

# The Mediating Effect of Moral Values on the Relationship between Media Exposure and Attitude on Malay Muslim Young Adults' Akhlaq towards Korean Dramas

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## ABSTRACT

Malay Muslim young adults is one of the groups that has been largely exposed to the Korean dramas. A long exposure towards Korean dramas may influence their akhlaq. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the mediating effect of moral values on the relationship of media exposure and attitude on Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq towards the values in Korean dramas. 1107 respondents participated in the study. Six hypotheses are significant and accepted and one hypothesis is rejected. Media exposure, attitude, Islamic moral values and akhlaq variables are found to be related to one another. Islamic moral values variable is found to be moderate media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq instead of mediating it and Islamic moral values variable partially mediate the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults akhlaq towards the values in the Korean dramas. This study proves attitude and Islamic moral values plays a role in shaping Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq when watching Korean dramas. Even though Islamic moral values do not mediate media exposure and akhlaq, there is still a significant and positive relationship between media exposure and respondents' akhlaq thus cultivation theory still holds true in this present study. The study proves that Korean dramas can give positive benefits to its audiences, and it can be considered by Malaysian media bodies as an effective way to encourage Malay Muslim young adults to practice the positive values in their everyday life.

**Keywords:** Moral Values, Media Exposure, Attitude, Malay Muslims, Young Adults' Akhlaq, Korean Dramas

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, audiences' interest towards Korean dramas keeps on escalated among Malaysians. This can be supported by the increasing number of Korean dramas being shown on various television stations in Malaysia. One of the groups that being highly influenced by Korean dramas in Malaysia is the young Malaysians (Cho & Jang, 2013; Ing et al., 2018; Mat et al., 2019). Therefore, the researchers choose young adults as the subject in this study because they can easily be influenced by replicating the message delivered by the media. Ilakkuvan et al. (2019) stated that young adults are heavy users of social media such as YouTube and they spend more time on social media everyday compared to others and with the advancements of technology, they have more easy access to watch Korean dramas.

Malay Muslim young adults are being exposed to Korean dramas in several ways. First, they can watch Korean television drama and movies through Malaysian television networks such as TV2, TV3, and Astro channel 394, 395 and 398. Besides television, the Internet also provides many Koreans readily available drama sites for any interested audiences such as DramaFever, AsianCrush, Viu and many others. They also can use applications like Netflix or Iflix to watch Korean dramas. Korean dramas can influence fans in many aspects such as it influences their fans to visit (Bea et al., 2017) or revisit the locations of the shooting in South Korea (Lee, 2015), to consume Korean foods (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2013) and others. However, for the purpose of this study, the researchers intend to focus on the influence of values in Korean dramas towards Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq. This is because the greater the number of consumptions of Korea dramas, the greater the likelihood these Malay Muslim young adults mimic the personalities and behaviours of the Korean celebrities and idols. If the adopted moral values are aligned with Islamic teachings, there is no

problem for the young adults to practice such values, but, if they adopt moral values that are contradict with Quran and Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah, it will be dangerous. The teaching of Islamic religion slowly erodes and slowly begin to be replaced by non-Islamic practices.

It is known that the media has a strong power to influence viewers' attitude and behaviour. In today's situation, studies have reported that Malay Muslim young adults have been heavily influenced by Korean dramas. Previous studies on Korean dramas in Malaysia are focusing on the meanings of Korean dramas among Malay women (Ruslan & Abdul Latif, 2016), factors on the acceptance of Korean dramas and the similarity of Korean and Malaysian cultures in the dramas (Ariffin et al., 2018), role of Korean dramas as educational tools in developing mutual understanding between countries (Hamdan & Ismail, 2018) or on the influences of Korean dramas on visiting South Korea (Teh & Goh, 2016). However, those studies did not provide readers on how Korean dramas may influence Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq, especially when they are being exposed to values that are in accordance or In addition, Korean dramas also being said to negatively influence its viewers' behaviours such as they are not focus and procrastinate when they are doing their work, they become lazy to do their main responsibilities as student or employee and they do not get enough rest because they spend most of their time watching Korean dramas (Prasanti & Dewi, 2020). Due to this situation, the researchers believe it is significant to conduct this present study as it would lead to better understanding on the influences of values in the Korean dramas towards Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq. The objectives of the research of the current study are:

1. To determine the level of media exposure, attitude, moral values and akhlaq of Malay Muslim young adults towards the values in Korean dramas.
2. To determine the relationship between Malay Muslim young adults' media exposure, attitude, moral values and akhlaq towards the values in Korean dramas; and
3. To assess the mediating effect of moral values on the relationship of media exposure and attitude on Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq towards the values in Korean dramas.

