

# ***The Craze of "Korean Women": A Study on the Impact of Korean Film and Television Cultural Output on the Self-Identity of Chinese Female Youth***

**Xinnan Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

*a. xwan750@uni.sydney.edu.au*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** The impact of the transnational flow of Korean cultural products on Chinese Female youth has received widespread attention. However, there is still a lack of specific analysis on how the image of "Korean women" in these cultural products affects the self-identity and femininity of young Chinese women. This paper analyzes the popularity of the image of "Korean women" among Chinese Female youth and its impact on their self-image and personal empowerment through a questionnaire survey, revealing the differences between this image and the traditional Chinese female image and the duality it brings. The results show that although the image of "Korean women" has promoted women's personal expression and self-identity to a certain extent, it may also challenge traditional female values. Therefore, this paper suggests that future research should pay more attention to the evolution of women's images under cross-cultural influences, explore how to promote positive effects on women's self-expression while respecting traditional culture and provide predictive analysis and suggestions for the development trend of Chinese youth culture.

**Keywords:** Korean Film and Television, Korean Women, Chinese Female Youth, Female Roles

## **1. Introduction**

Korean pop culture has been widely spread in China since the 1990s, triggering the "Korean Wave" phenomenon. It has gradually become a dominant force in youth culture, influencing all aspects of Chinese youth [1]. Among them, Korean film and television, as its representative cultural products, are crucial to tracing cultural dissemination. Especially after 2010, the "revamped" Korean film and television after the end of the Korean economic crisis showed a new female role model and concept that attracted most Chinese female youth [2]. Because the previous popular Korean dramas were more about the "Cinderella" storyline, it emphasizes that men are the primary breadwinners and women are secondary or housewives [3]. It is similar to the social roles and responsibilities that women have always been expected to have in traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, when Korean film and television culture introduces such new female concepts and forms of expression, it may challenge these traditional norms. With the widespread dissemination of social media, the term "Korean women" has appeared in the vision of more Chinese youth and has been widely disseminated and discussed by many female college students. Even on some social media, the image and golden

sentences of "Korean women" from Korean films and television are constantly intercepted and disseminated, causing some female college students to begin to admire and learn this attitude towards life.

However, with the development of globalization and the Internet, more and more positive meanings have been given to the "Korean women" group. After different understandings, whether this is a recognition or a burden, real life sends the opposite signal.

Therefore, this article will study the impact of the female image in Korean dramas on the culture of Chinese female youth. Moreover, think about whether the image of "Korean women" in Korean film and television has brought new shackles to Chinese female youth while helping them break the traditional female role norms. What challenges does this bring to their self-identity?

## 2. Research Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

The research topic of this study is to explore the impact of the image of "Korean women" in Korean films and television on the self-identity of Chinese female college students. Through questionnaire surveys, this paper tries to understand the views of Chinese female college students on female characters in Korean dramas and their impact on themselves. Questionnaires can help researchers quickly and accurately obtain a large amount of information. Moreover, subjective ideas can be converted into objective data to conduct quantitative analysis and understand the development trend of the problem. It can help this study analyze its causes and critically analyze the impact of promoting young Chinese women's self-identity and diversity development.

The questionnaire of this study is divided into three dimensions. First, by asking for the essential information and personal preferences of the respondents, the popularity of Korean dramas among the audience is analyzed. Secondly, by asking about the purpose of watching Korean dramas and the impact of Korean dramas on the concept of love, the impact of Korean dramas on personal emotions and psychological state is evaluated. Finally, some scales and open-ended questions are used to investigate the respondents' views on shaping social and gender concepts in Korean film and television culture. It helps to collect deeper personal insights and detailed information.

In addition, this study surveyed Chinese female college students in school and distributed 183 questionnaires, of which 138 valid questionnaires were collected. Among them, 29 young female respondents live abroad, and 109 young female respondents live in China. In this context, since overseas and Chinese have different educational concepts, which leads to different ways of thinking among young people, this paper will focus on understanding whether there are differences between the two.

### 2.2. Research Findings

Through the questionnaire survey, data were collected and analyzed, and it was found that in the process of watching Korean dramas, 39.86% of the young Chinese women interviewed felt gender identity and 11.59% felt identity. 29.06% felt both. In addition, 63.83% of the respondents recognized and yearned for the independence of female characters in Korean dramas. This shows that the Chinese young women interviewed recognized and agreed with the new female role models and concepts presented in Korean film and television works.

In addition, the female characters in Korean dramas are all exquisitely made up and have good figures. It has affected the aesthetic preferences of Chinese female teenagers to a certain extent. They began to imitate and learn the dress and makeup of female characters in Korean dramas and even the poses for taking photos. According to the survey, 31% of the young Chinese women interviewed felt anxious about this, and 7.9% of the people had already proposed the idea of plastic surgery. To a

certain extent, this has shown that Chinese Female youth still lack a certain degree of self-identity in aesthetics and face the challenge of aesthetic homogeneity.

