

## Tendentious Actions, Racism, or Bad Prejudice?: Examining the Relations of Ethnocentrism and Xenophobia in the Contemporary South Korea

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### ABSTRACT

When the phenomenon of contemporary South Korean culture in the world goes viral, some content can be regarded as tendentious content in the receiving countries. While some of these countries have large potential markets for South Korean commodities, including contemporary culture, these seem untouched by some of the tendentious prejudices exercised by South Korean. This research will emphasize the answer to the question of South Koreans who often take tendentious actions towards other countries/cultures? This article argues that the acts of prejudice committed by South Koreans are due to the high ethnocentric attitudes of South Korean society. Even when it became controversial, in the end, South Korea did not care much about cultural sensitivity to the culture of other countries. This article uses the concept of ethnocentrism as an answer to the frequent actions of either racism or things that tend to be in South Korean society. The findings confirm that the tendentious act of South Korean society stems from their feelings of cultural superiority by looking down on other cultures since Korea was colonized and is now a country with a more developed economy.

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### ABSTRAK

Ketika fenomena budaya kontemporer Korea Selatan di dunia menjadi viral, beberapa konten dapat dianggap sebagai konten yang tendensius di negara-negara penerima. Sementara beberapa dari negara-negara ini memiliki pasar potensial yang besar untuk komoditas Korea Selatan, termasuk budaya kontemporer, ini tampaknya tidak tersentuh oleh beberapa prasangka tendensius yang dilakukan oleh Korea Selatan. Penelitian ini akan menekankan jawaban atas pertanyaan masyarakat Korea Selatan yang sering melakukan tindakan tendensius terhadap negara/budaya lain? Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa tindakan prasangka tendensius yang dilakukan oleh orang Korea Selatan disebabkan oleh sikap etnosentris yang tinggi dari masyarakat Korea Selatan. Bahkan ketika menjadi kontroversial, pada akhirnya Korea Selatan tidak terlalu peduli dengan kepekaan budaya terhadap budaya negara lain. Artikel ini menggunakan konsep etnosentrisme sebagai jawaban atas seringnya tindakan entah rasisme atau hal yang tendensius di masyarakat Korea Selatan. Temuan tersebut menegaskan bahwa tindakan tendensius dari masyarakat Korea Selatan berasal dari perasaan superioritas budaya mereka dengan memandang rendah budaya lain sejak Korea dijajah dan sekarang menjadi negara dengan ekonomi yang lebih maju.

## Introduction

Advances in globalization characterized by improved technology make human interactions more intense. Moreover, the country seems to have no borders (borderless). The ease of interacting through technology has become an integral thing in human activities. In terms of interaction, both the way of interacting and the content of interaction are influenced by the cultural values and characteristics of each country.

For example, in Swedish society, it is taboo when interact with matters related to income. Bringing up or just discussing income with an unknown person is taboo. This becomes taboo because there is a term called Jantelagen. Jantelagen's culture encourages Swedes to never consider themselves to be more powerful than anyone else. The term Jantelagen comes from a rule-abiding town called Jante, which i mentioned in the 1933 work of Norwegian-Danish author Aksel Sandemose. Jantelagenis an unwritten social rule that applies in Sweden and many other places in the Nordic region.<sup>1</sup>

But it is inversely proportional when interacting with Americans with the same thing, namely income. Almost all in the United States, by interacting about high income, then the opponent of the interaction will give congratulations and praise. In other words, cultural identity factors in a country influence the way they interact and the content of those interactions with the opposite of interactions from other countries with their own cultural identity.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural identity is a detail of the characteristics owned by a person or group of people who can know their boundaries when compared to the characteristics or

cultural characteristics of another person or group. It is not easy to understand the characteristics or characteristics of another person's cultural identity with its boundaries. Lisa Orr explains that understanding another person's cultural identity — which happens at the beginning of interacting — is the hardest thing to ask, especially if what you want to know is the authentic cultural identity of that person.<sup>3</sup>

It is increasingly difficult since in general humans' cultural identity must be thorough. Cultural identity is cultural totalization. While cultural totalization is generally implied and behind the multicultural context. Thus, some people know the cultural identity of others with them-design of various characteristics, such as body, hair color, language, clothing, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

Although it is difficult to know the identity of the interaction opponent, they have their cultural characteristics and characteristics. To still know and understand the cultural identity of others, every individual must have cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is the ability of individuals to know that differences and cultural similarities exist, without assessing whether it is good or bad for cultural differences (National Maternal and Child Health Centre on Cultural Competency, 1997).<sup>5</sup>

