

## Idols, Ideals, and Identity: K-Pop and Indonesian Girls' Self-Perception

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### Abstract

In recent years, K-Pop has emerged as a global cultural phenomenon that exerts considerable influence on contemporary beauty standards. Central to this influence is the meticulously constructed image of K-Pop idols, who are persistently represented as slim, fair-skinned, and visually “perfect.” Disseminated extensively through digital platforms, social media, and visual entertainment industries, these representations operate as a hegemonic bodily ideal. Employing a qualitative methodology informed by a postcolonial analytical lens, this study critically examines how such idealized bodies are interpreted and internalized by Indonesian adolescent girls, and how these processes shape their self-image and identity formation within broader Southeast Asian cultural dynamics. This study argues that the idealized female body in K-Pop culture functions as a hegemonic global aesthetic that is internalized by Indonesian adolescent girls, influencing their body perceptions and identity formation while marginalizing local beauty values through processes of cultural representation and mimicry.

**Keywords:** K-Pop, Body Representation, Adolescent Girls, Self-perception, Popular Culture

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## Introduction

In recent years, Korean Pop (K-Pop) has developed rapidly into a major global cultural force (Paramita & Asmarany, 2023). Often referred to as “Hallyu” or the Korean Wave, this phenomenon first emerged in the early 2000s with the growing international popularity of Korean television dramas. A second wave followed in the early 2010s, driven primarily by the global expansion of the Korean music industry, particularly K-Pop (Paramita & Asmarany, 2023). K-Pop encompasses a hybrid musical genre that blends pop, dance, electropop, hip hop, rock, R&B, and electronic music, performed by highly produced idol groups commonly categorized as boy bands and girl bands (Santika & Bawono, 2022). Within the context of cultural globalization, K-Pop stands out as a compelling example of how the entertainment industry exports not only music, but also aesthetic values, visual styles, and lifestyles to global audiences (Santika & Bawono, 2022).

Indonesia represents one of the most significant K-Pop markets in Southeast Asia, reflecting the broader regional expansion of the Hallyu Wave from East Asia into Southeast Asia (Sari & Jamaan, 2014). Between 2011 and 2013, K-Pop experienced a dramatic surge in popularity in Indonesia, marked by frequent appearances of K-Pop idols in mainstream media and public discourse (Rinata & Dewi, 2019). Beyond functioning as a form of entertainment consumption, K-Pop operates as a symbolic cultural force that shapes tastes, lifestyles, and modes of self-expression while facilitating transnational cultural interactions across the region (Sari & Jamaan, 2014). Its influence is evident in young people’s fashion choices, makeup practices, language learning, and media preferences, as fans actively emulate the styles and behaviors of their idols. This growing engagement is further reflected in increased interest in the Korean language—such as the reported rise in language learners in Singapore—as well as the expansion of online concerts and global auditions that continue to intensify cross-border cultural exchanges in Southeast Asia (Sari & Jamaan, 2014).

The phenomenon of K-Pop in Indonesia reflects the dynamic interaction between global culture and local contexts, producing a form of cultural hybridity in popular culture consumption and identity practices among teenagers. In this process, global influences such as K-Pop do not simply replace local culture; instead, they combine with existing traditions to create new, mixed forms of identity expression. This hybridity is dynamic and generative, enriching local cultural identities by opening spaces for creativity, experimentation, and innovation (Ayu, Khasanah, Putri, Kustiana, & Purwanto, 2025).

A central aspect of this cultural engagement is fandom. As Puspitasari (2013) notes, the consumption of popular culture gives rise to fan communities, where fans actively appropriate, reinterpret, and produce meaning from the cultural products they consume. Fans function as “meaning hunters,” forming alternative cultural communities that can challenge norms, express opinions freely, and engage critically with media content (Linden & Linden, 2017). In the context of K-Pop, fans commonly referred to as K-Popers are not passive consumers but active participants who interpret and reproduce the values embodied in their idols’ performances and images (Dewi, 2021).