Even though Korean dramas has entered Malaysia's market for the past two decades (Azizan, 2012), the widespread of Korean dramas is still at its height. Thus, it is important to conduct an empirical study of the phenomenon. This research may provide insights into what factors make Korean dramas wave so well accepted in Malaysia especially among Malay Muslim young adults. Another contribution of this study is it includes the Islamic perspectives on the values portrayed in the Korean dramas. By conducting this research, it will add to the body of literature on intercultural studies among Malay Muslim young adult viewers in Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Korean Drama

Korean drama is one of the main cultural products under Korean wave (Bea et al., 2017) and it has been widely accepted to many Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Among of the three Korean dramas that have started Korean fever in Malaysia are Winter Sonata, Autumn in My Heart and Full House but after certain time the popularity of Korean drama is decreasing.

However, with the rise of Korean pop music, and the advancement of Internet and technology, Korean dramas have become popular again among Korean fans. The emergence of social media applications such as Netflix, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, Internet websites which allowed Korean drama contents to be easily shared and consumed by the viewers has help to increase the fame of Korean dramas. Even though local or private television networks do air the dramas, many fans preferred to watch using other channels because they can watch the dramas either at the same time it is being aired in South Korea or less than 24 hours after it is being first broadcasted.

The next factor why Korean dramas still popular is because many Korean idols and celebrities who are in the

famous Korean pop groups are also acting in the Korean dramas. To end with, Korean dramas are very influential in which it able to influence others to learn about the other aspects of Korean wave such as Korean modern and traditional values (Abdul Latiff, 2015), Korean foods (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2013), Korean beauty and grooming (Kim & Loo, 2017) and many others. For the purpose of this study, the researchers focus on the influence of Korean dramas on Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq in terms of values. Values are the moral principles or standards of behaviour that shape an individual's character (Oyserman, 2015). They guide perceptions, attitudes, and actions, helping individuals discern what is good or bad, fair or unfair, and desirable or undesirable within society. The values portrayed in media can suggest how individuals or groups may behave, although they do not always accurately reflect real-life behaviours.

Korean dramas have gained widespread acceptance due to their ability to meet audience demands. Beyond providing warmth and relaxation after a hectic day, these dramas evoke a range of emotions for examples laughter, happiness, sadness, and pain while imparting important life lessons. According to the Korean Culture and Information Service (2015), drama creators focus on the concept of "Jeong," which encompasses human affection. This concept includes themes of friendship, family values, and love, resonating with many Asian viewers as it aligns with broader Asian cultural values. This connection is a key factor in the popularity of Korean dramas among Asian audiences.

Previous studies indicate that Korean dramas convey both noble and less desirable values. Espiritu (2011) noted that some dramas promote individualism, liberalism, and consumerism, reflecting young women's aspirations for materialistic lifestyles and wealthy partners. Conversely, Briandana (2015) found that viewers prefer Korean dramas over local Indonesian productions because they convey positive social values such as family harmony, respect for parents and elders, solidarity, politeness, loyalty, and the sanctity of love and marriage. While negative values like materialism and individualism are also present, Brianda (2015) argued that these do not significantly influence audiences because characters often evolve to embrace positive traits.

In the study by Ruslan and Abdul Latif (2016), respondents expressed mixed feelings about the cultural values presented in Korean dramas. They appreciated themes of filial piety and a sense of belonging but were critical of depictions of violence and harsh communication. As Muslim viewers, they particularly disapproved of portrayals involving alcohol consumption and revealing clothing. Effendi et al. (2016) echoed these sentiments regarding the drinking culture. However, respondents praised other values depicted in Korean dramas, such as hard work, time management, perseverance, and respect for others. These findings highlight the complexity of audience reception to cultural values in Korean dramas. Ing et al. (2018) further explored this dynamic, finding that Korean dramas impart noble values including family loyalty, friendship, love, sincerity, humanitarianism, sacrifice, and patriotism. Some respondents noted that these values align with Islamic teachings, allowing them to enjoy Korean dramas without conflict. This suggests that while certain elements may be problematic for Muslim viewers, many underlying themes resonate positively with their beliefs.