Everyone must hone his sensitivity that other cultures are different from their own

<sup>1</sup> Maddy Savage, (2019), *Jantelagen: Why Swedes won't talk about wealth*, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/vert-cap-50052745> (Accessed August 2, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Orr, (1997), *Media and Identities Series*, California: SAGE

<sup>4</sup> Nikmah Suryandari, (2017), Existence of Cultural Identity Di Tengah Masyarakat Multikultur Dan Desakan Budaya Global, *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 11(1): 21-28. doi:10.21107/ilkom.v11i1.3020

<sup>5</sup> Hariyadi Kusuma', Arbin Janu Setiyowati, Yuliati Hotifah, (2016), Pengembangan Panduan Panduan Pelatihan Cultural Sensitivity Untuk Mencegah Potensi Konflik Budaya Bagi Siswa SMP, Malang: Universitas Negeri Malang

culture in their characteristics and characteristics. Historically, the term cultural sensitivity was found to be a popular term that was more widely used in global database literature searches, popular and scientific, occurring in 2008.<sup>6</sup>

Further, it seems that in today's global conditions, cultural sensitivity is indispensable for everyone. Because culture has transformed into a commodity of economic value, often referred to as commodification. Thus, it becomes very easy for certain cultures to interact with other cultures.

From an economic perspective, a commodity is a particular thing or right of something that is produced, real, and can circulate through an economic system in exchange for other goods, usually exchanged or in exchange for money. Naturally, with this view, it makes sense because an item that has a useful value also has an exchange rate. Another case from a cultural perspective states that the production of a commodity is a process of 2 things, namely culture and cognitive.<sup>7</sup> This means that commodities are not only produced materially (in the form of certain "goods") but culture is also categorized as a particular type of "goods".

Of the many "goods" that are in society, only a few are considered worthy to be used as commodities. Therefore, an "item" can be used as a commodity when the "goods" can be exchanged for a value higher than the value of the use of the "goods", and can be traded, and can be realized in the form of quantities.<sup>8</sup>

This is an example of South Korea's efforts to make its culture an export commodity. Jun Sun Park, a South Korean cultural anthropologist, suggested that "In the late 90s, the Korean government implemented policies and created organizations that supported the export and spread of pop culture. And make the expansion of culture and economy a national goal".<sup>9</sup> Starting from music, and movies, to television dramas become a commodity export of South Korean culture today. Jonghoe Yang said that three forms of South Korean culture became commodities, i.e., movie, television drama (K-drama), and pop music (K-pop) is popular and much respected, especially in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Since the 1990s, the spread of South Korean culture, such as music, drama, and film, as a commodity is very massive in several countries in Asia, such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia.<sup>11</sup> "The World of the Married", "Train to Busan", and "Boombayah" became one of the dramas, films, and music from South Korea that are trending in Indonesia. Korean music, films, and South Korean dramas are easily accepted among the people of Indonesia. The reason is that South Korean dramas and films always present romantic stories to the ease of accessing these dramas, movies, and music with the internet.

South Korean culture that has spread to various countries, one of which is Indonesia, is not without risks. Because the culture with

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia L. Foronda, (2008), A Concept Analysis of Cultural Sensitivity, *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, SAGE Publications, 19(3): 207–212. doi:10.1177/1043659608317093.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Paul Cloke & Harvey C. Perkins, (2010), Commodification and Adventure in New Zealand Tourism, *Current Issues in Tourism* 5(6): 521-549, doi:10.1080/13683500208667939

<sup>9</sup> Mustiana Lestari, (2012), *Drama & music, South Korea's main export commodity*, <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/drama-amp-musik-komoditas-utama-ekspor-korea-selatan.html> (Accessed August 3, 2021)

<sup>10</sup> Jonghoe Yang, (2012), The Korean Wave (Hallyu) in East Asia: A Comparison of Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese Audiences Who Watch Korean TV Dramas, *Development and Society*, 41(1), 103-147. Retrieved August 3, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/deveandsoci.41.1.103>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

its values and characteristics will each be different will meet. With the difference in the diversity of values and characteristics of culture, there may be a problem. Recently Jin Jong-Oh, a South Korean shooting athlete, argued that his competitor as well as the winner at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, Javad Foroughi, an Iranian shooting athlete is a terrorist. Jin said, "How can terrorists win gold? The most ridiculous and confusing thing..."<sup>12</sup> It has come under international criticism for being seen as an act of racism.

