama in certain themes, and how their comments reflect the social, cultural, and value dynamics in Indonesian society. Thus, this study enriches the existing literature and provides new perspectives on the interaction between global and local popular culture.

K-Drama consumption in Indonesia has increased rapidly in recent years. This condition is triggered by the increasingly easy access to digital content and the presence of various streaming platforms (Chandra, 2022; Katadata Insight Center, 2021; Liputan6.com, 2023). The significant development of K-Drama consumption emphasizes the importance of examining how Indonesian viewers respond to K-Drama, especially regarding how they understand and interact with the foreign culture presented. Various comments on YouTube are an important data source for seeing how Indonesian viewers experience watching K-Drama emotionally and cognitively. Through these comments, it can be traced how K-Drama viewers interpret the show and reveal the dynamics of perception, including the form of acceptance or rejection of the cultural elements presented (Messerli & Locher, 2021). This approach can be carried out through in-depth qualitative analysis.

Studying how Indonesian audiences view K-Drama is crucial to understanding the dynamics of cultural acceptance, not just cultural exchange. K-Drama does not offer a two-way interaction between cultures but serves as a medium to convey Korean culture to Indonesian audiences. However, audiences are not passive in accepting this cultural flow. Many of them do worship the idealized image of Korea presented in K-Drama. Still, at the same time, they also actively interpret, reflect, and selectively compare it with their cultural norms. Furthermore, they also project their imagination or fantasy of Korea into the Indonesian cultural and social context, forming their understanding in a complex and nuanced way.

Audiences do not simply adopt the content of K-Drama, but rather place it within the framework of their idealized cultural values, by looking for points of cultural similarity, including historical similarities, social norms, and other cultural elements (Azeharie, 2023).

In the context of globalization, examining how foreign cultures are received through digital media like K-Drama contributes to the discourse on how local communities respond, adapt, and either adopt or resist global cultural influences (Jeong et al., 2017). The findings of such research can also serve as valuable insights for creators of popular culture content, helping them understand local preferences and expectations to tailor global content to suit local audiences better.

Building on this background, this study addresses a central research question: *What are the dynamics of Indonesian audience perceptions of K-Drama as reflected in YouTube comments?* In addition to this main question, the study poses several specific sub-questions:

1. What are the primary topics discussed in Indonesian audience perceptions of K-Drama?
2. How do Indonesian audiences express their attitudes and views toward K-Drama?
3. How do the perceptions reflected in audience comments illustrate the dynamics of cultural interaction between Indonesia and South Korea?
4. How do Indonesian audiences negotiate Korean cultural values with local norms through their YouTube comments?
5. How do K-Dramas influence Indonesian audiences' perceptions of Korean culture, particularly in comparison with local cultural values?

The contribution of this study is that it is methodologically unique, as it is the first to examine audience perceptions of K-Dramas using topic modeling on YouTube comments. Moreover, the study reveals a contradictory audience perception—both romanticizing Koreans and being critical of them.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Indonesia Audiences and Korean Dramas

Korean culture began to gain popularity in Indonesia in the early 2000s, marked by the success of the drama Endless Love, which paved the way for various other K-Dramas. This rapid growth was driven by technological developments and easy access to digital content, allowing viewers to enjoy shows anytime and anywhere (Jeong et al., 2017). Indonesians have watched more than 300 K-Drama titles, showing high enthusiasm for this phenomenon. According to a survey by the (Katadata

Insight Center, 2021), this enthusiasm has created a large fan community that actively discusses the plot and themes of the drama (Jung, 2011). The appeal of K-Drama is also strengthened by cultural values that are in line with Indonesian society, such as romance, friendship, and family (Azeharie, 2023), as well as introducing the Korean lifestyle and culture that further strengthen cultural relations between countries (Chandra, 2022).

