



## Beyond the Korean Wave: Understanding the Motivation of Among Indonesian Gen Z to Learn Korean in the K-Pop Trend

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to uncover the motivation that drives the Indonesian Generation Z (Gen Z) to learn Korean and absorb Korean Pop culture as a lifestyle that is now increasingly trendy. Pop-Korean Language and Culture referred to in this research is the Pop-Korean language and culture used in South Korea, a language that has recently become popular with young people not only in Indonesia but in several other countries in the world. This research was designed with the aim of; 1) to reveal the motivations that encourage Gen Z to learn Korean, and 2) to measure their level of perception of Korean pop culture. The results of this research show that Gen Z's interest in Korean in the trend of K-Pop is caused by K-Pop being a trend among the younger generation. The implications of this research contribute to the reader's understanding that the cultural orientation of Gen Z is different from the Old Generation who tend to keep themselves away from new things.

**KEYWORDS:** Korean, Pop-Korea, Gen Z, Global era

### INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the world is increasingly connected through various forms of cross-cultural interaction. One emerging trend is the growing interest in learning foreign languages. Among the many language options, Korean has gained significant popularity among Generation Z (Gen Z) in Indonesia. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of many parties, including academics, industry practitioners, and cultural observers.

Undeniably, the motivation to learn Korean among Gen Z in Indonesia has become an interesting topic for further research and understanding. From pop culture phenomena to international career opportunities, several reasons underpin this growing interest, reflecting the complexity of social changes and current global dynamics.

Korean pop culture, which includes K-Pop music, television dramas (K-Dramas), films, and fashion, has created an appealing and inspiring image for many young people. Many are drawn to understand this culture more deeply because of its multifaceted allure, which seems to hypnotize its fans.

Indonesia, too, has been gripped by the Korean Wave. Various aspects of Korean culture, from dramas, films, music, television shows, cultural festivals, to Korean cuisine, have spread into Indonesia. Moreover, Korean electronic products, fashion, style, cosmetics, and other beauty products (makeup and skincare) have become familiar to the Indonesian public (Pha & Lhe, 2022; Yaumi et al., 2024; Hidayat et al., 2023).

One interesting aspect of Korean pop culture is the high-quality production and distinctive creativity in the entertainment industry. Korean dramas with deep storylines and K-Pop music with energetic dances have captivated many fans in Indonesia (Shin & Whitaker, 2023; Weda et al., 2022; WP et al., 2023). This has sparked an interest in understanding the cultural and linguistic context of Korea to better appreciate and understand their works.

Furthermore, Korea is known as a country with advanced and innovative technology. Korean companies like Samsung and LG have become global leaders in the technology industry, creating the perception that knowing Korean can open career opportunities in technology and related industries.

Moreover, Korean tourism is also noteworthy. One of the attractions of getting to know Korea better is its tourism (Somadi, 2022; Sulastri & Alleyynisa, 2024). Korean tourism is divided into cultural and natural attractions, as well as engineered attractions. Public facilities, hotels, transportation, and Korea's openness to visitors contribute to the overall development of

Korean tourism, which is widely appealing (Danney & Green, 2024; Suma et al., 2023).

This research aims to track the responses of Indonesian youth behind their motivation to learn Korean. The Korean language is closely related to Korean culture. In this context, Korean culture refers to K-Pop or what is often called Hallyu (한류), also known as the Korean Wave. The influence of popular K-Pop and K-Dramas, which are currently trending, has made many people fall in love with the entertainment industry from South Korea. It is important to emphasize that the Korean language is a target language for Gen Z in the K-Pop context, while K-Pop itself is a part of Korean culture.