Overall, while many values embedded in Korean dramas resonate with Islamic principles such as respect for elders, sincerity, friendship, and caring for others, there are some aspects that contradict Islamic teachings, such as materialism and egoism. Therefore, Muslim fans of Korean dramas should critically assess the messages conveyed in these shows to differentiate between values worth adopting and those to avoid. Given this study's focus on assessing the mediating effect of Islamic moral values on media exposure, attitudes, and the akhlaq of Malay Muslim young adults regarding Korean dramas, the following section will delve into Islamic moral values in detail.

### **Islamic Moral Values**

In Islam, values serve as guidelines that promote and regulate Muslim akhlaq, ensuring that both individuals and society live harmoniously (Nuriman & Fauzan, 2017). These moral values are derived from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, with Allah urging Muslims to incorporate them into their daily lives. Values significantly influence people's attitudes and behaviours (Titrek et al., 2014). Key moral values practiced by Muslims include helping the needy (Stefon, 2010), caring for family and neighbours, seeking forgiveness from both Allah and fellow human beings, demonstrating tolerance (Leaman, 2006), being honest (Ali, 2015; Alkhuli, 2006), and showing kindness and compassion (Quran 2:143).

Islam emphasises the importance of hard work, helping others, and continuous improvement (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). Key moral values include politeness (Quran 2:183), respect (Quran 49:11), loyalty (Quran 49:10), sincerity (Quran 8:24), diligence (Quran 13:11), caring for others (Quran 2:143), and valuing friendship. As Imam Ali (AS) stated, “Try to have as many true friends as possible, for they are the supplies in joy and the shelters in misfortunes” (as-Sadr, n.d.).

Research conducted by Yaseen et al. (2015) highlight that Islamic moral values encompass continuous effort, cooperation, and the fulfilment of responsibilities. Similarly, Annalakshmi and Abeer (2011) and Krauss et al. (2005) discuss values such as humility, modesty, self-control, truthfulness, integrity, patience, steadfastness, keeping promises, kindness, and fulfilling social responsibilities towards parents and neighbours. These moral values significantly shape individuals’ attitudes and behaviours. Previous research indicates that moral values influence attitudes in various contexts. For example, Mohezar et al. (2016) found that Islamic values impact young Muslim consumers’ attitudes towards halal cosmetics. Additionally, Mokhlis and Spartks (2020) reported that individuals with strong moral values are less likely to engage in impulsive buying and demonstrate greater self-restraint. Based on this literature review, two hypotheses are proposed: “There is a positive relationship between attitude and moral values regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas” and “There is a positive relationship between moral values and Malay Muslim young adults’ akhlaq concerning the values depicted in Korean dramas.”

Besides, Hashim and Musa (2013) found that Islamic values influence Muslim young adult women’s attitudes towards purchasing halal cosmetic products. Another research conducted by Recker and Saleem (2014) has discovered that individual values positively affect attitudes towards organic personal care products. Consequently, hypothesis seven is formulated: “Moral values mediate the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults’ akhlaq regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas”. In this study, Islamic moral values will serve as foundational principles for developing one of the inventories. These values are classified into seven sub-values based on previously discussed Islamic principles: politeness, respect, loyalty, sincerity, caring, friendship, and hard work.

## Media Exposure

Media plays a crucial role in delivering information and significantly influences the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals, particularly those who may lack access to alternative sources of information or are in the process of forming their identities and opinions. Various platforms, including television, internet websites, and social media applications, serve as primary sources that shape the attitudes and behaviours of both young and older audiences. Gehrau et al. (2016) emphasize that television is a powerful medium capable of influencing and inspiring audiences, especially young adults and children. The frequency with which audiences are exposed to specific messages increases the likelihood that their attitudes and behaviours will be affected by those messages, a phenomenon known as the effects of media exposure. Qin (2019) conducted a study examining the influence of media exposure to Thai dramas on the precautionary measures and travel intentions of 200 Chinese tourists. After watching the drama series “Love Destiny”, respondents reported a positive perception of Thailand, which influenced their intention to travel there. This evidence suggests that long-term exposure to certain media messages can indeed influence audience behaviour. As a result, the first hypothesis of this study is formulated: “There is a positive relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults’ akhlaq regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas.”

Media exposure can also impact an individual’s moral values. Tian and Yoo (2018) distributed a survey to 983 American adults to investigate the relationship between viewing medical dramas and trust in medical professionals. Their findings indicated that exposure to medical dramas positively correlated with perceived realism, which in turn enhanced trust in physicians portrayed in these dramas. This trust extended to real-world interactions with medical professionals. In another study, Khalid and Wok (2020) found that exposure to Korean wave products, such as K-pop music and dramas, introduced young adult Malay Muslim women to positive moral values, including friendship, love, respect for parents and elders, and self-love. Based on this evidence, the third hypothesis of this study is developed: “There is a positive relationship between media exposure and moral values regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas.”