The role of social media is very important in enriching the experience of watching K-Drama in Indonesia. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and X have become spaces for discussion and sharing of opinions among fans, strengthening their connectedness (Ju, 2018). The discussions that emerge not only discuss the storyline but also reflect broader social and cultural dynamics. Viewers often highlight social issues, compare local values with those depicted in the drama, and see characters as inspirations or reflections of the younger generation. In this way, K-Dramas are entertainment and a place for cultural and social reflection (Jin et al., 2023).

2.2. YouTube's Role as a Platform for Discussion

YouTube has become one of Indonesia's most popular digital platforms, a medium for watching and sharing videos, and a global interaction space. This platform allows users to express opinions, discuss, and form social relationships based on the content they consume (Thelwall, 2017). In the context of K-Drama, YouTube provides a space for fans to comment on the storyline, characters, and social issues presented. Comments from users from various countries create cross-border discussions, strengthen a sense of togetherness among viewers and form an active global community (Ju, 2018; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Thus, YouTube has democratically empowered individuals to participate in pop culture conversations (Burgess & Green, 2009, 2018).

The comment feature on YouTube allows direct responses to the latest episode clips, character reviews, or criticism of the storyline, which encourages dynamic discussions (Dai & Wang, 2023). In addition, the diversity of content, such as reaction videos and reviews, enriches the discussion space and encourages further audience engagement (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). These comments form a shared opinion and provide input for content creators. Thus, YouTube is an entertainment medium and an important forum for exchanging ideas and cultural and social reflection (Hassim et al., 2019).

2.3. Romanticism and Cultural Hybridity

Romance in K-Drama illustrates how Indonesian viewers interpret and build emotional connections with the storylines and characters shown. Korean dramas often feature themes of idealistic love, emotional conflict, and deep character development, which reflect the personal experiences of many viewers (C. S. U. P. Park & Jo, 2024; V. M. T. Park et al., 2021). These romantic elements are entertaining and reflect hopes and aspirations in personal relationships. When viewers watch characters face dilemmas of love, loyalty, or sacrifice, they find space for self-reflection and deep emotional involvement.

Meanwhile, the concept of cultural hybridity refers to the blending of different cultural elements, as occurs in the consumption of K-Drama by Indonesian viewers (Burke, 2009; Kraidy, 2005). K-Drama adapts universal themes such as love, family, and friendship, which are widely accepted by global audiences, including Indonesia. Viewers also bring local cultural values and perspectives when interpreting the story, creating cross-cultural dialogue. Although K-Drama is not explicitly adapted for Indonesia, many Korean cultural values are considered familiar. Cultural representations in K-Dramas influence viewers' views of their identities, encouraging reflection and pride or criticism of national dignity (Ju, 2020; Shim, 2008). Ultimately, this engagement shows how K-Dramas play a role in shaping cultural identities that continue to evolve amidst the flow of globalization (Putri et al., 2019).

3. Research Method

This study applies a qualitative approach using content analysis with topic modeling to understand Indonesian audiences' perceptions of K-Drama dynamics. Content analysis in a qualitative context is commonly used in textual data processing (Bryman & Bell, 2019), and this approach is considered appropriate for examining communication materials, such as narrative responses and user comments on social media (Prior, 2020).

The topic modeling technique in this study uses the Probabilistic Latent Dirichlet Allocation/LDA approach (Blei, 2012). LDA is a generative probabilistic approach commonly applied to the analysis of discrete data, particularly in exploring patterns within text corpora. LDA analyzes a document-term matrix by modeling each document as a mixture of topics, and each topic as a distribution over several words (Albalawi et al., 2020). The LDA approach was chosen because its probabilistic approach is more suitable for detecting topic distributions in

text documents with high variation and is able to explicitly map the relationship between words in the form of topic distributions.

Topic modeling is performed using TopMod, a Python application that incorporates the Gensim library (Maulana, 2025). The application includes features for text preprocessing and allows users to explore the content of documents associated with each topic. This exploration helps assess whether a topic is too broad, fragmented, or potentially suitable for merging with another. As a result, the number of topics is determined manually by examining and interpreting the modeling output.