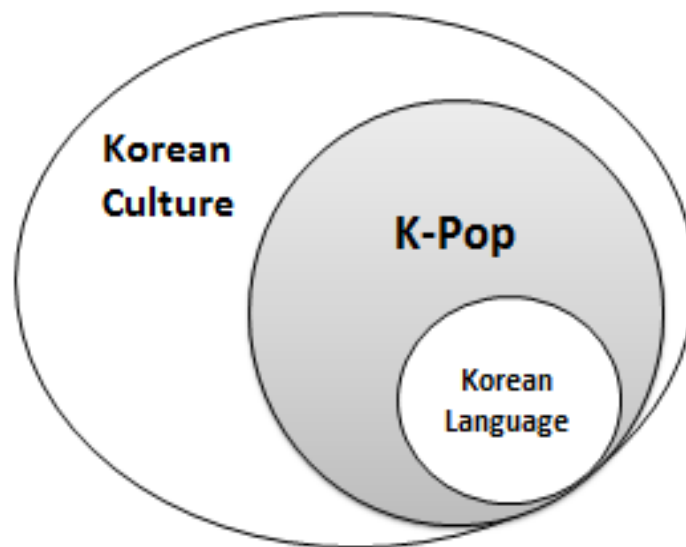


Figure 1. Korean Language as a Part of Korean Culture

Once again, the popularity of the Korean language in Indonesia cannot be separated from the presence of K-Pop in the lives of Gen Z in Indonesia. The widespread appeal of Korean culture among Gen Z should be understood as an opportunity to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby strengthening intercultural connections, which are increasingly important in the context of current globalization. Research with the topic "Beyond the Korean Wave: Understanding the Motivation of Indonesian Gen Z to Learn Korean in the K-Pop Trend" is highly relevant and should be seen as an important aspect of an increasingly borderless world.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED STUDIES

Several studies have been conducted by researchers in the field of Korean language and culture. For instance, Puspitasari & Hermawan (2013) conducted a study titled "The Lifestyle of K-Pop Fans (Korean Culture) in Expressing Their Lives: A Case Study of K-Pop Lovers in Surakarta." According to Puspitasari & Hermawan (2013), the Korean Wave spreads very quickly through social media and digital platforms that can be accessed for free. The current popularity of the Korean Wave in Indonesia, especially among millennial teenagers, presents an opportunity for some companies in Indonesia to use Korean artists as advertising stars/brand ambassadors for their products. Marketing and advertising are specifically used to market products online.

Another study by Sari & Jamaan (2014) titled "Hallyu as a Transnational Phenomenon" discusses several factors underlying K-Pop's popularity. First, unique characteristics dominate; fans are very attracted to idol groups such as boy bands and girl bands. Second, K-Pop has different characteristics from other music, as it originates from traditional music with higher commercial value. Third, the attractive physiques and handsome faces of idol group members become a major attraction in the spread of Hallyu. The beauty and uniqueness of South Korean culture are depicted by making idol group members the faces of Hallyu. Fourth, the vocal and dance skills of idol group members or other solo singers create distinctive K-Pop characteristics.

Furthermore, Leeunjung (2016) predicted the interest and motivation of Indonesian millennials to learn Korean. Leeunjung's research was published under the title "Grammatical Interference of Korean into Indonesian" in the Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics Review, Vol. 1 No. 2 (2016). This study also revealed the linguistic challenges Korean students



in Indonesia face when learning Indonesian. The article highlights that not only are Indonesian youths interested in learning Korean, but the reverse is also true.

Another perspective is provided by Valenciana, C. & Pudjibudojo (2022) in their study titled "Korean Wave: The Phenomenon of Korean Pop Culture among Millennial Teenagers in Indonesia." The key point of this research is that the widespread Korean Wave in Indonesia is inseparable from the current era of modernity. The Korean Wave spreads through gadgets, social media, and the internet, which are easily and quickly accessible, especially to millennial teenagers. Teenagers' love for K-Pop is demonstrated by their memorization of K-Pop lyrics and frequent public singing of these songs, whether in class or elsewhere.

In reality, it's not just about singing; many teenagers enjoy participating in K-Pop dance challenges that are trending on social media. K-Pop fan teenagers collect original CDs, posters of their idols, and other music-related items, as well as clothes, jackets, and hats that identify them as fans. In this era of modernization, teenagers use advanced, easy, and fast technology, such as streaming. Without needing to download, they can listen to music from their idols (Valenciana & Pudjibudojo, 2022). The results of this research were published in *Jurnal Diversita* Vol. 8 No. 2 (2022).

**Table 1. The Trend of Korean Wave (K-Pop)**

<b>Kind of Culture</b>	K-Pop
<b>K-Pop (Korean Popular Culture)</b>	Drama/Film
	Boyband/Girlband
	Actors/Actrees
	Styles
	Advertisement
	Musics

The current article is about to discuss the motivation of among Indonesian Gen Z to Learn Korean in the K-Pop trend

**BRIEF HISTORY OF KOREAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

One of the most popular languages in the world is Korean. Korean (한국어/조선말) is the most widely spoken language in Korea, and is the official language of South Korea. This language is also widely spoken in the Yanbiah region, northeastern China. It is now reported that there are around 82 million Korean speakers worldwide, including large groups in Japan, Canada, the United States and Russia. The identity of the Korean language is divided into two, some linguists call it an isolate language, but others call it a language originating from the Altaic group. There are also those who say that Korean is related to Japanese.