Not only that, but similar interactions have also occurred. This was done by South Korean television station MBC TV during the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. When Indonesian athletes paraded at the opening of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, MBC TV displayed the information that "Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world. Countries with the fourth most populous in the world have low GDP, low vaccines, and six percent of the population is infected with COVID-19." Not stopping there, when athletes from several countries entered the parade area for the 2020 Olympics, MBC TV showed photos of pizza for Italian athletes, photos of sushi for Japan, photos of salmon for Norway, photos of Wuhan maps for China, photos of the Berlin wall for Germany, photos of the Chernobyl nuclear incident for Ukraine, photos of riot incidents for Haiti, as well as ironically displaying an image of the border wall between Israelis-Palestinians when introducing Palestinian athletes.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Tata Ferliana, (2021), *Is South Koreans Really Racist and Discriminatory?*, <https://dunia.tempo.co/read/1489745/benarkah-penduduk-korea-selatan-rasis-dan-diskriminatif/full&view=ok> (Accessed August 3, 2021)

<sup>13</sup>Andika Rachmansyah, (2021), *South Korean TV Station Makes a Tantrum because of Racist, Indonesian Netizen Emotions*,

Palestinians when introducing Palestinian athletes. Recently, in the drama series "Racket Boys" which was shown by Seoul Broadcasting Station (SBS) there was a conversation about racism against Indonesia. "Racket Boys" is a South Korean television drama series aired by the SBS television station with a storyline centered on the journey of the badminton club of a high school in Haenam, South Korea.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, the fifth episode of the drama sparked a controversy that sparked criticism from the audience, especially from Indonesia. When the South Korean team officials were gathering at a restaurant in Jakarta when the national team coach, said "Gosh. Such bad manners. The rooms are a mess, and they practice at the stadium while we're forced to practice at some run-down place with no air conditioner. Those jerks," He is also suspicious of Indonesia by accusing Indonesian players of doing anything to weaken South Korean badminton players and win the match.<sup>15</sup>

Looking at some of the above actions, they received various criticism from the international community for being considered an act of tendentious.

Thus, in the hope that cultural differences or similarities do not cause conflict or diplomatic rifts, we tried to analyze this case through, "Why do South Koreans often take tendentious actions towards other countries/cultures?" Whereas South Korea is a developed country in terms

<https://sports.okezone.com/read/2021/07/27/43/2446636/stasiun-tv-korea-selatan-buat-ulah-karena-rasis-netizen-indonesia-emosi> (Accessed August 3, 2021)

<sup>14</sup> Medikantyo Junandika Adhikresna, (2021), *Menilik Kontroversi Drama Korea Racket Boys di Indonesia*, <https://www.kompas.com/sports/read/2021/06/26/22200028/menilik-kontroversi-drama-korea-racket-boys-di-indonesia?page=all>.

<sup>15</sup> Coconuts Jakarta, (2021), *Indonesians angered over 'unfair' portrayal in K-drama 'Racket Boys'* [https://www.nme.com/en\\_asia/news/tv/racket-boys-k-drama-production-team-apologises-to-indonesian-viewers-for-offensive-episode-2972697](https://www.nme.com/en_asia/news/tv/racket-boys-k-drama-production-team-apologises-to-indonesian-viewers-for-offensive-episode-2972697)

of technology, economy, science, and culture characterized by the commodification of South Korean culture. South Korea has maintained good diplomatic relations with many countries. Therefore, this article argues that the acts of racism committed by South Korea are due to the high ethnocentric attitude of South Korean society. Even when it gets higher, at the end of the day it does not care about cultural sensitivity to the culture of other countries. This becomes important because with a high ethnocentrism attitude it will assume that cultures other than their culture become very low and no longer understand the cultural sensitivity of other countries well. Of course, it will be difficult to accept the differences and similarities between South Korean culture and outside culture. Not infrequently these actions lead to social conflicts between nations or even have an impact on bilateral relations between the two countries.

### Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, we would like to examine ethnocentrism as the theory for this issue. Moreover, we also would like to describe the qualitative descriptive as a research method through a study case to analyze the issue. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's ethnic group is superior to those of other groups. Racism, on the other hand, is prejudice and discrimination based on skin color.<sup>16</sup> These two concepts are as old as humanity, and they can be found in many cultures as well as societies all over the world. Korea has a long history of ethnocentrism and racism. It was not until recently that Koreans have begun to open their minds to people from other cultures and backgrounds.