The main focus of the analysis is the comments uploaded by K-Drama viewers on various YouTube videos, which function as paratexts in this study. The research process follows standardized methodological stages (See Figure 1) (Babbie, 2021; Bryman & Bell, 2019; Creswell, 2014), including:

a) Data Collection

Data were obtained from YouTube comments on videos related to K-Drama, emphasizing comments written in Indonesian and uploaded by users with Indonesian language accounts. Selected videos had a high volume of comments and covered a range of K-Drama genres to capture a broad spectrum of audience responses. The selected videos are filtered using the keywords *drakor OR "drama korea" or kdrama site:.youtube.com* in the Google search engine. A total of 85,840 comments were collected from 720 videos uploaded between January 2021 and November 2024. One of the search keywords was "*kdrama*", a term also commonly used by foreign users. We then manually rechecked by removing the comments in English or languages other than Bahasa. The same method applies to videos in English.

b) Data Processing

Only comments that directly responded to K-Drama content—such as those discussing the storyline, characters, plot, or conveyed values—were included in the analysis. Spam and irrelevant comments were excluded. The dataset was processed using a Python-based topic modeling application to identify thematic clusters and categorize topics within the large volume of data.

c) Analysis and Interpretation

This stage involved analyzing and interpreting the processed data to identify recurring topics and themes. The goal was to uncover how Indonesian audiences perceive and engage with K-Dramas and how their responses reflect broader socio-cultural dynamics, particularly the negotiation between local values and foreign popular culture.

Based on the analysis of the collected comments, 15 topics emerged. These 15 topics were then combined into four main themes using an inductive and interpretative approach. Topics with similar meanings, such as those related to the same keywords or those appearing in the same narrative context, were grouped into one theme. Coherence scores, a list of top words from each topic, and examples from the documents supported this process. Therefore, this grouping was based more on emerging discursive patterns than simply counting.

d) Discussion and Conclusion

The final stage entailed compiling a discussion and drawing conclusions from the findings. The discussion situates the results within the broader academic discourse and addresses the study's research questions. The conclusion highlights the main findings, explores their implications, and acknowledges the study's limitations.
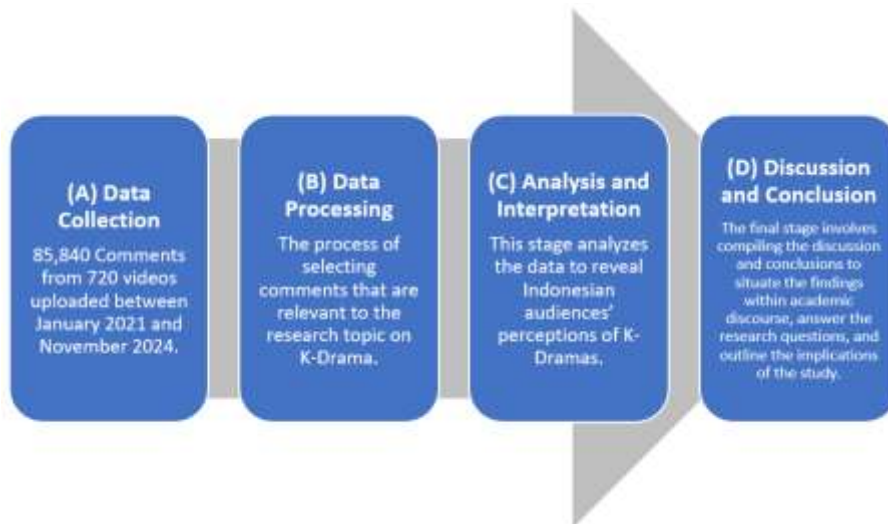

Figure 1. Stages of Research Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