K-Pop idols are often portrayed as idealized figures with doll-like appearances, disciplined behaviour, and caring, positive personas. These representations create aspirational models of beauty and success, influencing fans particularly adolescent girls to adopt their idols’ fashion,

attitudes, and aesthetics as part of their own identity formation (Purwaningtyas & Oktara, 2023). Through this process, K-Pop fandom becomes both a space for personal expression and a site where global cultural ideals are locally negotiated, adapted, and integrated into everyday life. Accordingly, the massive popularity of K-Pop has transcended the boundaries of music and entertainment, making it a cultural phenomenon that influences body perceptions and beauty standards. K-Pop is easily accepted by teenagers because it features good-looking and beautiful faces, attractive styles, and catchy songs, combined with synchronized dance choreography (Novchi, Hanafi, & Arlizon, 2018). In addition to singing and dancing talent, the main aspect that K-POP idols emphasize is appearance. The visual representation of K-Pop artist who often display body shapes that are considered “perfect”, creates an ideal body construction that is widespread through social media, advertisements, and daily life styles. Beauty standards formed from the influence of the K-Pop phenomenon are also widely spread through various digital platforms such as social media, music videos, or promotional content that is intensively consumed by adolescent girls. Teenagers who like K-POP usually use media to get information about their idols, listen to songs, and access things related to K-POP in various forms, such as videos, photos, text, and audio (Sobur et al., 2018).

One of the largest segments of K-Pop consumers is adolescent girls, who are the most vulnerable group in internalizing these body standards. Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood. Experiences and biological characteristics in childhood transform into interests, abilities, and confidence in adolescence (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). During this stage, adolescents learn by observing and imitating socially accepted figures, particularly media idols who serve as role models in shaping identity and body ideals. In the context of K-Pop, this process is evident in female K-Pop fans, who eventually internalize Korean beauty standards by making the physical form of K-Pop idols a standard that must be met to be considered attractive by the public (Aristantya & Helmi, 2019). In the process of internalizing beauty standards, fans, especially teenagers who are building self-identity, can experience pressure to conform to the ideal body image given by their idols visually and symbolically. This certainly has the potential to affect perceptions of body image, and encourage dissatisfaction with body shape and unrealistic physical idealization (Aristantya & Helmi, 2019).

The term “Southeast Asia” used in this article is used as a conceptual framework to understand the global cultural dynamics at work in the region. Although the main focus of study of this article is on adolescent girls in Indonesia, the Southeast Asian context is used to situate the findings of this study within a broader cultural landscape, given that Indonesia is not separate from regional dynamics. As such, the aim of this article is to investigate how representations of the ideal body are constructed in K-Pop culture and how these representations influence the self-perceptions of Indonesian adolescent girls within the cultural context of the Southeast Asian region.

## Literature Review

The phenomenon of ideal body construction is inseparable from the social and cultural dynamics that continue to develop, including in Southeast Asia. Body representations shown in various media have created certain aesthetic standards that are often imitated by society, including

adolescent girls. A study from Putri, Novitasari, & Khoirunnisa (2021) analyzed the representation of the ideal female body in Thermolyte Plus advertisements using a semiotic approach and critical studies. The research shows that the media explicitly shapes the image of idealized women as slim, white, and fat-free. The representation is also reinforced by visual and language codes that associate the ideal body with success, confidence, and social acceptance. This overemphasis on visualization creates a singular discourse on beauty that is problematic, as it tends to exclude the diversity of women's body shapes.

Meanwhile, in the digital landscape, the influence of social media on body perception has also been highlighted. A study by Illahi, Fajar, & Saputra (2020) examined the role of social media influencers in shaping the ideal body culture and self-confidence of digital society. The study used a qualitative approach and qualitative content analysis methodology. The research findings show that influencers not only build an image of physical beauty, but also instill values and a healthy lifestyle and self-control as part of an ideal body. This reinforces the view that digital media, especially social media, is an important platform or arena for the mediation of body discourse and greatly influences self-perception, especially among adolescent girls. However, the article has not specifically addressed the context of adolescents in a focused manner.

Another study on the correlation between social media exposure and adolescents' body perception is also discussed in a study from Agustina, Zahirah, & Sholehah (2023) which directly highlights the relationship between Instagram and body perception among adolescent girls. The study used quantitative methods and took samples from adolescents aged 13-21 years. The study found that while most respondents felt unaffected by the body image on the social media they accessed, others experienced the influence of social media with decreased self-confidence and dissatisfaction with their bodies. The study was limited to a single platform, Instagram, and did not address cross-cultural issues or the influence of foreign popular culture, however, it is important to point out that the impact of media is not uniform or universal.