<sup>16</sup> Boris Bizumic & Duckitt, J. (2012). What Is and Is Not Ethnocentrism? A Conceptual Analysis and Political Implications. *Political Psychology*, 33(6), 887-909. Retrieved September 6, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23324197>

Ethnocentrism is the idea that one's culture or society is superior to others. Summer first used the meaning for sociological scientific purposes in 1906.<sup>17</sup> We believe that the Korean Ethnocentrism Issue has been built similar to whiteness in Western society.<sup>18</sup> Further, Korean Ethnocentrism is the idea that Korean culture is superior to other cultures, and it has been prevalent in Korea's history. Korean ethnocentrism is signed with the notion of sharing the same blood, same culture, and same language.<sup>19</sup> It was introduced as a campaign to oppose the Japanese Occupation in the early 20th century.<sup>20</sup> One of the major instances of Korean ethnocentrism can be seen in Park Chung-Hee's controversial policy of "ideology of racial purity".<sup>21</sup> Hence, in the global age like today, this ideology somehow clashes with the fact that South Korea today is a global nation with a global culture that invites people to live, work, and even settled with marriage and migration to their country.

Furthermore, social science theorists have proposed six broad causes of ethnocentrism: (1) threat and insecurity; (2) self-aggrandizement; (3) intragroup similarity and outgroup difference; (4) proneness to simplification and ignorance; (5)

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Druckman. (1968). Ethnocentrism in the Inter-Nation Simulation. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 12(1), 45-68. Retrieved September 6, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/172813>

<sup>18</sup> Kim, Hyein Amber. (2020). Understanding "Koreanness": Racial Stratification and Colorism in Korea and Implications for Korean Multicultural Education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 76-97.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v22i1.1834>

<sup>19</sup> Gi-wook Shin. (2006). *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>20</sup> B.R.Myers. (2010). *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters*. Melville House.

<sup>21</sup> Nadia Y. Kim. (2008). *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to L.A.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

social factors or influences located outside the individual; and (6) evolutionary factors. It is important to note that many theorists have acknowledged two or more of these causes to be important for ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, the theories here were classified according to the central cause that they propose.<sup>22</sup>

To clarify conceptually the construct of ethnocentrism, we investigated how ethnocentrism has been defined by various authors. Thus, to illustrate the main underlying themes clearly, we separated some statements or merged them. Three broad major themes in these definitions emerged: a) group self-centredness (i.e., giving strong importance to one's group), b) outgroup negativity (i.e., hostility and contempt towards other groups), and c) mere ingroup positivity (i.e., positive evaluation of one's group).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, ethnocentrism could lead to xenophobia as it evolves. Bennett 2013 explains that xenophobia serves as a kind of mechanism or arrangement to understand ethnocentrism.<sup>24</sup>

## Research Method

Furthermore, qualitative analysis is a research methodology that involves the systematic description, interpretation, and discussion of qualitative data.<sup>25</sup> Qualitative

data is information that cannot be measured or counted. It can be words, images, sounds, or any other sensory evidence that can help to describe a context or event. This part of the text will discuss the qualitative descriptive analysis of international relations issues. Qualitative descriptive analysis is about doing thorough research on social, cultural, or economic topics through a series of qualitative data to get a better understanding of what's going on in the world around you. The methods used are different from quantitative methods because they rely on verbal stories rather than numbers and statistics, which have been gathered from surveys and questionnaires.

Then, the study case method is a research strategy that can be applied to almost any given topic. It is a type of descriptive research that requires the researcher to trace the history of a certain event, namely what happened and how it came about.<sup>26</sup> The study case method does not give any indication as to whether one event was better than another. What it does do is provide a thorough examination of the events in question and help create a timeline for these events. The advantages of this type of research are that it provides the researcher with an unbiased view of what has transpired, and it can be used as a framework for other cases in the future. The disadvantages are that it requires more time, effort, and resources than other types of studies because they require an in-depth look at every step taken by actors within. Thus, in this paper, we will talk about ethnocentrism and racism in Korean culture through a study case strategy in a qualitative descriptive framework. We will also discuss how these two concepts have been a diplomatic challenge for South Korea by examining recent cases of both racism and