4. Results

This research shows 15 topics that emerged from the processing of 85,840 comments by Indonesian audiences on K-Dramas across 720 YouTube videos. These fifteen topics include Topic 0 (Korean Drama and Entertainment), Topic 1 (Film and Daily Life), Topic 2 (Social Issues and Relationships), Topic 3 (Netizens and Korean Culture), Topic 4 (Romance and Personal Relationships), Topic 5 (Video and Visual Entertainment), Topic 6 (Audience Stories and Enthusiasm), Topic 7 (Reactions to

Apologies), Topic 8 (Korean Language, Culture and Racism), Topic 9 (Emotional Reactions and Criticism of K-Dramas), Topic 10 (Children and Family Responsibilities), Topic 11 (Favorite K-Drama Actors and Actresses), Topic 12 (Representation of Indonesia in K-Dramas: Between Fiction and Fact), Topic 13 (Various Attitudes towards Korean Pop Culture), and Topic 14 (National Pride). The frequencies of these topics, derived from topic modeling, are calculated based on their proportional occurrence within the comments and are illustrated in Figure 2. A single comment can contribute to multiple topics, depending on the proportions assigned.
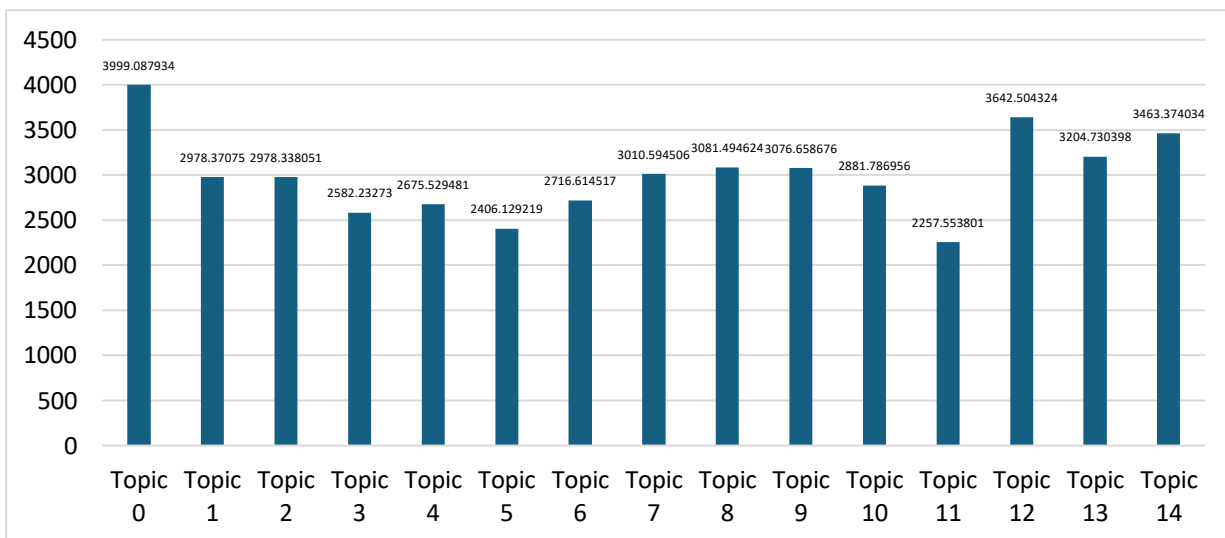

Figure 2. 15 Topics of Indonesian Audience Comments on K-Drama on YouTube (Author's Elaboration)

The explanation of each of these topics is as follows:
Topic 0: Korean Drama and Entertainment
Comments on the "Korean Drama and Entertainment" topic reveal many audience responses to Korean dramas, including enthusiasm, disappointment, and even addiction. Some comments express euphoria over the storyline or the actors' performances, while others convey dissatisfaction with plot twists or disappointing, sad endings.