In the Southeast Asian context, racialized and postcolonial aspects also influence women's body perceptions. Arsitowati's (2018) study analyzed the New POND'S White Beauty advertisement that highlights how white skin is portrayed as the dominant beauty standard. The study used the ad video as a data source and critical discourse analysis. The research findings show how the beauty standards of Southeast Asian women through the representation of brand ambassadors from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The research revealed that white skin, which is associated with Korean beauty standards, is displayed as a symbol of superiority in advertisements targeting Indonesian, Filipino and Vietnamese consumers. This study, which uses Homi Bhabha's mimicry theory, emphasizes the cultural power relations between Asian countries and how Southeast Asian societies symbolically "mimic" external aesthetic values, one of which is Korean, to gain higher social status. Although this study does not explicitly show adolescents as the main subjects, it can provide a deeper understanding of body construction as a field of symbolic hegemony.

In a broader study, Oktaviani's (2022) study discusses the phenomenon of colorism as a form of social stratification in Southeast Asia. The research was conducted using qualitative methods with FGDs and literature studies and used qualitative data analysis with data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Mapping how the preference for light skin is not only a legacy of colonialism, but also the result of the globalization of intertwined Western and East

Asian aesthetic values. Using a postcolonialism and area studies approach, this research shows that skin lightening products and the idealization of whiteness reflect cultural structures that discriminate against skin colour diversity in Southeast Asia. The preference for whiteness is not merely a matter of aesthetics, but also reflects social hierarchies established since the colonial era and is still influential in the construction of beauty values today. This article is important as a theoretical foundation for understanding symbolic inequality in body representation, although its focus is still more macro and has not examined its impact specifically on the adolescent age group.

Overall, these previous studies have discussed and shown that the construction of ideal bodies in Southeast Asia is influenced by media narratives, local social structures, and interventions from outside cultures. However, most of the previous studies have not explicitly highlighted how Korean popular culture, especially K-Pop, influences the ideal body perceptions of adolescent girls in Indonesia as part of the region. Therefore, this article aims to fill this gap by critically examining how representations of the ideal body in K-Pop culture are interpreted and internalized by Indonesian adolescent girls, while reading this process within the broader Southeast Asian cultural framework. The analysis is conducted within the framework of Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, which explains how media shape social meanings through symbolic practices, as well as Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) theory of mimicry, which is relevant in seeing how colonized subjects imitate the dominant culture with ambivalence.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach by using the literature study method as the main technique in data collection. As mentioned by Creswell (2015), qualitative research focuses on compiling words. No numbers are needed to present the data. In the literature study method, data collection is carried out by tracing and analyzing information from various sources, such as books, journals, and the results of research that has been done before (Adlini, Dinda, Yulinda, Chotimah, & Merliyana, 2022). In this research, the literature study was conducted by tracing, compiling, and reviewing various written sources that are relevant to the topic of this research, namely discussing ideal body representation, self-perception of Indonesian adolescent girls, Korean popular culture, and socio-cultural dynamics in Southeast Asia. The main focus of this research is on the cultural experiences of Indonesian adolescent girls, but it is analyzed within a regional framework to reveal cross-border connections in the consumption of popular culture.

Then the data obtained was analyzed using critical descriptive analysis techniques to answer the focus of this research study, namely how the representation of the ideal body in K-Pop culture affects the self-perception of adolescent girls. The analysis is carried out by examining the construction of meaning in the literature studied. Then, it also looks at the social and cultural context behind the emergence of beauty standards believed in the Southeast Asian region.

In the analysis process, this research also relates to the theory used, namely representation from Stuart Hall to understand how media and popular culture shape and spread social meanings related to ideal body standards. In addition, Homi K. Bhabha's mimicry theory is also used to explain how Indonesian teenage girls negotiate their identity through ideal body standards under

the influence of dominant culture, especially from Korean aesthetics displayed in K-Pop. Both theories are used to facilitate the process of reading power relations and identity in the context of popular culture that has transcended national borders.

## Results and Discussion

### Representation of the Ideal Female Body in K-Pop Culture

The K-Pop industry not only creates products in the form of music that can be heard by the general public, but also constructs strong beauty standards. This is done by the K-Pop industry through the visual representation of its idols. The exclusive representation of the ideal body in K-Pop tends to feature a slim body shape, white and bright skin, a symmetrical face, and a fashionable style of clothing. These representations are not only present through music performances, but are also expanded through various media channels, such as from music videos, product promotions, to digital avatars used in virtual group projects. With the power of digital media distribution, the ideal body image in K-Pop spreads widely and across countries. Body representation in K-Pop is not just about physical beauty, but becomes an instrument of visual power that dictates how women “should” perform.