According to Pae, (2024) Hangeul is the original Korean language writing system, both syllabic and phonetic. Several Sino-Korean characters (Hanja) are also used to write Korean, although Hangeul is the most common and more than 75% of Korean vocabulary consists of words formed from Hanja taken from Mandarin.

In the 15th century King Sejong introduced this letter which was then called Hunmin Jeongeum. However, the term Hangeul only became known at the beginning of the 20th century (Jieun & Jiyoun, 2021). After Hangeul was used, Hanja was still used, and at the same time Hangeul was used by uneducated people, both women and children.

Over the course of its development, Hangeul became increasingly popular until the beginning of the 20th century, the use of Hangeul and Hanja was balanced. Some linguistic evidence is now only found in academic and official writings, while almost all signboards, roads, directions, and even informal writings are written in Hangeul (Pae, 2024; Weda et al., 2021). Like most languages in the world, Korean also has several dialects that complement each other. Each region can understand other dialects.

Next is about Korean pop culture which is currently popular with Gen Z. In recent years, the Korean Wave/Hallyu (한류) phenomenon has been booming in several countries. This happens because South Korea continues to expand its culture to decorate community life throughout the world. South Korea continues to develop and innovate to present a variety of products that have succeeded in dominating and being successful at the world level.

Korean culture and lifestyle have become popular culture in several countries, one of which is Indonesia. Korean Wave or Korean wave is a translation of the word Hallyu (한류). Han (한) is "Hankuk" which means Korean and Lyu (류) which means flow. This term was first coined by mass media from China. Beijing Daily Youth was the media that first used the term Hallyu



to report on the successful holding of a K-Pop idol group concert in Beijing in November 1999 (Lee, 2000:33). Since then, popular depictions of South Korean culture abroad have used the term Hallyu. Korean Wave (in English) or Hallyu is a South Korean cultural wave phenomenon which consists of several cultural contents, namely K-Pop, K-Drama, K-Fashion, K-Beauty, K-Food, and so on (Valenciana & Pudjibudojo, 2022).

In the entertainment industry, not only in Southeast Asia but also in America and Europe, Korean boy bands and girl bands have made significant inroads. At the 92nd Academy Awards, South Korea achieved a remarkable feat by winning four Oscars with the film "Parasite," surpassing other contenders such as The Irishman, Jojo Rabbit, Joker, Little Women, Marriage Story, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, and Ford vs. Ferrari (Sprankle, 2010). What Sprankle reports is a crucial milestone that drives Generation Z's interest in learning about the Korean language and culture.

Several Korean dramas have aired on Indonesian TV stations. In Indonesia, Hallyu began with the broadcast of drama series (K-Drama/한국드라마) on one of the television stations. The captivating storylines and the presence of handsome actors and beautiful actresses have increased viewers' interest in Indonesia, especially among women.

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, is a global phenomenon that describes the popularity of Korean culture around the world, including in Indonesia. The Korean Wave encompasses various cultural aspects, including music (K-Pop), television dramas (K-Drama), films, fashion, food, and Korean lifestyle. This wave has become one of the most influential cultural phenomena in recent decades.

Hallyu (한류), or the Korean Wave, often referred to as the Korean wave, is a term known to the public due to the spread of Korean pop culture worldwide, including in Indonesia (Shim; 2006). In Indonesia, the Korean Wave has influenced various aspects of society, especially among teenagers and young adults. K-Pop music has become widespread among music fans in Indonesia, with groups like BTS, Blackpink, Exo, and Twice gaining immense popularity. K-Pop concerts in Indonesia consistently attract and draw thousands of fans.

Additionally, Korean dramas (K-Dramas) also have a loyal fan base in Indonesia. Popular dramas like "Descendants of the Sun," "Goblin," and "Crash Landing on You" have successfully captured the attention of Indonesian viewers with their intriguing stories, strong characters, and stunning filming locations (Kanozia & Ganghariya).

The influence of the Korean Wave is also evident in the lifestyle and trends in Indonesia. Korean fashion, including clothing, accessories, and hairstyles, often serves as inspiration for many Indonesians, especially among the youth. Korean food is also becoming increasingly popular, with Korean restaurants and food stalls spreading across various cities in Indonesia.

Moreover, the Korean Wave has become a driving force in strengthening the relationship between Korea and Indonesia, in terms of culture, economy, and tourism. The increasing number of Korean tourists visiting Indonesia and vice versa, as well as business collaborations between the two countries, are concrete evidence of the positive impact of the Korean Wave in enhancing the relationship between the two nations.