Topic 1: Film and Daily Life
Comments on the topic "Film and Daily Life" provide a picture of various perspectives on religious values, nationalism, morality, and socio-cultural

reflection. Some comments criticize viewpoints or beliefs that deviate from certain religious doctrines. Meanwhile, some other comments discuss stereotypes in films about certain countries and their impact on the national image. On the other hand, some comments are more introspective, exploring themes such as personal morality, the importance of tolerance, and family happiness.

Topic 2: Social Issues and Relationships
Comments on "Social Issues and Relations" highlighted debates about patriotism, nationalism, and the influence of foreign cultures, especially from South Korea. The criticism from some comments was the excessive enthusiasm for foreign cultures that tended to ignore national values. Meanwhile, several other comments emphasized aspects of appreciating local culture and products to preserve national identity.

Topic 3: Netizens and Korean Culture
Comments in this topic focus on the dynamics of Indonesian netizens' responses to issues of culture and nationalism in the context of relations with South Korea. For example, in the context of negative perceptions, such as the findings of Microsoft's survey on online politeness. Many comments show a mix of strong nationalism and aggressive behavior in responding to perceived criticism or insults towards Indonesia. The phrase "you are polite, we are reluctant (*Anda sopan, kami segan*)" is often mentioned, but it often leads to offensive actions when netizens feel provoked.

Topic 4: Romance and Personal Relationships
Comments on "Romance and Personal Relationships" reflect a complex emotional experience, covering themes ranging from romantic relationships to marital challenges, from various perspectives. Several commenters shared personal stories about the struggles of balancing professional life with personal relationships. Emotions such as frustration, sadness, and resilience were woven into a collective narrative highlighting the unique dynamics and challenges of building healthy, meaningful relationships.

Topic 5: Video and Visual Entertainment
Comments on this theme highlighted emotional, cognitive, and cultural responses to visual content in the context of Korean dramas and YouTube videos. Discussions in the comments highlighted appreciation for positive

values, such as respect for hard work and kindness. They hoped content creators would continue inspiring viewers through thoughtful communication. Despite occasional clashes of views on cultural and national issues, discussions in the comments showed that visual entertainment creates space for dialogue involving emotions, identity, and personal values.

Topic 6: Audience Stories and Enthusiasm
Comments on "Audience Stories and Enthusiasm" show various comments ranging from the quality of Indonesian soap operas to comparisons with foreign productions and nostalgia for old shows. This phenomenon related to audience enthusiasm highlights the dynamic participation of the audience, which shows the connection of everyday experiences with their cultural identity.

Topic 7: Reactions to Apologies
Comments on this topic show viewers' responses to the perceived insincere apology, delivered solely through the comments section. Most comments criticized the lack of seriousness shown by the party involved (SBS) in issuing the apology (regarding the badminton-themed K-Drama), especially when compared to Hansol's response, which was perceived as more sincere despite his innocence. Viewers expressed high expectations for proper etiquette, such as issuing a formal apology through a video or a dedicated post.

Topic 8: Korean Language, Culture and Racism
Comments in "Korean Language, Culture and Racism" discuss language, stereotypes, and social criticism from various perspectives on Korean culture. Discussions in the comments highlight cross-cultural interactions with complex dynamics, such as admiration for Korean culture intertwined with social criticism and prejudice, illustrating the tension between local and global values.

Topic 9: Emotional Reactions and Criticism of K-Dramas
Comments on K-Dramas on this topic, especially True Beauty, reflect viewers' relationships with the story, characters, and viewing experience in the form of emotional reactions and criticisms of K-Dramas. Comments illustrate how K-Dramas serve as a space for cultural interaction while acting as a medium that evokes nostalgia, sparks critical discussion, and encourages reflection on local and universal values.

Topic 10: Children and Family Responsibilities
Comments on "Children and Family Responsibilities" provide insight into the dynamics of family life, child rearing, and social values surrounding the number of children, education, and parental responsibilities. Comments on this topic range from social critique to expressions of personal aspirations, all of which are linked to contemporary cultural dynamics.