Research from Viqri (2023) shows that the K-Pop music videos of NXDE (G)I - DLE, Miniskirt AOA, and Marionette Stellar explicitly represent women's bodies as objects of spectacle and sex. The female body in some of these video clips is shown through camera angles that emphasize certain parts such as thighs, breasts, thighs, and lips, the female body is constructed as the center of attention intended for audience consumption. Thus, it can be seen that in the K-Pop industry, the female body is not only seen as a means of artistic expression, but also as a visual commodity. It also not only reinforces normative beauty standards, but also makes women's bodies a visual commodity that is consumed massively.

The representation of the ideal body in K-pop culture reflects hegemonic power relations mediated through the industry. Visual constructions are not neutral but are shaped by economic interests that position the body as both a cultural symbol and an economic commodity. Through repetitive narratives centered on visual consumption, women's bodies become embedded in entertainment production and global capital circulation. The industry enforces strict beauty standards for female idol candidates, emphasizing ideal body proportions, fair skin, and conventionally attractive facial features (Viqri, 2023). As a result, women's bodies become sites of regulation and control. K-pop thus not only presents idealized female bodies but also reproduces beauty norms that influence young women's self-perceptions.

Then, in the findings presented by Idris (2020), K-Pop girl bands and boy bands are described as having an appearance that is considered attractive and perfect by fans. Physical characteristics that are highlighted include slim bodies, fair skin, tall posture, and hair that follows typical K-Pop trends and characteristics. This indicates that K-Pop culture constructs a homogenous beauty ideal that links physical perfection with social approval, emphasizing conformity rather than diversity in body representation. These standards are not only shaped by the industry, but also reinforced by the views and judgments of fans. As a result, the bodies of K-Pop artists become symbols of beauty that influence the way women, especially fans, see and judge their own bodies (Idris, 2020).

A similar point was made by (Banurea, 2017) in her study of SNSD's Gee music video. The video presents the nine members of the girl band as “living mannequins” with tight clothes, white

skin, and graceful feminine movements. The representations in the video emphasize the concept of ideal beauty that merges with passive and consumptive beauty. However, these ideals cannot be viewed as entirely new beauty standards created by South Korea that replaced Western domination. Modern Korean beauty standards are deeply influenced by Western ideals of appearance such as fair skin, a high nose bridge, and large eyes that are popularized through mass media and the global cosmetic industry (Kwak, 2021). These ideals illustrate the assimilation of Western aesthetics that have been localized and reproduced within the K-Pop industry and South Korea's broader cosmetic culture. Consequently, the female body in K-Pop functions as a site of cultural power, hybridizing Western and local beauty norms to create transnational ideals of femininity (Kwak, 2021). In this context, women's bodies in K-Pop culture are not only constructed as aesthetic objects, but also as ideological instruments that convey patriarchal values and symbols of social status. Representational practices that emphasize the body as the visual center in entertainment performance, make women not only appear to be admired, but also controlled through symbolic constructions that regulate how they "should" look (Banurea, 2017).

Adding to this, Chen (2024) found that the representation of K-pop girl groups undergoes three stages of transformation. First, they are presented in a hyper-sexualized or infantile manner with attributes such as high heels, miniskirts, and school uniforms to fulfill the male gaze. Second, the "girl crush" trend encouraged the use of boots and leather clothing to emphasize girl power and attract a female fan base. Third, K-pop producers shaped the group concept to meet various ideologies, so members had to sacrifice authenticity for synchronization. While remaining under the dominance of patriarchal views, K-pop girl groups also exhibit the spirit of sisterhood and the influence of feminism, marking a postfeminist landscape in Korean popular culture (Chen, 2024).

On the other hand, a study by Moekajanto & Ahmad (2025) also highlighted how virtual technology reinforces the construction of the ideal body. In their study of the digital avatars of the aespa group, the virtual bodies were engineered to be slimmer, whiter, and more sensual than the members' real bodies. This shows that even in the digital world women's bodies are still reduced to visual objects based on industry-produced aesthetics. In addition, it also emphasizes that the representation of women's bodies in K-Pop does not only occur in physical reality, but also extends to the virtual realm, reinforcing the control and reproduction of unrealistic beauty standards. This form of representation in the digital realm also shows a new form of control over women's bodies, where aesthetics is constructed not only in accordance with Korean aesthetic values, but also with international market tastes. Virtual avatars show that even unreal bodies are subject to industry beauty standards, removing individual agency in determining self-representation (Moekajanto & Ahmad, 2025)

