

Editor's Introduction

The Korean Social Science Journal (KSSJ) remains steadfast in highlighting salient issues across multiple milieus and scales, by providing key snapshots of diverse social phenomena in various contexts. While mostly publishing articles that are focused on Korea, we at the KSSJ recognize the complex entanglements and interconnectedness of issues in an increasingly globalized world. For the December issue of the KSSJ, we present articles from a wide variety of academic disciplines, and with this issue, we introduce a special section on Hallyu - dedicated to the emerging rich scholarship about the Korean Wave and its dynamic manifestations.

In the first article, Vadim Akulenko in the piece, "The Development of Russophone Korean Ethnocultural Enclaves in South Korea: A Socio-Geographical Case Study of Anseong and Gyeongju," investigates the socio-economic and geographical factors that contribute to the formation and maintenance of these enclaves, along with the main challenges that they currently face. Distinct geographical factors such as well-defined boundaries, affordable housing, socio-cultural and commercial infrastructure contributed to the development of these communities, along with employment opportunities for the immigrant population. However, lack of resources also hinders the smooth integration of residents into broader South Korean society. Akulenko proposes the development of a unified education policy for Russophone Koreans, one that incorporates quality education for children in their native language.

The next article, "Big Five Personality Differences across Academic Majors among South Korean University Students" by Sanghee Nam, Joomin Lee, Sojin Park, and Jae Yoon Chang examine personality trait differences across academic majors among South Korean university students, revealing how academic major commitment can moderate these relationships. The research revealed significant variations in personality traits across different majors, particularly in conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. However, these differences were less pronounced compared to similar studies in Western contexts, highlighting the influence of South Korea's collectivist culture on students' major choices. The study found that students might choose majors based on peer pressure and recommendations from family and authority figures rather than personal interests and traits. These findings contribute to our understanding of person-environment fit in academic settings, particularly in non-Western contexts, and have practical implications for education and career counseling. The study emphasizes the need for more research outside North America and Europe to account for cultural differences in values, priorities, and social environments.

The Social Sciences Korea (SSK) project was the focus of the article by Ho-Dae Chong and Jong-Kil Kim. In the piece, "Innovating the Innovation by Competition and Cooperation in Higher Education: The Case of the Social Sciences Korea as a Natural Experiment," the authors showcase the progress of the project thus far in following key areas: research performance, collaborative efforts, and nurturing the next generation of scholars. The research highlights the importance of balancing competition and cooperation in fostering innovation in higher education. This involves developing adaptive operational mechanisms that can respond flexibly to changing circumstances, internalized at the individual level and institutionalized at the collective level. This balance between exploitation (efficiency) and exploration (creativity) is seen as crucial for sustaining innovation in research support programs and advancing the field of social sciences in Korea.

Authors Dongil Kim and Seyoung Jang in the article, “The Identification and Diagnostic Support System for Students with Borderline Intellectual Functioning” examine the diagnostic and support systems that are available for students with Borderline Intellectual Functioning (BIF). Students with BIF exhibit a range of characteristics during school years, including aspects of intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties, and academic underachievement, along with diverse behavioral and emotional patterns. These traits become more evident as students enter school and can be identified by teachers, parents, or through interventions addressing other academic issues. The absence of a standardized system for early identification and eligibility assessment places these students at risk of delayed or inadequate educational interventions. The study suggests a multifaceted approach that involves a battery of tests pertaining to learning skills, emotional and psychological characteristics, and social skills. Quantitative and qualitative indicators will aid in the construction of a comprehensive eligibility assessment matrix.

Introduction to the KSSJ December 2024 Hallyu Special Section

For the December 2024 issue, the KSSJ introduces the Hallyu special section to highlight emerging research that explores new dimensions of the Korean Wave phenomenon. The two (2) collected articles in this issue’s special section examine understudied aspects of Hallyu’s global influence, moving beyond traditional focuses on Korean cultural contents. By bringing together these novel perspectives, this special section aims to deepen our understanding of Hallyu’s multifaceted nature and its ongoing transformations in the global cultural landscape.

For the first article, “Extraordinary Lead: Portrayals of People Living with Mental Health Challenges in Korean Dramas,” Alyssa Manalo analyzes the portrayal of characters with mental health challenges in Korean dramas that aired between 2010-2022 and are available on Netflix, revealing the persistence of stereotypes identified in previous literature. The cultural narrative and common characteristics that are typically associated with individuals with mental health challenges as “dangerous members of society, narcissistic parasite, female patient as seductress, and dynamic” reinforce stigma and contribute to negative perceptions. However, the study also notes that some storylines offer a more empathetic approach, highlighting the importance of support systems and the potential for individuals to redefine their identities through disability subcultures. By drawing on the Disability Identity Development Model, these narratives align with the concept of “disability pride,” encouraging individuals to embrace their identities and challenge societal assumptions. While traditional stereotypes persist, these dramas also provide a platform for more inclusive portrayals, emphasizing personal growth and the role of supportive networks in overcoming mental health challenges.

Daniela Alana Picazo & Michael Prieler’s article, entitled “Influencer Marketing of Korean Beauty Products in the Philippines: The Role of the Korean Wave, Influencers, and Content Attributes” investigates the role of social media influencers (SMI) in marketing Korean beauty products to consumers in the Philippines, revealing the complex interplay between digital platforms, local beauty standards, and the transnational flow of cosmetic trends. The study investigated the sponsored posts of SMIs on Instagram that promote Korean beauty products in the Philippines. Korean beauty brands were found to primarily collaborate with nano- and micro-influencers that occupy the beauty, fashion, and lifestyle niche. Parasocial relationships

and interactions were seen to be effective in increasing engagement from Instagram users. Another factor that influenced consumer behavior is trustworthiness, and SMIs with implicit rather than explicit disclosures of sponsorship and endorsement generated higher engagement. Results also reveal that SMIs that included Korean Wave references in their profiles can yield better engagement from their followers.

As the official journal of the Korean Social Science Research Council (KOSSREC), the KSSJ continuously aims to provide readers with the latest provocations in social science research from diverse theoretical and methodological backgrounds. The KSSJ is actively seeking original research that covers a wide range of topics in the social sciences with a distinct focus on dynamic understandings of Korea. The KSSJ team ensures a timely double-blind peer review process that involves experts and authority figures across a wide array of academic disciplines. We are also open to special issue proposals on key relevant and emergent topics within the social sciences. The KSSJ is an open-access journal, and we are hoping to play a crucial role in democratizing knowledge by ensuring that cutting-edge research is accessible to everyone, regardless of one's institutional affiliation or financial resources. By providing a platform for interdisciplinary research, the journal contributes towards promoting and disseminating innovative social science research from Korea and beyond to the broader academic community. The KSSJ publishes biannually in June and December.

For inquiries or submissions, you may get in touch with the editorial team at kssjournal@gmail.com.