Topic 11: Favorite K-Drama Actors and Actresses
Comments in this topic reflect various preference patterns for favorite Korean actors, actresses, and dramas. Comments show viewers connect emotionally with characters and stories that resonate with their desires or aspirations. Most viewers associate their favorite dramas with their preferred actors or actresses, although their alignment is inconsistent.

Topic 12: Representation of Indonesia in K-Dramas: Between Fiction and Fact
Comments on this topic show a variety of responses to the portrayal of Indonesia in K-Dramas (related to the badminton theme) regarding issues of cheating, inadequate facilities, and negative stereotypes. The portrayal of Indonesia in K-Drama stories as cheating organizers or providing poor facilities tarnishes the country's image and is unethical, even in a fictional context. Some comments suggest that such stories should be removed and replaced with more inspiring ones that show greater respect for other countries and cultures.

Topic 13: Various Attitudes Towards Korean Pop Culture
The comments in "Various Attitudes Towards Korean Pop Culture" highlight various views on Korean pop culture, especially K-Drama and K-Pop. Discussions in the comments show that people's preferences vary, with some preferring anime or other cultures over Korean culture. There are also humorous and critical opinions about the relationship between fans and Korean culture.

Topic 14: National Pride/Dignity
Comments on the topic "National Pride/Dignity" reflect various perspectives on the relationship between Indonesia and South Korea and issues of nationalism. Most comments expressed disappointment over insults from the Korean side toward Indonesia, particularly in sports and

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culture. Some also highlighted the lack of pride among Indonesians in their nation, especially when supporting local talents who succeed abroad. On the other hand, some comments encouraged introspection, suggesting that criticism from external parties should serve as motivation for improvement. However, there were also expressions of anger and frustration, emphasizing the need to maintain national pride. Overall, this topic illustrates the complex emotions surrounding nationalism, frustration with social realities, and hopes for national progress.

5. Discussion

5.1. Indonesian Audience Perceptions of K-Dramas: Four Key Themes

The results of the topic modeling analysis of Indonesian viewers' comments on K-Drama on YouTube showed 15 different topics. These topics range from discussions about narrative and characters to broader social and cultural issues. Of the 15 topics, several are related to each other, making it possible to combine them. After data processing was carried out, the combination of these topics resulted in four main themes:

a) Korean Drama and Entertainment – This theme encompasses discussions about the general appeal of K-Dramas, their storytelling techniques, and the visual aspects of production. It includes the following topics:
- Topic 0: Korean Drama and Entertainment
- Topic 1: Film and Daily Life
- Topic 5: Video and Visual Entertainment
- Topic 11: Favorite K-Drama Actors and Actresses

b) Cultural Representation and Social Issues – Audiences often reflect on how K-Dramas depict culture, language, and social issues, including how Indonesia is represented in these dramas. This theme includes:
- Topic 3: Netizens and Korean Culture
- Topic 8: Korean Language, Culture, and Racism
- Topic 12: Representation of Indonesia in K-Dramas: Between Fiction and Fact
- Topic 13: Various Attitudes Towards Korean Pop Culture

c) Personal Relationships and Family Dynamics – Many discussions revolve around romantic and familial relationships and how K-Dramas portray these aspects of life. This theme includes:
- Topic 2: Social Issues and Relationships
- Topic 4: Romance and Personal Relationships
- Topic 10: Children and Family Responsibilities

d) Social Reactions and National Dignity – This theme captures the emotional and nationalistic responses of Indonesian audiences, including their reactions to perceived cultural misrepresentations, apologies from Korean public figures, and national pride. It includes:
- Topic 6: Audience Stories and Enthusiasm
- Topic 7: Reactions to Apologies
- Topic 9: Emotional Reactions and Criticism of K-Dramas
- Topic 14: National Pride

By grouping these topics into broader themes, we better understand how Indonesian audiences engage with K-Dramas—not just as entertainment but also as a lens for cultural reflection, social commentary, and emotional expression.