Meanwhile, a study of Blackpink in the music video *As If It's Your Last* by Amorita, Hadi, & Wahjudianata (2018) shows how the ideal body is also associated with a luxurious lifestyle. The group members' appearance is packed with expensive costumes, consistent makeup in public and private spaces, and accessories from well-known brands. This phenomenon creates an image that beauty is not only biological, but also materialistic, linking physical beauty to social class and purchasing power. These representations show that the female body in K-Pop culture is not only an aesthetic object, but also a status symbol, reinforcing the relationship between physical appearance, capitalism and social class. In addition, in Blackpink's music videos, the female body is not only represented as an aesthetic object, but also used as a tool for commercialization and reproduction of patriarchal values. Whether through the role of brand ambassadors or the

narrative of “inner beauty” that remains directed to fulfill masculine tastes, women's bodies are reduced to economic and ideological instruments in the entertainment industry (Amorita et al., 2018).

With the intensive visual dissemination of K-Pop culture through digital media platforms, social media, and online entertainment platforms, female body image in K-Pop is not only passively consumed by the public, especially K-Pop fans. However, it also shapes the way the public perceives standards of beauty and female body identity. In this context, it is important to understand that K-Pop media does not merely provide entertainment through music, but works as a representation machine that systematically shapes social meaning.

These findings are in line with Stuart Hall's (1997) idea that representation is not merely describing reality, but is an active process in shaping social meaning through language, signs and visual images. In the context of K-Pop culture, the slim, white and fashionable female body does not only appear as a visual reality, but is formed through a system of media representations that are full of meaning and ideology. This idealized body representation is consistently reproduced in music videos, product promotions, and digital avatars, making the bodies of K-Pop artists as signs that carry certain cultural messages. Through this mechanism, K-Pop media not only shows “what beauty is” but also shapes the way the public understands, assesses, and internalizes these beauty standards. In other words, the ideal body in K-Pop culture is the result of symbolic constructions that regulate society's perceptions and expectations of the female body.

### **Indonesian Adolescent Girls' Self-perceptions and Responses to K-Pop Ideal Body Representations**

Exposure to representations of idealized bodies displayed by K-Pop artists has significant psychological and social implications for adolescent girls in Indonesia. Adolescent girls are the most vulnerable group to media influences on body representations in popular culture, including K-Pop. Adolescence is a crucial phase in the formation of self-identity, because in adolescence the search for identity is often carried out through identification with admired figures or public figures. In this context, K-Pop idols become a very strong reference for many young Indonesian teenage girls, not only as idol artists, but also as beauty models and social standards.

Dwiputeri & Maulina (2015) stated that female K-Pop fans tend to make body comparisons with their idols. The comparison process has the potential to lead to body dissatisfaction when the ideal body standards displayed in the media that they see do not match the physical reality of adolescents. In addition, it also encourages extreme dieting activities and unhealthy eating habits. Thus, the beauty standards created and disseminated by various K-Pop media trigger psychological distress and body image disturbances, especially in adolescent girls who are in the process of self-formation.

Then, Paramita & Asmarany (2023) reinforced these findings by stating that there is a very significant relationship between self-concept and body perception in generation Z adolescent girls who are K-Pop fans, where when their self-concept is higher, the higher the body image, and the lower the self-concept, the lower the body image. Adolescent girls with a positive self-concept tend to have healthier body perceptions, even though they remain exposed to ideal body visualizations from K-Pop idols. Thus, building psychological resilience such as self-

confidence and self-awareness is very important, because it can be useful to deal with all forms of pressure from idealistic body representations from popular media.

Santika & Bawono (2022) in their study also showed that 85% of female K-Pop fans in Indonesia experience moderate to high levels of body dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction is triggered by excessive expectations of ideal body standards that they associate with K-Pop idols who have slim, tall bodies and fair skin. This indicates that the visualization of K-Pop idols' slim, white, and proportional bodies has become the main reference in the formation of Indonesian teenage girls' self-image. Thus, the consumption of Korean popular culture by K-Pop fans, especially female teenagers, plays a significant role in shaping perfectionist and unrealistic body orientations among teenagers. The entertainment industry, through the body image of idols, has produced beauty standards that are then internalized as something that must be achieved.