Thus, the Korean Wave continues to be a significant phenomenon in Indonesia, playing a crucial role in shaping and influencing popular culture and intercultural relations in this era of globalization.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the phenomena mentioned above, the objectives of this research are formulated as follows; 1) to reveal the motivations that encourage Gen Z to learn Korean, and 2) to measure their level of perception of Korean pop culture

To achieve the research objectives in question, research data was obtained through a questionnaire given to a group of Generation Z students studying at universities by asking two important topics, namely the issue of Korean language and culture.

## METHOD AND SOURCES OF DATA

Exploratory qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand a phenomenon. This approach emphasizes efforts to describe something from the perspective of individual experiences and understandings of a phenomenon. Exploratory qualitative research can be used to understand how the Korean Wave influences the perceptions, preferences, and behaviors of consumers in Indonesia related to Korean music, dramas, fashion, and lifestyle. The theory applied in this research is phenomenological explorative theory.

The research data is sourced from questionnaire data given to groups of students who are interested in the Korean language and culture, with a total of 40 respondents determined purposively. These respondents are aged between 20-24 years, born since

the year 2000, and categorized as Generation Z. The respondent clusters can be seen in the graph below;

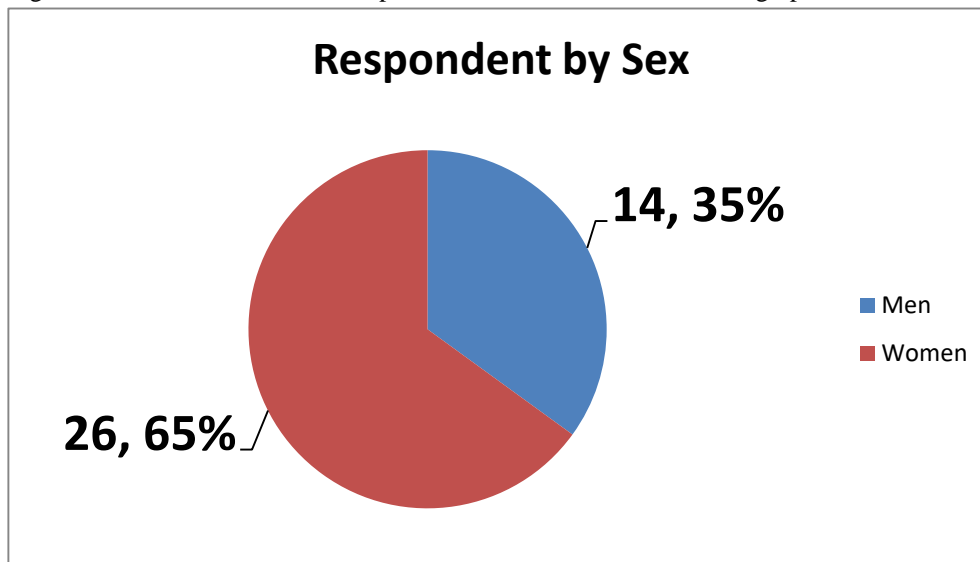


Figure 2. Respondents by Sex

To obtain research data, the researcher prepared a questionnaire with ten questions specifically directed at answering linguistic phenomena regarding how to reveal the reasons for learning Korean in relation to respondents' interest in K-Pop. The questionnaire design is as follows;

Table 2. Questionnaire for Respondents

No	Questions: (State Reasons for Learning Korean Language!)	Yes	No	No Answer
1	Learning Korean language is fun.	36 (90%)	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)
2	Wanting to greet Koreans when encountering them at tourist spots or elsewhere.	33 (82.5%)	2 (5%)	5 (12.5%)
3	Enjoying cultural content such as Korean dramas and films.	29 (72.5%)	9 (22.5%)	2 (5%)
4	Opening access to broader educational and career information sources.	21 (52.5%)	12 (30%)	7 (17.5%)
5	To understand the lyrics of favorite K-pop songs directly.	35 (87.5)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)
6	To better understand various aspects of Korean culture and society.	32 (80%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)
7	Understanding some terms and expressions in the Korean language.	34 (85%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)
8	Trending among the youth.	38 (95%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)
9	Facilitating opportunities to work in Korean companies in Indonesia.	32 (80%)	6 (15%)	2 (5%)
10	Wanting to vacation in Korea.	13 (32.5%)	15 (37.5)	12 (30%)