<sup>22</sup> Boris Bizumic, *Theories of Ethnocentrism and Their Implications for Peacebuilding*, in O. Simić et al. (eds.), *Peace Psychology in the Balkans: Dealing with a Violent Past while 35 Building Peace*, Peace Psychology Book Series, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-1948-8\_3,

<sup>23</sup> Boris Bizumic & John Duckitt, (2012), What Is and Is Not Ethnocentrism? A Conceptual Analysis and Political Implications, *Political Psychology*, 33(6):887-909. <https://doi.org/10.2307/23324197>

<sup>24</sup> Bennett, M. (2013). Entry in C. Cortes (Ed) *Multicultural America: A multimedia encyclopedia*. New York: Sage

<sup>25</sup> Jane W. Sutton, & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management. *The Canadian journal of hospital*

*pharmacy*, 68(3), 226–231.

<https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456>

<sup>26</sup> Heale R, Twycross A. (2018). What is a case study?. *Evidence-Based Nursing*; 21:7-8.

ethnocentrism that have occurred especially in South Korea and Indonesia as International Relations actors.

## Literature Review

Racism is often perpetrated by some South Koreans. Some previous articles analyzed the phenomenon of racist acts that are often carried out by South Korea through several other theories/concepts to know the cause. At the same time, several scientific articles examining South Korea's acts of racism have touched on various fields, such as education, ranging from education in schools<sup>27</sup> to education at universities,<sup>28</sup> tourism,<sup>29</sup> and the media.<sup>30</sup>

Globally, the acts of racism over skin color differences committed by not only South Korea are categorized as sociologically independent, even class theory or caste theory does not explain the racism that breeds social stratification.<sup>31</sup> This means that the birth of acts of racism generally

occurs due to the sociological condition of the individual/ society itself. Therefore, Bandopadhyaya suggests a structural reorganization of economic relations between whites and non-whites. At the same time promote communication on a global level effectively regardless of their skin color.<sup>32</sup>

In the South Korean context, some articles examine the phenomenon of South Korean acts of racism from theories or concepts such as the tri-racial system of Bonilla-Silva.<sup>33</sup> In that context, "Whites" are at the very top, "Honorary Whites" are in the middle strata, and "Collective Blacks" are in the lower strata.<sup>34</sup> Therefore in the tri-racial concept, Hyein Amber Kim said that South Korea is divided into three strata, namely "Koreans" (people of pure Korean blood) are in the upper strata, "Honorary Koreans"(light-skinned Asia immigrants, Koreans with a mix of white races, and light-skinned non-Koreans)are in the middle strata, and finally "Collective Dark" ("Asian immigrants, South Asians, Middle East, dark-skinned non-South Koreans, Koreans with a mix of black races, and blacks) are at the lowest strata.<sup>35</sup>

South Korea's current acts of racism can be examined through neo-racism

<sup>27</sup> Hyein Amber Kim, (2020), Understanding "Koreanness": Racial Stratification and Colorism in Korea and Implications for Korean Multicultural Education, *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 76-97. Doi: 10.18251/ijme.v22i1.1834

<sup>28</sup> Luis M. Dos Santos, (2020), The Challenging Experiences of International Students in South Korea: The Neo-Racism Perspective, *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12B), 8102-8109. Doi: 10.13189/ujer.2020.082612; Hyein Amber Kim, (2017), Understanding Blackness in South Korea: Experiences of one Black Teacher and One Black Student, *Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: C Sociology & Culture*, 17(1)

<sup>29</sup> Zunsyika Zahra Zatira & Muhammad Pambudi Prakoso, (2020), The Corona Case and the Increasing Cases of Racism and Xenophobia against Chinese Ethnic Groups in the World, *Journal of Islamic World and Politic*, 4(2). Doi: 10.18196/jiwp.4256

<sup>30</sup> Sookyung Kim, (2012), Racism in the global era: Analysis of Korean media discourse around migrants 1990–2009, *Discourse & Society* 23(6), 657–678. Doi: 10.1177/0957926512455381

<sup>31</sup> Jayant Bandopadhyaya, (1977), Racism And International Relations. *Alternatives*, 3(1), 19–48. Doi: 10.1177/030437547700300102

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Hyein Amber Kim, (2020), Understanding "Koreanness": Racial Stratification and Colorism in Korea and Implications for Korean Multicultural Education, *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 76-97. Doi: 10.18251/ijme.v22i1.1834