The "Korean Drama and Entertainment" category shows Indonesian audiences' high interest in K-Drama as popular entertainment. With interesting storylines and high production quality, K-Drama has become an important part of global popular culture (Shim, 2008). Online discussions about K-Drama form a collective identity and solidarity among fans (Maros & Basek, 2022). Comments on YouTube show viewers' emotional involvement in the story, characters, and actors. They share experiences and recommendations, making K-Drama entertaining and a social interaction space that builds a connected community (Jin, 2020).

The category "Cultural Representation and Social Issues" reflects the audience's response to Korean culture in K-Drama, especially when interacting with local Indonesian culture. The audience highlights the story's customs, values, and stereotypes, then evaluates its influence on their views. Some adapt foreign cultural elements into the local context, forming cultural hybridity (Kraidy, 2002, 2005; C. S. U. P. Park & Jo, 2024; Sintowoko, 2021). In addition, K-Drama also becomes a means to highlight social issues, encouraging the audience to compare the drama's values with Indonesia's social reality (M Santoso, 2017; Rahmawati, 2023).

This condition is reflected in how Indonesian audiences respond to the drama Racket Boys (one of the videos in the research dataset), which is seen as damaging Indonesia᾽s image and indicates a complex cultural negotiation. Instead of rejecting it outright, the audience chose to understand Hansol, a South Korean content creator who posted a clarification about the broadcast of the episode, while criticizing the drama's production team. This attitude reflects what Kraidy (2025) calls cultural hybridity, where local audiences do not just passively consume global culture but interpret and negotiate it through a socio-cultural lens. Hansol's personal connection to Indonesia−because of his extensive

experience there—led audiences to believe he understood local cultural sensitivities. Hansol's explanation helped to defuse anger and reinforced, not just diplomatically.

The "Personal Relationships and Family Dynamics" category illustrates the importance of commitment, communication, and shared responsibility in marriage and family. Loyalty is key, even if couples face distance, work, or financial problems. Infidelity is not an escape from loneliness. In families, the decision to have children is influenced by financial and emotional readiness, not just following the traditional mindset of "more children, more fortune (*banyak anak, banyak rezeki*)," which can have a negative impact on children's well-being. Children need attention and affection, not just material things. K-Drama is a medium of entertainment and a space for emotional expression related to family issues (Dalimunthe et al., 2022).

The category "Social Reaction and National Dignity" highlights the importance of maintaining local cultural identity amidst admiration for foreign cultures, such as Korea. Despite appreciating foreign cultures, Indonesian people are encouraged to uphold nationalism and national dignity. Social tensions, such as derogatory comments online, trigger reflection on internal issues such as corruption and education. Comments from K-Drama viewers often reflect social and national awareness, making dramas a means of critical reflection on their social realities and national identity (Nisrina & Najicha, 2022). Pride in local culture, achievements, and creativity is important to building a positive image and strengthening Indonesia's position as an equal in global relations.

5.2. Indonesian Audience's Attitudes and Views Towards K-Drama

Indonesian viewers express their views and attitudes towards K-Drama through various expressions, ranging from emotional reactions to criticism and suggestions. Their comments often reflect a strong emotional involvement with the characters or storyline, either in praise or dislike (Putri et al., 2019; Rahmawati, 2023). This situation indicates that viewers not only passively enjoy watching, but also respond deeply to the content of the drama. In addition to expressing emotions, viewers actively provide input regarding the plot and characters, and compare the cultural values displayed in K-Drama with local norms (An, 2022; Jin, 2018). These critical comments reflect cultural awareness and selectivity in accepting foreign influences, indicating that although K-Drama is popular, viewers still maintain a reflective and critical attitude (Longenecker & Lee, 2018).