This question covers two aspects, namely the issue of motivation to learn Korean and the interest of respondents regarding K-Pop which is currently popular with Gen Z in Indonesia. The answer options available are Yes (confirm to the question), No (to refuse the question), and No Answer (the choice does not belong to the Yes and the No).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Two important things are discussed below respectively a) Finding and b) Discussion;

**RESULTS**

Based on the results of the questionnaire (see Table 1), the respondents' responses are as follows;

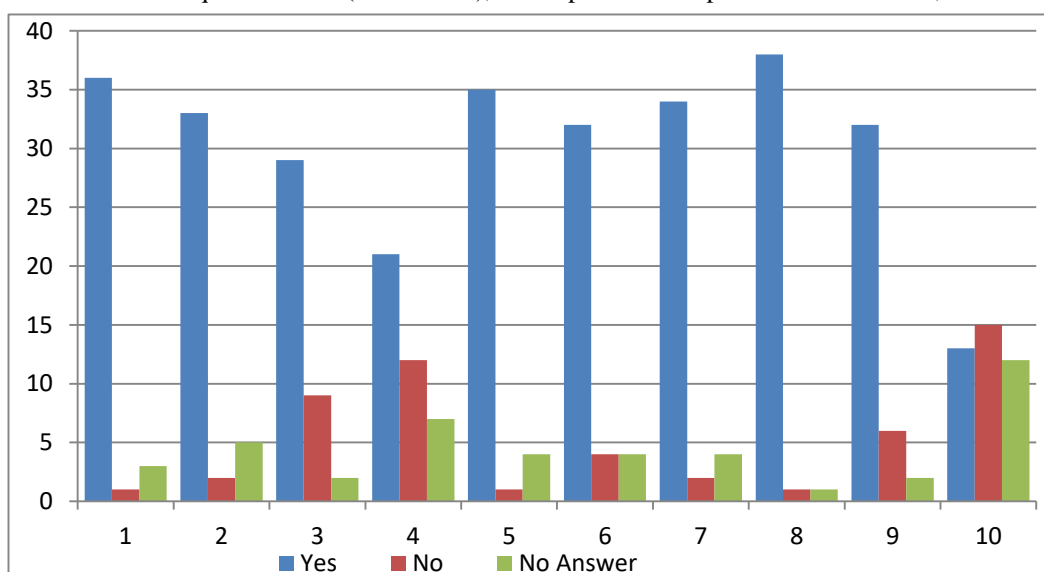


Figure 3. Responses of Respondents

With a presentation like this, the respondent's responses can be clearly mapped as to the percentage of each answer cluster. The No only stands out on questions 3, 4 and 10, but for the No Answer, the highest answer is on number ten. Once again it needs to be emphasized that this response does not differentiate between men and women.

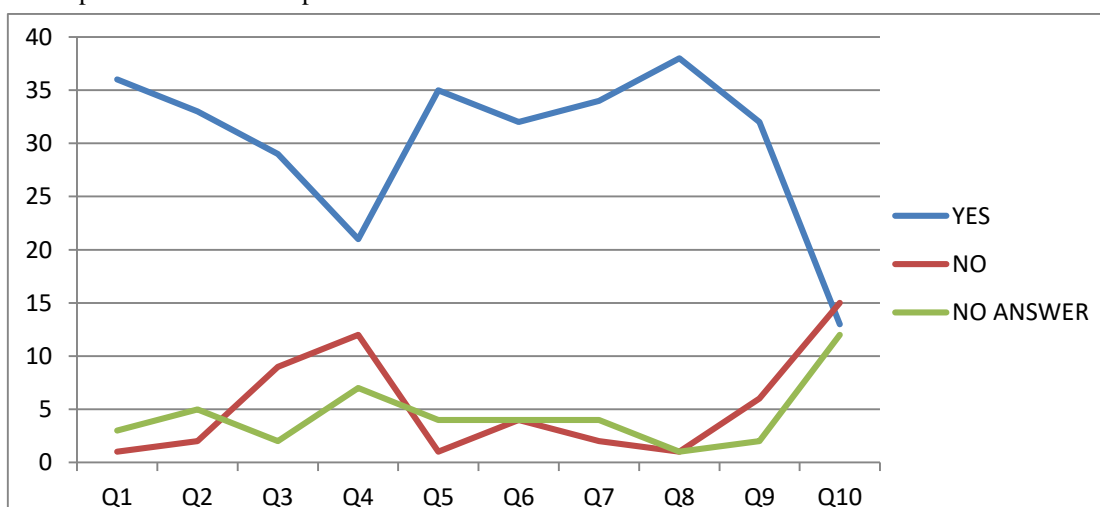


Figure 4. Response of Respondents



Based on Figure 4 above, it is clear that the respondents' answers are predominantly 'yes,' indicating a strong motivation among Gen Z to learn the Korean language for various reasons, as revealed through the questionnaire.