<sup>34</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, (2004) From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27(6), 931-950. Doi: 10.1080/0141987042000268530

<sup>35</sup> Hyein Amber Kim, (2020), Understanding "Koreanness": Racial Stratification and Colorism in Korea and Implications for Korean Multicultural Education, *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 22(1), 76-97. Doi: 10.18251/ijme.v22i1.1834

theories.<sup>36</sup> The theory of neo-racism focuses on racist cultural aspects (not by color), for example referring to non-traditional discrimination such as nationality, place of birth, place of origin, religion, personal characteristics, and gender.<sup>37</sup> Although South Koreans have the same skin color as China or other East Asian countries because of their geographical location, language and behavior have differences. That's the key to neo-racism ideas.<sup>38</sup>

Media in South Korea also described the act of racism experienced by migrants in an analysis of critical discourse. In general, media articles mostly describe from a positive perspective but based on critical discourse analysis reveal that positive perspectives are used to perpetuate the political interests of some groups only even meaningfully not often discussed, and often misunderstood.<sup>39</sup>

Interestingly, the acts of racism that are often committed by South Korea cannot be separated from the colonial and precolonial history of South Korea. Jae Kyun Kim explains that the idea of race and darkness is fundamentally embedded in Koreans' understanding of the Imperial Age. At that time, Japan colonized South Korea using the Seikanron cultural scheme (argument about

the conquest of Korea) which thus had an important role in colonizing Korea.<sup>40</sup>

From some previous literature, no one has examined the acts of racism committed by South Korea against other cultures/nations through ethnocentrism. That's the research gap in this article. In addition, South Korea is one of the countries whose globalization process is quite fast in the world, especially in the field of technology and economy.<sup>41</sup> But unfortunately from the political side, South Korea still maintains strong ethnic nationalism (ethnocentrism), even though the majority of South Koreans uphold the ethnic homogeneity of their nation.<sup>42</sup>

## Discussion

From the previous section, in this part of the text, we will explore and argue regarding the issue. There is a lot to be said for the benefits of cross-cultural exchange and international friendships, but unfortunately, Korea and Indonesia do not always share such a positive relationship. Indonesia is an important country in Southeast Asia, with a population of more than 250 million people. Indonesia is a strategic partner of Korea because it has a long history of cultural exchange and a lot of potential for future economic cooperation.

Historically, official diplomatic relations between Indonesia and South Korea have been running since the signing of the agreement for the opening of state

<sup>36</sup> Luis M. Dos Santos, (2020), The Challenging Experiences of International Students in South Korea: The Neo-Racism Perspective, *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12B), 8102-8109. Doi: 10.13189/ujer.2020.082612.

<sup>37</sup> M. Barker, (1981), *The new racism: Conservatives and the ideology of the tribe*. London: Junction Books

<sup>38</sup> M. Barker, (1981); L. M. Dos Santos, (2019); J. Lee, J. Jon, and K. Byun (2017) in Luis M. Dos Santos, (2020), The Challenging Experiences of International Students in South Korea: The Neo-Racism Perspective, *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12B), 8102-8109. Doi: 10.13189/ujer.2020.082612

<sup>39</sup> Sookyung Kim, (2012), Racism in the global era: Analysis of Korean media discourse around migrants, 1990–2009. *Discourse & Society* 23(6), 657–678. Doi: 10.1177/0957926512455381

<sup>40</sup> Jae Kyun Kim, (2015), Yellow over Black: History of Race in Korea and the New Study of Race and Empire. *Critical Sociology*, 41(2), 205–217. Doi: 10.1177/0896920513507787

<sup>41</sup> Sookyung Kim. (2012). Racism in the global era: Analysis of Korean media discourse around migrants, 1990–2009. *Discourse & Society* 23(6), 657–678. Doi: 10.1177/0957926512455381

<sup>42</sup> Shin G, (2006), *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*, California: Stanford University Press

diplomatic relations at the consular level in 1966.<sup>43</sup>

Indonesia has been investing in Korea for years. For example, South Korea has been one of Indonesia's largest investors, in the top 10, while some other Korean industries have set up offices there.

Moreover, the Deputy Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) of South Korea, Moon Jae-do, 2015, considered that Indonesia was an important investment destination for many South Korean companies.<sup>44</sup> Especially now that Indonesia and South Korea have agreed to hold economic cooperation within the framework of the Indonesia-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IK-CEPA).