5.3. Dynamics of Cultural Encounters between Indonesia and South Korea

Viewer comments reflect the complex cultural dynamics between Indonesia and South Korea. K-Drama is not only enjoyed as entertainment, but also as a means to understand the cultural values displayed. Viewers often relate characters and storylines to personal experiences and local social norms, creating a space for dialogue between Indonesian and Korean cultures (Kim & Ryoo, 2007). In addition to being a window into Korean culture—by presenting traditions, lifestyles, and social norms—K-Drama encourages Indonesian viewers to compare and critique these values (Jin, 2016). This interaction shows a selective process in accepting foreign culture, where viewers maintain local identities while negotiating meanings from foreign cultures (Huat, 2012). This condition emphasizes the role of popular culture as an arena for cultural encounters and value negotiation.

5.4. Patterns of Acceptance or Rejection of Cultural Values in K-Drama

The results of the comment analysis show a pattern of acceptance and rejection of cultural values in K-Drama. Some viewers accept these values as part of the entertainment, while others reject them, especially if they conflict with Indonesian social norms. The depiction of characters that are considered unethical or stereotypical often triggers critical discussions (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). Acceptance is usually seen in comments praising the story's work ethic, family closeness, or romance. Conversely, some viewers highlight the inconsistency of Korean cultural values with the local context, such as overly idealistic depictions (Jin, 2016). This pattern reflects how Indonesian viewers sort and negotiate foreign cultures, absorbing elements that align with their values and identities, while rejecting those considered contradictory (Putri et al., 2019).

5.5. The Role of K-Drama in Shaping the Indonesian Audience's Perception of Korean Culture

Korean dramas significantly shape Indonesian audiences' views of Korean culture by presenting stories and characters that depict Korean social norms, traditions, and lifestyles (Rahmawati, 2023). Some viewers adopt these cultural aspects because they feel they are relevant to their experiences. However, this acceptance is not passive; viewers also show a critical attitude by comparing the values presented in K-Drama with local culture, even rejecting elements considered inappropriate (Effendi et al., 2016). Audience comments reflect an awareness of foreign cultures'

influence and show the value negotiation process that occurs in their minds. Thus, K-Drama is not only entertainment, but also a medium that enriches discourse on local people's responses to global cultural flows, especially in the context of cultural relations between Indonesia and South Korea (Jin, 2018; Rahmawati, 2023).

6. Conclusion

This study explores Indonesian viewers' perceptions of K-Drama through topic modeling analysis of 85,840 YouTube comments on 720 videos. The results identified four main themes, namely K-Drama: entertainment, cultural representations and social issues, personal relationships and family dynamics, and social reactions and national dignity. Of these four themes, K-Drama is not just entertainment, but a dynamic platform for cultural reflection, social critique, and emotional engagement. The comments on YouTube reveal how Indonesian viewers navigate between admiration for Korean culture and awareness of their own cultural identity by expressing enthusiasm, criticism, or national pride towards the narratives and representations in K-Drama. The findings suggest that K-Drama encourages a complex dialogue between local and global cultures, allowing viewers to compare Korean values with Indonesian norms and negotiate national dignity and cultural hybridity issues. This engagement demonstrates the role of K-Drama as a catalyst for cross-cultural understanding that encourages reflection on shared values, social challenges, and aspirations in an era of global connectivity.

This study employed topic modeling using the TopMod application to analyze how Indonesian audiences engage with Korean dramas through online discourse. By identifying latent themes in audience commentary, the study reveals not only patterns of cultural admiration but also undercurrents of national sentiment, identity negotiation, and critique of misrepresentation. Based on these findings, several practical implications are proposed. First, media producers and cultural policymakers may benefit from incorporating content analysis—such as topic modeling—as a tool for gauging transnational audience sentiment prior to releasing culturally sensitive content. Second, co-productions involving Indonesian creators can be encouraged to foster mutual cultural understanding and to prevent one-sided representations.

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