Zia et al. (2017) investigated how individual ethical beliefs mediate the impact of television advertisements for mobile networks on youth behaviour in Lahore, Pakistan. They conducted a survey with 500 respondents and complemented their findings with focus group interviews involving twelve young individuals. They found that television advertisements significantly influenced social, moral, and psychological changes in youth behaviour. Many participants expressed concern that these advertisements weakened social and moral values, negatively affecting the behaviour of young people. Based on their findings, the researchers formulated hypothesis six: “Moral values mediate the relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults’ akhlaq regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas.”

## Attitude

Attitude reflects an individual’s mental position, encompassing feelings or ways of thinking that influence behaviour (Petty et al., 2014). According to Sommer (2011), a person’s attitude can be shaped by several factors, including emotions, experiences, and knowledge. These elements contribute to one’s personality and guide specific behaviours. Aljammazi and Asil (2017) aimed to identify the influence of Turkish dramas on Saudi consumers’ attitudes and purchase intentions toward Turkish products. Their findings indicated that after watching the drama series, viewers developed a positive attitude toward Turkish products, which significantly influenced their intention to purchase them. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2020) found that respondents’ attitudes toward Korean pop music significantly affected their decisions to buy South Korean products. Based on these insights, the second hypothesis of this study is formulated: “There is a positive relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults’ akhlaq regarding the values depicted in Korean dramas.”

## Behaviour

Mtandika (2013) reported a significant relationship between respondents’ frequency of exposure to entertainment television and its role in shaping their behaviour. The influence of these programs can be either positive or negative, depending on the individual and the type of television content consumed. Consequently, she suggested that developers and broadcasters of entertainment programs should prioritize creating content with high positive values while minimizing negative social messages, as the content significantly influences audience behaviour. Similarly, Liu et al. (2020) found that exposure to mass media regarding COVID-19 preventive behaviours positively impacted respondents’ adherence to health guidelines in China. This highlights the potential for media to not only shape perceptions and behaviours in entertainment contexts but also to play a crucial role in public health messaging.

## Theoretical Framework

The present study utilizes cultivation theory as its foundational framework. Developed by George Gerbner (West & Turner, 2010), cultivation theory examines the effects of television on viewers, particularly those who spend significant time engaging with this medium. According to Gerbner (1969), cultivation theory posits that television can subtly, directly, and cumulatively influence audiences’ perceptions of reality. Gerbner categorizes viewers into three groups based on their viewing habits: heavy viewers (those who watch four or more hours a day), moderate viewers (two to four hours), and light viewers (less than two hours). He argues that those who watch television for extended periods are more susceptible to media messages and are likely to perceive what they see on television as real.

Shanahan and Morgan (1999) further discuss how long-term exposure to media content can shape viewers’ beliefs about reality, suggesting that consistent media consumption leads individuals to adopt perceptions that mirror televised portrayals. Historically, television served as a primary source of entertainment and information; however, the advent of new technologies such as smartphones, the Internet, and social media has transformed how people access content. These platforms now play a significant role in shaping viewers’ perceptions and attitudes towards various media. Given this context, the researchers believe that cultivation theory is relevant to the current study, particularly regarding the impact of Korean dramas on those who spend considerable time watching them. The theory suggests that prolonged exposure to media content influences viewers’ lifestyles and beliefs. Previous studies have validated this theory in analyzing media’s effects on behaviour.

For instance, Abdul Manaf et al. (2013) investigated the acceptance of Islamic reality shows among Muslim communities and found that most respondents viewed these programs as educational, significantly influencing their perceptions and attitudes. Similarly, Humphries (2018) applied cultivation theory to explore the effects of binge-watching horror television. Her findings indicated a significant relationship between the number of hours spent watching horror shows and beliefs about personal safety; specifically, higher viewing hours correlated with an increased perception of danger. In another study, Ali et al. (2019) utilized cultivation theory to examine the factors influencing the adoption of Korean popular culture among university students in Malaysia. The study revealed that respondents primarily accessed Korean culture through television and radio channels, leading to positive perceptions and attitudes towards it after extensive exposure to Korean dramas.