From a broader Southeast Asian perspective, Kamon (2024) found that the desire to emulate Korean looks is also evident in Thailand, where Korean beauty standards have established an aesthetic hierarchy that favors lighter skin. The phenomenon of skin bleaching influenced by the Korean Wave reflects not only a new desire for beauty, but also a form of cultural imperialism. Kamon (2024) warns that while soft power can be a cultural asset, it must also bear the responsibility of acknowledging the negative impacts of aesthetic homogenization, especially when it suppresses local identities. The dominance of K-Beauty risks delaying the development of local cultural movements such as the Thai Wave and suggests that the appeal of the Korean Wave in Southeast Asia can both elevate and suppress regional uniqueness.

This hegemonic tendency is echoed in Jalaluddin & Ahmad's (2011) study in Malaysia, which highlights how Hallyu has become a deeply embedded cultural force among adolescents. Besides bringing cultural benefits and opportunities for cross-cultural appreciation, the success of Hallyu also shows the potential for Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries to develop their own cultural industries using similar strategies. This study suggests that Malaysia's cultural diplomacy initiatives, such as Malaysia Truly Asia, can draw inspiration from the strategic deployment of Hallyu.

Returning to the Indonesian context, Widyaningrum, Ramadhani, & Lestari (2023) found that some K-Pop fans adopt extreme practices such as crash diets, excessive exercise, slimming pills, and even plastic surgery to achieve ideal body standards. In addition, Korean dramas significantly influenced brand perception of Korean cosmetics and increased purchase intention. Although knowledge of halal cosmetics and religion influence purchase decisions, this study emphasizes the need for health education and media literacy to counteract harmful aesthetic pressures.

Ramadhani & Linadi (2012) also found that the influence of the Korean Wave on adolescents occurs through parasocial learning: observing, self-identifying with, and imitating K-Pop idols. The normalization of practices such as alcohol consumption, cosmetic surgery, and permissive dating behaviors—frequently portrayed in Korean dramas—demonstrates the extent to which K-culture can influence adolescents' social values. However, these representations often conflict with Indonesian cultural and religious norms that emphasize modesty and self-discipline. In response, Indonesian adolescents tend to engage in selective adaptation, adopting only those aspects of K-culture that align with local moral values. Consequently, although K-pop-influenced youth may be perceived as modern or trendy, their participation remains

constrained by prevailing societal expectations. This reflects a process of cultural negotiation rather than complete cultural adoption (Ramadhani & Linadi, 2012).

Prameswari et al., (2025) in their study affirm that Korean popular culture has also become one of the major factors shaping beauty perceptions among Generation Z Indonesians. The Korean media and beauty industry intensely propagate ideal beauty images such as fair skin, thin face, and slim body. These representations not only shape new beauty perceptions, but also create social pressure to conform to these standards. However, the dominance of Korean beauty standards also has the potential to cause psychological problems such as body image issues, insecurity, and decreased self-confidence, especially when individuals feel unable to meet unrealistic standards (Prameswari et al., 2025). In addition, Indonesia's diverse natural beauty is starting to be marginalized, threatening local cultural identity. In this context, the representation of the K-Pop-style ideal body cannot be understood as just one of the global trends, but as a form of cultural domination that requires a critical response. The implications do not only concern the psychological realm, but also the need for media policy and cultural literacy education so that the younger generation is able to read representations critically, and strengthen local beauty values that are more inclusive and diverse.

In addition, Mappe, Sunaniah, & Salwia (2023) found that beauty advertisements in Indonesia that use K-Pop idols as brand ambassadors reinforce Korean beauty standards in the eyes of teenagers. Local aesthetic values are displaced by global narratives disseminated through digital media. Beauty is no longer understood as something diverse and contextual, but uniformed through the imagination of the ideal body constructed by the K-Pop industry. Thus, from this it can be seen that there is a hegemonic process in the realm of aesthetics, namely the global narrative of the ideal body spread by the K-Pop industry through digital media has begun to shift the understanding of beauty as a plural social construction. Beauty ideals tend to become more uniform and standardized, often distancing themselves from local cultural roots, as shown in studies highlighting how global media influences reshape local beauty perceptions in Southeast Asia (Arsitowati, 2018; Oktaviani, 2022). In the long run, this can lead to cultural identity alienation, as well as a crisis of representation for individuals who do not fit the global beauty "template".