Thus, the acceptance of K-Pop among young people shows that K-Pop culture has its own appeal that aligns with the lifestyle of the youth. This is certainly strong evidence that the desire of Generation Z to learn about K-Pop culture serves as a unique motivation to study the Korean language, even if only for limited needs.

## DISCUSSION

This research reveals the motivation behind the interest of Gen Z in Indonesia to learn the Korean language in the context of the K-Pop trend. The research results indicate that the main factor driving Generation Z to learn the Korean language is the strong influence of Korean pop culture, especially K-Pop, which has become deeply rooted in their lifestyle. One of the main motivations is the influence of K-Pop and K-Dramas, where respondents want to understand the cultural content more deeply, such as song lyrics and dialogues in dramas, which enhance their experience as fans. Additionally, the desire to interact directly with Koreans in the context of tourism and cultural events is also an important reason. Gen Z sees learning the Korean language as a way to access broader educational and career information, especially in the technology and entertainment industries.

Referring to the questionnaire results (Table 2), ten responses to the questionnaire questions selected YES are seen in questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Notable responses with a NO answer are found in questions 3 (Enjoying cultural content such as Korean dramas and films), 4 (Opening access to broader sources of education and career information), and 10 (Wanting to vacation in Korea). Specifically, for question 10, once again, there is almost an equal distribution between YES, NO, and NO Answer. Question 10 reads; State Reasons for Learning Korean!, Wanting to vacation in Korea. The top five responses for each question of State Reasons for Learning Korean, no 8 (because it's trending among young people), 1 (because learning Korean is fun), 5 (To understand the lyrics of favorite K-pop songs directly), 4 (to open access to broader sources of education and career information), and 2 (Wanting to greet Koreans when meeting them at tourist attractions or elsewhere) range from 82% to 95%. The answers indicate the real conditions of the research goal to understand the Motivation of Among Indonesian Z Generation to Learn Korean in the K-Pop Trend..

Trends that are currently popular among young people also drive the interest in learning the Korean language. The lifestyle influenced by Korean fashion, music, and culture makes Gen Z want to be more involved and participate in these trends, feeling like a part of the global community that enjoys and supports Korean culture. Generation Z's perception of Korean pop culture is highly positive, seeing K-Pop and K-Dramas as cultural products with high quality and distinctive creativity. This is reinforced by respondents stating that they enjoy Korean cultural content because of its uniqueness and visual appeal, as well as its engaging stories.

This research confirms that globalization plays a significant role in the spread of culture and language, with the phenomenon of the Korean Wave or Hallyu being a concrete example of how a country's culture can influence and be accepted by people in other countries through media and digital technology.

## CONCLUSION

This research employs a response tally method by providing questionnaires to respondents with a number of questions reflecting the reflection of the phenomenon, namely data related to Korean language and culture within the Korean Wave trend. Several key points as conclusions of this research are; 1) the Korean Wave has been a driving force in enhancing relations between Korea and Indonesia, both culturally, economically, and in tourism, 2) the motivation to learn Korean language is greatly influenced by respondents' interest in the booming K-Pop scene, which is popular among Generation Z in Indonesia, and 3) K-Pop has its own allure because it aligns with the fashion trends of young people's lifestyles.

The results of this research indicate that the interest of Generation Z in Indonesia to learn the Korean language is driven by the strong influence of Korean culture, especially K-Pop and K-Dramas. This is also driven by factors such as access to information, career opportunities, social interaction, and lifestyle trends, which reinforce their motivation. Respondents' responses show a dominance of 'Yes' answers in the questionnaire, confirming their interest in K-Pop culture regardless of gender.



This research provides valuable insights for various parties to harness this trend in the development of educational programs, marketing strategies, and stronger bilateral relations. Thus, the phenomenon of the Korean Wave continues to be an important aspect in the lives of young people in the era of globalization, without sacrificing their identity crises.

The recommendations of this research, besides fostering studies of popular foreign languages and cultures that are developing in Indonesia among Generation Z, can also serve as a reference for further research with relevant studies. As global citizens, Indonesian Generation Z can get to know foreign cultures while still maintaining a love for the local culture of their homeland.

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