To conclude, it is evident that cultivation theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the impact of Korean dramas on viewers. The studies reviewed illustrate how prolonged exposure to media content can significantly shape perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. As viewers engage with Korean dramas, they may internalize the values and narratives presented, which can influence their understanding of cultural norms, relationships, and social realities.

### Conceptual Framework

The present study used cultivation theory as the underpinning theory. The conceptual framework is developed with two independent variables involved: media exposure and attitude. The mediating variable is moral values, while the dependent variable is Malay Muslim young adults' behaviour. The framework of this study is:

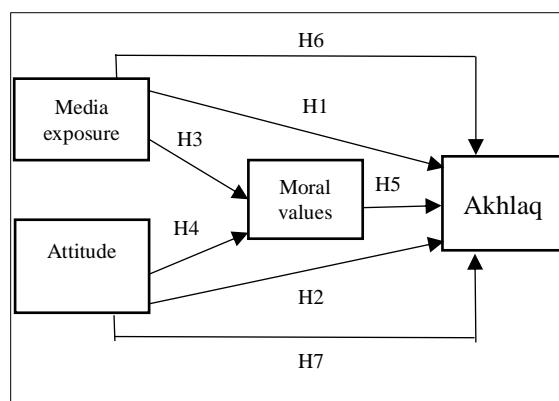


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of the study

The hypotheses for this study are:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a positive relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a positive relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas.
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a positive relationship between media exposure and moral values on the values in Korean dramas.
- Hypothesis 4 (H4): There is a positive relationship between attitude and moral values on the values in Korean dramas.
- Hypothesis 5 (H5): There is a positive relationship between moral values and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas.
- Hypothesis 6 (H6): Moral values mediate the relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas; and

- Hypothesis 7 (H7): Moral values mediate the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology that being used in the present study was quantitative methodology and the researchers used online questionnaire as an approach to collect the data from the respondents. By using this approach, the researchers obtained broader sample population and helped to obtain data faster and with affordable cost (Mander, 2017).

In this study, the researchers distributed the survey nationwide as this help to increase the generalization of the data. The questionnaire was be distributed to 1077 Malay Muslim young adults. The instructions for the survey were being informed via social media applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram and all respondents were being notified that their participation was voluntary and the answers would remain confidential. Since the researchers targeted young adult Malay Muslim who have been exposed to Korean dramas, purposive sampling technique were being chosen. This allowed the researchers to select respondents who could provide relevant information on the research topic (Creswell, 2012). The criteria to be the respondents of this study were first, they must be Malay and Muslim, second, they were young adults with age between 19 to 30 years old and third, they must have been exposed to any Korean dramas. By having these criteria, the researchers ensured that the respondents able to share relevant information about this study.

The researchers distributed the online questionnaire to Malay Muslim young adults across Malaysia via social media applications such as Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp from 06th December 2020 until 15th December 2020. The researchers used online questionnaire due to Malaysia's COVID-19 restriction movement control order. To invite the respondents to answer the questionnaire, the researchers used both Malay and English languages. Each one of the respondents was required to answer all of the questions in the questionnaire. From the online questionnaire, the researchers used Microsoft Excel to record the shared responses. Later on, the researchers transferred those collected data to IBM SPSS statistics to be analysed.

## FINDINGS

A total of 1077 respondents participated in the study as displayed in Table 1. The biggest group was those who spent two to four hours watching Korean dramas in a day (39.6%) or also known as moderate viewers and the least was those who spend four hours and above (21.1%) or also known as heavy viewers. And 39.4% of the respondents are light viewers in which they only spend one hour or below to watch Korean dramas in a day. This probably because most of the respondents are full-time students followed by full-time working which means they cannot spend much time watching Korean dramas as they were preoccupied with other responsibilities

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	215	20.0
Female	862	80.0
Total	1077	100.0
Age (Years Old)		
18 – 20	552	51.3

21 – 23	393	36.5
24 – 27	65	6.0
28 – 30	67	6.2
Total	1077	100.0
Education level		
SPM/STPM	98	9.1
Foundation	30	2.8
Diploma	455	42.2
Bachelor’s Degree	453	42.1
Master’s Degree	37	3.4
PhD	4	0.4
Total	1077	100.0
Employment status		
Full-time student	896	83.2
Part-time student	6	0.6
Full-time working	106	9.8
Part-time working	26	2.4
Not working	43	4.0
Total	1077	100.0
Time spent		
One hour or below	424	39.4
Two to four hours	426	39.6
Four hours and above	227	21.1
Total	1077	100.0

Next, Table 2 shows the existence of a significant, positive, and weak relationship between media exposure and akhlaq ( $r = .248$ ,  $p = .000$ ), thus supporting H1 of the study. There was a significant, positive, and weak relationship between attitude and akhlaq ( $r = .363$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and significant, positive, and moderate relationship between media exposure and moral values ( $r = .168$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, H2 and H3 of the study are both supported. Similarly, there was a positive, moderate and significant relationship between attitude and Islamic moral values ( $r = .436$ ,  $p = .000$ ), thus supporting H4.