Pramadya & Oktaviani (2021) in a broader study highlight that Korean culture has successfully shaped young people's positive perceptions of South Korea. The study found that through exposure to popular culture such as music, fashion, culinary, and cosmetics, Indonesian teenagers show intense emotional and cultural affiliations, which then influence their identity aspirations, including in terms of body aesthetics. This implies that body perception is not only formed from the personal sphere, but is also closely related to cultural diplomacy and global representations brought by South Korea.

In general, these studies indicate that adolescent girls in Indonesia interpret body representations in K-Pop culture as ideal and desirable aesthetic standards. This process is not only consumptive, but also transformative in shaping body perception and self-worth. Body dissatisfaction, the desire to emulate idols, and changes in the perception of local beauty are concrete forms of the impact of K-Pop body representations on Indonesian teenagers.

The body of a K-Pop artist described as slim, white and "perfect" is not an objective reality, but rather a social construction shaped and propagated through the media system. These

representations work through images, visual narratives, and symbols that are produced continuously in music videos, social media, and advertisements. Therefore, when Indonesian teenage girls feel dissatisfied with their bodies or try to resemble their idols, it is not because of individual factors, but because of the internalization of meanings created by the media. In this context, K-Pop media not only reflects beauty, but regulates how beauty is understood and valued in society. This is in accordance with Stuart Hall's (1997) view in his theory of representation. Hall states that meaning is not naturally attached to an object or image. Meaning is formed through the practice of representation, namely the way the media selects, frames, and disseminates certain signs. Hall emphasizes that the media is the main place where social meaning is constructed and disseminated.

Then, the phenomenon of imitating the body of K-Pop idols carried out by Indonesian teenage girls can be read as a form of imitation of the dominant culture (South Korea) in the context of postcolonial symbolic inequality. This is in accordance with Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concept of mimicry, which is a process in which colonial or marginalized subjects try to imitate the dominant culture. Mimicry is not just an imitation, but an attempt to be "like the other", but never quite the same. Bhabha explains that this process creates an ambivalence that causes a desire to be accepted by the center of cultural power, but also a sense of crisis due to loss of identity. The concept can also be seen in the efforts made by Indonesian teenage girls to emulate the bodies of K-Pop idols creating a desire to be part of the "global standard", but at the same time sacrificing the uniqueness of the body and local identity.

While these representations often produce negative psychological effects, it is equally important to highlight the ways adolescents can build resilience against these pressures. Several studies emphasize the importance of strengthening media literacy, self-esteem and positive body awareness among adolescents as protective factors. Strong self-confidence and a focus on inner qualities rather than appearance can be effective strategies for overcoming negative body image (Rahmalia & Laili, 2025). Therefore, it is important to develop intervention programs that focus on boosting teenagers' self-confidence, improving negative body image, and reducing the harmful effects of social media use. These interventions may include education on self-worth and self-acceptance, training in coping with social pressure, and campaigns that promote positive views of body diversity (Rahmalia & Laili, 2025). In addition, the involvement of parents, teachers, and counselors is essential in guiding teenagers to use social media in a healthy way, avoid getting caught up in social comparisons, and better appreciate their own potential (Rahmalia & Laili, 2025).

Furthermore, adolescent girls need to build self-confidence that does not depend solely on physical appearance (Lionita, Febry, Appulembang, & Anggraini, 2022). To support this, nutritionists and the government can collaborate in providing education and facilities that encourage healthy eating behaviors, thereby positively impacting the nutritional status and psychological well-being of adolescents (Lionita et al., 2022). Interventions that target cognitive and affective aspects, which play a role in body image formation, are also important because they can trigger changes in eating behavior towards healthier habits. Teenage girls with a positive body image are 2.21 times more likely to engage in healthy eating behaviors than those with a negative body image (Lionita et al., 2022).

In addition, intervention models such as the Body Project have been proven effective in promoting body acceptance and reducing unhealthy eating behaviors among adolescents. Annah, Miden, Febriani, & Heriteluna (2024) shows that adolescents who participated in the Body Project program experienced a significant increase in body image and self-esteem scores after the intervention. This program combines media literacy, self-esteem enhancement, and psychological education, providing adolescents with the tools to critically evaluate unrealistic beauty ideals and develop a positive self-perception (Annah et al., 2024). Such interventions highlight the importance of combining education, peer support, and community-based programs to counteract the negative effects of idealized body representations in popular media (Annah et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening self-confidence, media literacy, and social support are key factors in helping adolescent girls overcome unrealistic beauty standards and develop a more positive self-image. These efforts are particularly relevant in the context of popular media influences, such as the representation of idealized bodies in the K-Pop industry, which has significantly shaped adolescents' perceptions of beauty in Indonesia.