### 3. Cause Analysis

The theory of soft power can explain both of the above phenomena. That is, when Korean film and television are a kind of soft power, they impact the self-identity of most young Chinese women with the independent image of "Korean women" that breaks traditional norms. However, when Korean beauty standards and fashion become a kind of soft power culture, Chinese Female youth want to be consistent with the cultural norms spread through Korean media. It requires critical acceptance to a certain extent. Because China's traditional aesthetic is that women must be generous and dignified [4]. However, according to the above Analysis, it can be found that Korean women pursue the so-called childish aesthetic and have influenced the mainstream aesthetic of Chinese youth to a certain extent. In particular, some media distort the aesthetic of Chinese women's bodies and their body shape constraints, which seems to capture the public's aesthetic eyes only by satisfying white, young, and thin, thus making some Chinese Female youth feel anxious about their appearance and gradually giving up the recognition of their independent bodies.

However, the recognition of the image of Korean women is not only a yearning to break the cage of traditional female role norms but also reflects, to a certain extent, the limitations of Chinese local film and television culture in reflecting this type of values. As for some domestic romantic dramas produced in mainland China in the past decade, most of them revolve around the plot of "the domineering president falls in love with me" [5]. That is, the heroine gains the admiration and help of the hero through her charm. In other words, their feelings can not only blur class restrictions but also transcend the barriers of different cultures to a certain extent [5]. Thus, they can satisfy the longing and fantasy of most Chinese young women for love. However, TV dramas of this type also hide gender inequality to a certain extent through romantic relationships. They still contain the role of women who need to be redeemed. However, the female image in Korean dramas after "renovation" emphasizes the unique and conscious female image and even shows a new binary relationship replacement in some Korean dramas [6]. Thus, the audience can see the awakening of women's self-consciousness and establish a new narrative belonging to women. Therefore, under the traditional themes of Chinese local film and television culture, the independent image of "Korean women" in Korean dramas is attractive to Chinese Female youth. They point out that women do not need to rely on anyone and can achieve their ideal life with their abilities.

Part of the reason for the homogenization of aesthetics is that Korean TV dramas have packaged a large number of entertainment stars [2]. In particular, female characters in Korean dramas often embody idealized beauty standards, including flawless skin and a slim figure. As a result, young Chinese women influenced by these portrayals use the aesthetic standards in Korean dramas as a barometer of beauty and use various means to achieve what they consider an ideal state. Of course, the most basic method is to use skin care procedures or improve makeup skills. However, because some girls set high standards for themselves, they pay too much attention to their "shortcomings" and have the idea of plastic surgery. In other words, although this aesthetic has promoted Chinese Female youth to explore various beauty methods, it has also set an unattainable standard invisibly, making some women dissatisfied with their natural appearance, which may lead to appearance anxiety or even inferiority. Therefore, this aesthetic pursuit needs to be critically examined. The idealized image created by society and the media often ignores individual differences and the value of natural beauty. Mainstream aesthetic standards should not be the only criterion for evaluating women's appearance.

In summary, Korean dramas' impact on young Chinese women is complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, Korean dramas have promoted the redefinition of gender roles and the internationalization of aesthetic standards. On the other hand, it has also brought challenges to

personal self-identity and appearance satisfaction. China's youth cultural development organizations should learn from these influences so that Chinese female youth can find their place and identify themselves with the cultural influence of globalization. It is a cultural adaptation process that manifests personal growth and social progress.

## 4. Impact Analysis

### 4.1. Analysis of the Current Status of Gender Identity

Based on the above analysis of the survey report, it can be found that Korean pop culture can influence and shape the audience's roles and behaviors to a certain extent [7]. This impacts Chinese Female youth's self-identity and aesthetic standards differently. At the same time, with the promotion of globalization and modernization, as well as the development of the Internet and mobile media technology, Chinese audiences' exposure to other foreign TV series has rapidly expanded and become more and more common [4]. Of course, the storylines of TV series in different countries about social composition are often different. For example, compared with traditional popular Korean dramas and Chinese TV series, most American dramas present more "independent" plots; women do not need to rely on anyone, and they can live a happy life on their own [5]. In other words, for young Chinese audiences. American dramas also provide an alternative space for them to understand the gender relations of other societies, thereby encouraging young Chinese women to express their personalities. This will also affect their values regarding family, social relations, and careers to a certain extent. So that they are no longer bound by traditional norms for women in all aspects.

The popular culture of different countries has had a certain degree of influence on Chinese youth culture with the development and spread of globalization. From a positive perspective, they have promoted the gender identity of young Chinese women by developing a role structure different from that of Chinese TV dramas. They have also been deeply influenced by Korean and American TV dramas' values, inspiring young Chinese women to pursue their values. This positive influence has also led to more profound cultural exchange and understanding. That is, not only should a new female narrative be established in film and television culture, but a female discourse center should be developed in daily life and cultural construction to meet the self-esteem and self-reliance awareness of today's female audiences while also satisfying the source of motivation for modern independent women to work hard for their future lives [8].