Furthermore, there was also a significant, positive, and moderate relationship between Islamic moral values



and akhlaq ( $r = .492, p = .000$ ), which means H5 is supported. Since hypotheses one to five are all supported, the mediating effect of Islamic moral values on the relationships of moral values on the relationship of media exposure and attitude on Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq could be tested. Last but not least, Table 2 also shows Islamic moral values variable was found to mediate the relationship between media exposure and akhlaq as the relationship between them was significant even though it was reduced from  $r = .248 (p = .000)$  to  $r = .193 (p = .000)$ . Islamic moral values also mediated the relationship between attitude and akhlaq because the relationship was reduced from  $r = .363 (p = .000)$  to  $r = .190 (p = .000)$ .

Table II: Zero-Order and Partial Correlations between Media Exposure, Attitude, Moral Values and Akhlaq

Control Variable	Variable	Akhlaq	Media Exposure	Attitude	Islamic Moral Values
None	Akhlaq	1			
	Media Exposure	$r = .248, p = .000$	1		
	Attitude	$r = .363, p = .000$	$r = .517, p = .000$	1	
	Islamic Moral Values	$r = .492, p = .000$	$r = .168, p = .000$	$r = .517, p = .000$	1
Islamic Moral Values	Akhlaq	1			
	Media Exposure	$r = .193, p = .000$	1		
	Attitude	$r = .190, p = .000$	$r = .193, p = .000$	1	

The results were further confirmed by the hierarchical regression analysis to test the mediation effect of Islamic moral values on the relationships of moral media exposure and attitude on the respondents' akhlaq towards the values in Korean dramas. As stated in Table 3, the result shows an increasement in the beta value of model 1 ( $\beta = .083, p = .013$ ) and model 2 ( $\beta = .116, p = .000$ ) for media exposure. Hence, the result indicates that Islamic moral values do not mediate the relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq but Islamic moral values moderate the relationship between media exposure and the respondents' akhlaq. Thus, H6, which states that moral values mediate the relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas is rejected. The result also shows a reduction in the beta value of model 1 ( $\beta = .320, p = .000$ ) and model 2 ( $\beta = .120, p = .000$ ) for attitude. The result indicates that Islamic moral values partially mediated the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq. Thus, H7, where moral values mediate the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq on the values in Korean dramas is partially supported.

Table III: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Moral Values on the Relationship of Media Exposure and Attitude Variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	3.363	.072		46.391	.000
	Media Exposure	.056	.023	.083	2.492	.013
	Attitude towards Korean Dramas	.191	.020	.320	9.676	.000
	(Constant)	1.686	.133		12.666	.000

2	Media Exposure	.079	.021	.116	3.809	.000
	Attitude towards Korean Dramas	.072	.020	.120	3.614	.000
	Islamic Moral Values	.443	.031	.420	14.526	.000

## DISCUSSION

Overall, the research underscores the positive impact of Korean dramas on the moral development of young Muslim Malay adults, highlighting the interplay between media exposure, attitudes, and akhlaq. The findings of the study show that the internet, social media applications, and television are the main platforms for young Muslim Malay adults to access Korean dramas. This is in line with previous research by Ilakkuvan et al. (2019) and Ali et al. (2019), who highlighted the important role of social media in popularizing Korean culture among this demographic. The current findings also suggest that respondents spend at least one hour a day watching Korean dramas, with 39.6% spending up to four hours. This duration is significant enough to expose them to certain message content that may influence their moral values (Tian and Yoo, 2018; Khalid and Wok, 2020), which in turn affects their attitudes (Aljammazi and Asil, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020) and behaviour (Briandana, 2015; Ing et al., 2018; Qin, 2019).