Intense exposure to ideal body representations shaped by the K-Pop industry on various media platforms has shaped perfectionist body perception patterns among Indonesian adolescent girls. The representation of K-Pop artists' slim, white, and proportional bodies is not only an aesthetic image that is admired, but also used as a beauty standard that is internalized in the process of forming adolescent self-identity. A number of studies confirm that this process triggers social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and even extreme dieting behaviors that risk the physical and psychological health of adolescent girls. Representations of the ideal body in K-Pop have shaped global beauty standards that homogenize the way Indonesian adolescent girls view their bodies. As images of slim, white and perfect bodies continue to be produced and disseminated by the media, many teenagers are encouraged to emulate these body shapes in an effort to achieve social acceptance. However, this process often undermines self-confidence and distances them from appreciating body diversity and true local beauty. Attempts to conform to such standards create a tension between the desire for recognition and the risk of losing one's identity.

Thus, the perceptions and responses of Indonesian adolescent girls to K-Pop representations of the ideal body cannot be seen as a purely psychological phenomenon, but also as a complex cultural event. This phenomenon involves identity negotiation, social pressure, and representation inequality between local and global. Thus, there is a need for critical awareness of body representation practices in popular media and efforts to build identity resilience through media literacy education and beauty promotion that is more inclusive and culturally contextual.

Based on the results of the literature review and theoretical analysis, this study found that the body perceptions of Indonesian adolescent girls are influenced by representations of the ideal body in K-Pop culture, which are displayed by artist figures with slim bodies, white skin, and certain aesthetic images. Advertisements, social media and music videos lead to physical dissatisfaction, social comparison and the desire to mimic the idol's appearance to the extreme. The results show that teenagers not only passively consume popular culture, but also engage in a process of internalization and identity negotiation through the aesthetic logic monopolized by the K-Pop industry.

The main strength of this study lies in the use of Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry to read power relations, ideology and the production of meaning in popular culture. The approach allows for a critical look at how bodies are symbolically constructed and interpreted in local and international contexts. However, this study has limitations. First, due to the literature study methodology used in this research, there is no primary data such as interviews or direct observation that can add depth to the subjective experiences of teenagers. Secondly, due to the geographical focus on Indonesia only, generalizations to the rest of Southeast Asia should be made with caution. However, the regional context remains the conceptual basis.

For future research, it is hoped that researchers can integrate the use of qualitative field methods in research, such as using in-depth interviews or focus group discussions (FGDs) with adolescent girls from various social and cultural backgrounds in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries as a data collection technique. This method is expected to facilitate researchers to dig deeper into the affective, symbolic, and resistive dimensions of idealized body representations in Korean popular culture. In addition, it is also important to explore the practices of resistance or reappropriation that may be carried out by adolescent girls as a form of negotiation against dominant beauty standards. Thus, it is hoped that future research will not only focus on the negative impacts, but also focus on the potential agency and creativity of adolescent girls in the face of hegemonic global culture.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that representations of the ideal body in K-Pop culture, which emphasize slim, white and perfect body images, have significantly shaped the body perceptions of Indonesian adolescent girls. Through intensive media exposure, these beauty standards are not only admired but also internalized by teenagers, resulting in body dissatisfaction, social comparison, and pressure to emulate idols' appearance (Dwiputeri & Maulina, 2015; Santika & Bawono, 2022). Body representation in K-Pop works hegemonically through the media and creates global aesthetic standards that often ignore body diversity and local beauty values (Kamon, 2024; Mapped, Sunaniah, & Salwia, 2023).

Referring to Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation and Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concept of mimicry, this study asserts that the idealized female body in popular culture is not a neutral entity, but rather the result of symbolic constructions that carry dominant ideologies. In this context, the bodies of K-Pop artists become a means of representing global cultural power that influences the identity formation process of Indonesian teenage girls (Banurea, 2017; Kwak, 2021).

This research emphasizes the importance of awareness of the influence of the media in shaping body standards that are not always in accordance with local social and cultural contexts. Therefore, it is recommended that future research involve a qualitative field approach to explore the experiences of adolescents directly, and encourage the strengthening of educational programs in media literacy and beauty campaigns that are more inclusive and culturally contextual that celebrate body diversity and promote positive attitudes towards the body (Rahmalia & Laili, 2025; Lionita et al., 2022).

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