### 4.2. Analysis of the Current Status of Aesthetic Standards

Some merchants perceive this aesthetic standard as a popular culture among young Chinese women. Therefore, their clothing will focus on catering to the popular trend of "thinness," resulting in a series of "BM" girls, which means that all clothes only have one "S" size, causing some girls to have body anxiety and start an unhealthy weight loss process. Although this is just a marketing method merchants use to make profits, does it also reflect the current popular trend to a certain extent? That is, it seems that only girls who can fit into the S size will be regarded as having a "good" figure, or only a sexy appearance can be considered a "beauty" in the eyes of others. Of course, this combination of pressure from my inner self and the external environment will cause some young women to gradually lose themselves in the aesthetic standard of "white, young, and thin," losing their aesthetics and their uniqueness. It has weakened the self-identification of "beauty" among young Chinese women to a certain extent, leading to the homogenization of aesthetics.

In addition, on the negative side, people are worried about cultural homogenization, in which the dominant culture obscures and erodes local traditions and identities. It is particularly evident in the case of Chinese Female youth being attracted by the aesthetic standards shown in Korean dramas, which puts tremendous pressure on young women to continue to follow these so-called mainstream

beauty standards. In particular, the fear of being judged and rejected by others based on appearance exacerbates the psychological problems of women who are more "non-mainstream" in terms of aesthetic standards, leading to a vicious cycle of dissatisfaction with their body and appearance and low self-worth among young women. However, it is worth noting that advocating for self-acceptance and mental health is more important than adhering to mainstream aesthetic standards [9]. Therefore, China's youth culture development sector should promote the media to disseminate content that promotes body positivity and diversity. For example, highlighting a more comprehensive range of body shapes, skin colors, and ages to break the narrow beauty ideals propagated by the Korean Wave. It will lead to more inclusive and realistic aesthetic standards to mitigate the negative impact of cultural homogenization.

## **5. Inspiration for Chinese Film and Television Culture**

### **5.1. Advantages of Integrating Korean Drama Narrative Methods**

In general, Korean film and television culture has impacted my country's youth culture field. Therefore, whether it is pure spiritual culture or a model wrapped in commercial operation, it is worth reflecting on [10]. First, Korean film and television have their unique cultural paradigm, using life and humanity as the "killer weapon" to attract audiences [9]. Therefore, Chinese film and television culture can learn from Korean dramas' narrative methods and cultural concepts. In the creation process, this paper can carefully study the psychological needs of local audiences and dare to break the traditional shooting techniques and character shaping. It can not only avoid aesthetic fatigue in the content at the creative level but also meet the psychological needs of the audience to a certain extent [9]. Even if conditions permit, these psychological needs can be effectively guided to meet the audience's spiritual consumption.

### **5.2. Promote Local Aesthetic Standards**

However, the negative impact of cross-cultural communication in film and television dramas cannot be ignored. China should learn from it and develop a cultural industry [10]. Because foreign cultures have had a specific impact on the aesthetic standards of Chinese Female youth, China's youth culture development organizations should pay attention to contemporary youth's aesthetic culture and trends to advocate diverse beauty. For example, the media can be used to spread open aesthetic psychology and aesthetics with traditional cultural spirit as the core. It can help Chinese female youth reduce their anxiety about a single mainstream aesthetic and provide good soil for growth in my country's film and television industry to a certain extent [11]. For example, the screen image of the heroine can be diverse. It may also set a positive example for audiences who do not conform to the "mainstream" aesthetic and improve their self-confidence.

Generally, when disseminating foreign popular culture, China needs to maintain a clear and critical mind [11]. That is, China should not unthinkingly criticize or unquestioningly worship. This way, China can adhere to the correct value orientation in spreading Chinese youth culture and improve its shortcomings. It will align with Chinese audiences' aesthetic trends, emotions, and inner pursuits.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study shows that Korean film and television works present a new female role model and concept represented by "Korean women." It challenges the expectations of the interviewed Chinese Female youth for the role of traditional Chinese women and inspires the interviewed young women to yearn for and learn new female concepts.



However, the Korean women's aesthetics shown in Korean dramas have also influenced the aesthetic preferences of Chinese female teenagers to a certain extent. It has weakened the self-identification of "beauty" of Chinese Female youth to a certain extent, resulting in the homogenization of aesthetics and the lack of diversity based on traditional Chinese aesthetics.

These different understandings of the image of Korean women and the global development of popular culture show that Chinese Female youth have broken the stereotype of traditional female roles through Korean dramas and found their own gender identity. In addition, the challenge of aesthetic homogeneity can also help Chinese youth culture better understand the cultural needs and development trends of Chinese Female youth so that it can combine Chinese traditional culture to promote the development of the diversity of aesthetics of Chinese youth while also promoting the development of China's popular culture industry.

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