Watching Korean dramas fosters values such as friendship, hard work, and care for others. Korean drama teaches the viewers to value the importance of friendship in their life, to work hard in whatever they do, to be caring upon people surrounding them, to be sincere and many others. It is important to note that decision-making is influenced by moral values and behaviour (Mohezar et al., 2016; Mokhlis and Spartks, 2020). The values instilled in the Korean dramas are align with Islamic teachings. Thus, the seven values that influenced the respondents as presented in the findings section earlier, should enhance the respondents' Islamic values and beliefs. Islam encourage their followers to be polite (Quran, 2: 183), to respect others especially the older people (Quran, 49:11), to be loyal (Quran, 49:10), to have sincere intention when communicating with others (Quran, 8:24). Another three values that also being taught in Islam are Muslims must be caring (Quran, 2:143), they must appreciate friendship as Imam Ali (AS) says a person must "Try to have as many as possible true friends, for they are the supplies in joy and the shelters in misfortunes." (as-Sadr, n.d.) and lastly Muslims should work hard in their life (Quran, 13:11).

The findings also indicated Islamic moral values do not mediate the relationship between media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq as it moderates the relationship. This probably happens because the respondents are Muslims, they already aware and practice the values that are being instilled in the Korean dramas. This contradicts with the work of Zia et al. (2017) who claims youths' ethical beliefs mediate media exposure and respondents' behaviour. Instead, this study validates the arguments of the former research by Recker and Saleem (2014) who found values mediate the relationship of consumers' attitude and behaviour. The researchers believe the respondents has strong and positive attitudes towards Islamic moral values; they believe in hard work and the importance to behave positively when with others such as being caring, respectful, polite, value friendship, sincere and loyal in a relationship and all of these influences their everyday akhlaq.

Korean dramas have established themselves as a powerful medium for education and personal development. Beyond mere entertainment, these dramas provide valuable lessons that shape individuals' behaviour, enhance language skills (Dunan et al., 2022), deepen cultural understanding (Kim, 2019), and promotes emotional intelligence (Arviani et al., 2021). To leverage the positive aspects of Korean dramas while mitigating potential risks, educators, parents, and media producers can adopt various strategies that incorporate moral values, particularly those aligned with Islamic teachings.

For educators, incorporating Korean dramas into the curriculum offers an effective way to teach language skills. By selecting specific episodes that resonate with students' interests and experiences, educators can create engaging lessons that stimulate discussion about moral values aligned with Islamic teachings. This

approach not only improves students' language comprehension and vocabulary but also fosters an environment where ethical behaviour is emphasized. Through discussions around the characters and situations depicted in the dramas, students can explore important themes such as respect, loyalty, and sincerity, thereby enhancing both their linguistic abilities and their understanding of ethical conduct. Additionally, promoting media literacy is essential; educators should teach students to critically analyze the themes presented in Korean dramas. By encouraging reflection on how these themes relate to their own values and beliefs, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of the content they consume.

Parents play a crucial role in guiding their children's media consumption, particularly when it comes to watching Korean dramas. Co-viewing these dramas with children can facilitate meaningful discussions about moral values and character development. By engaging in this shared viewing experience, parents have the opportunity to highlight important traits such as respect, loyalty, and sincerity, which are often depicted in both Islamic teachings and Korean dramas. This not only allows for a deeper understanding of the narratives presented in the dramas but also reinforces the values parents wish to instil in their children. Furthermore, establishing reasonable limits on screen time is vital to ensure that children engage with content that promotes positive behaviours aligned with their moral values. By setting boundaries, parents can help maintain a healthy balance between entertainment and academic responsibilities. This approach encourages children to consume media mindfully, fostering an environment where they can enjoy Korean dramas while also prioritizing their studies. Besides, co-viewing Korean dramas can strengthen family bonds. As families discuss the characters' choices and the consequences of their actions throughout the series, they create a safe space for open dialogue about real-life situations. This interaction not only enhances communication within the family but also helps children develop critical thinking skills as they learn to analyse the content they watch.

Media producers have a significant responsibility to create content that reflects positive values and contributes to the moral development of their audiences. This involves focusing on narratives that promote essential qualities such as empathy, respect, loyalty, sincerity and other values that resonate not only with Islamic teachings but also with universal human principles. By embedding these values into their stories, producers can create engaging content that encourages viewers to reflect on their own behaviour and relationships. To enhance the quality and impact of their productions, media producers should consider collaborating with educators and cultural experts. This partnership can ensure that the content is not only entertaining but also educationally valuable and culturally sensitive. Educators can provide insights into how narratives can be structured to facilitate learning, while cultural experts can offer guidance on accurately representing diverse cultures and moral frameworks. Such collaboration is crucial for bridging cultural gaps and ensuring that the portrayal of characters and situations aligns with the values held by various audiences. By being mindful of cultural contexts and ethical considerations, producers can create content that resonates positively with viewers, fostering a deeper understanding of different perspectives and promoting social harmony. Ultimately, this approach not only enhances the entertainment value of Korean dramas but also contributes to a more informed and empathetic society. In conclusion, by strategically integrating Korean dramas into educational frameworks, fostering co-viewing practices among families, and producing content that reflects positive moral values, all stakeholders can harness the benefits of Korean dramas while mitigating potential risks. This balanced approach allows audiences to appreciate the entertainment value of Korean dramas while promoting personal development and ethical conduct rooted in strong moral principles.

## CONCLUSION

A total of 1107 Malay Muslim young adults have participated in this study. Their responses are being used to assess the mediating effect of moral values on the relationship of media exposure and attitude on Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq towards the values in Korean dramas. The study shows that many respondents are being exposed to Korean dramas through Internet websites, social media applications and television and they are positively exposed towards the media content and most of them spend between two to four hours in a to watch Korean dramas. Six hypotheses are significant and accepted and one hypothesis is rejected. Media exposure, attitude, Islamic moral values and akhlaq variables are found to be related to one another. Islamic moral values variable is found to be moderate media exposure and Malay Muslim young adults' akhlaq instead of mediating it and Islamic moral values variable partially mediate the relationship between attitude and Malay Muslim young adults akhlaq towards the values in the Korean dramas.

This study proves attitude and Islamic moral values plays a role in shaping Malay Muslim young adults akhlaq when watching Korean dramas. Even though Islamic moral values do not mediate media exposure and akhlaq, there is still a significant and positive relationship between media exposure and respondents' akhlaq thus cultivation theory still holds true in this present study. The implication of this study is it proves that South Korean dramas can give positive benefits to its audiences and it can be considered by Malaysian media bodies as an effective way to encourage Malay Muslim young adults to practice the positive values in their everyday life so all of them can be a good Muslim. Having good akhlaq can lead a society to live harmoniously in this world, to be closer to Allah S.W.T and to help them to enter the Paradise.

Despite of the positive result, there are some limitations when conducting the study such as it is challenging to persuade respondents who are full-time working to participate in the study as they are preoccupied with their work and also to balance the gender of the respondents. Thus, for future studies, it is being suggested to include more male and full-time working respondents, recruit teenagers as respondents, and cover different aspects of Korean cultural products such as Korean pop songs or Korean beauty and fashion. In addition to that, since this study only use Cultivation Theory, the researchers suggest that future research to also include Uses and Gratification theory (Katz et al., 1973) and Social Identity theory (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) as the theories of the study.

Besides, future studies could benefit from incorporating in-depth interviews or focus groups with participants to explore subjective experiences and cultural conflicts in greater detail. The current study's time limitations prevented the inclusion of these qualitative methods, which may have restricted the depth of understanding regarding how viewers interpret and internalize the moral lessons portrayed in Korean dramas. By employing these approaches in future research, scholars can gain a richer perspective on personal experiences and cultural dynamics that quantitative methods may overlook.

Additionally, expanding the analysis to critically discuss the dual influences, both positive and negative, of Korean dramas on akhlaq and moral values would provide a more balanced perspective. The current study did not thoroughly examine how these dramas promote positive moral values such as respect for elders, family loyalty, and honesty, as well as the potential negative impacts, such as the normalization of aggressive behaviour in romantic relationships or unrealistic beauty standards. A balanced analysis will enhance understanding of how these dramas can uplift while also challenging traditional moral frameworks.

Future research should investigate how variables such as age, gender, and education mediate or moderate the relationship between media exposure and akhlaq. The absence of this analysis in the current study limits insights into how demographic factors influence viewer responses. For instance, younger audiences may be more susceptible to adopting behaviours depicted in dramas compared to older viewers who might critically evaluate the content. Gender differences could reveal varying responses to portrayals of romance and conflict, while educational background may influence the degree of critical consumption of media. By examining these variables in future studies, researchers can add valuable granularity to their findings.

Finally, conducting longitudinal studies could provide insights into how prolonged exposure to Korean dramas influences viewers' moral development over time. The current study's timeframe limited the ability to track changes in attitudes and behaviours related to akhlaq as audiences engage with these narratives. By integrating qualitative methods, addressing dual influences, considering mediating variables, and employing longitudinal designs, future research can offer a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Korean dramas on akhlaq and moral values. This multifaceted approach will significantly contribute to the discourse surrounding media influence on societal norms and individual behaviours.

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