Moreover, in 2012, around 300,000 South Korean citizens visited Indonesia and 149,000 Indonesian citizens visited South Korea, which is proof of the good relationship between Indonesia and South Korea.<sup>45</sup> While in 2016, more than 1 million Indonesians visited Korea, making it the fifth most visited country by Indonesian tourists.<sup>46</sup>

As such, there is a strong need to strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries and this topic will discuss how

Korean people have been treating Indonesians poorly in the Korean society which could be disrupting their diplomatic relationship.

However, there is discrimination and racism against other cultures or nations, such as Indonesians in Korean society. This could be seen in the racism in pop culture<sup>47</sup> or even in featured news on the special occasion.<sup>48</sup> While it is difficult to explain why Koreans discriminate against Indonesians, one can see that they do so because of cultural and linguistic differences. Korea has had a long history with foreigners which has made Koreans prejudiced and unwilling to interact with new people. As a result, many Koreans view Southeast Asia as marginal, such as in households of international marriage in Korea.<sup>49</sup> Cultural sensitivity is seldom to be forgotten in Korean society, therefore racism or misconduct happened<sup>50</sup> in such, media aspects as told above. If South Korea wanted

<sup>43</sup> Ady Muzwardi, (2016), Kerjasama Korea Selatan – Indonesia dalam Manajemen Bencana Alam (Rekonstruksi Aceh Pasca Tsunami Samudera Hindia), *Andalas Journal of International Studies*, 5(2), 178-193. doi: 10.25077/ajis.5.2.178-193.2016

<sup>44</sup> Achmad Ismail & Darynaufal Mulyaman, (2018), Pendekatan Behavioralisme dan Kendala Perundingan Indonesia-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IK-CEPA), *Jurnal ISIP: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 15(2), 33-45, doi: 10.36451/j.isip.v15i2.17

<sup>45</sup> Ady Muzwardi, (2016), Kerjasama Korea Selatan – Indonesia dalam Manajemen Bencana Alam (Rekonstruksi Aceh Pasca Tsunami Samudera Hindia), *Andalas Journal of International Studies*, 5(2), 178-193. doi: 10.25077/ajis.5.2.178-193.2016

<sup>46</sup> Statista, 2021, "Number of Indonesian tourists in South Korea from 2012 to 2016", <https://www.statista.com/statistics/898271/south-korea-inbound-tourists-from-indonesia/> (accessed 7 September 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Resty Woro Yuniar, 2021, "Indonesians slam badminton K-drama 'Racket Boys' for 'racist' depiction", <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/lifestyle-culture/article/3138359/indonesians-slam-badminton-k-drama-racket-boys-racist> (accessed September 7, 2021).

<sup>48</sup> Japan Today, 2021, "South Korean TV network apologizes for offensive Olympic broadcast", <https://japantoday.com/category/sports/tokyo-2020-olympics/south-korean-tv-network-apologises-for-offensive-olympic-broadcast> (accessed September 7, 2021).

<sup>49</sup> Mi Yung Park. (2016). Resisting Linguistic And Ethnic Marginalization: Voices Of Southeast Asian Marriage-Migrant Women In Korea. *Language And Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 118–134. doi: 10.1080/14708477.2016.1165240

<sup>50</sup> Darynaufal Mulyaman, 2021, "Hubungan antara masyarakat Korea Selatan dan Indonesia serta perlunya keberlanjutan dalam kerangka kebijakan New Southern Policy Korsel", [https://utamanews.com/opini/Hubungan-antara-masyarakat-Korea-Selatan-dan-Indonesia-serta-perlunya-keberlanjutan-dalam-kerangka-kebijakan-New-Southern-Policy-Korsel?utm\\_source=Whatever](https://utamanews.com/opini/Hubungan-antara-masyarakat-Korea-Selatan-dan-Indonesia-serta-perlunya-keberlanjutan-dalam-kerangka-kebijakan-New-Southern-Policy-Korsel?utm_source=Whatever) (accessed August 10, 2021).

to be a global country, this kind of accident should be avoided.

Furthermore, from the things mentioned above, the point of threat, insecurity, and self-aggrandizement may be apparent, as South Korea is a relatively new country that emerged from the ashes of conflict, such as the Japanese Occupation of the Korean Peninsula, World War 2, and the still on-going Korean War. This premise is supported by Snyder,<sup>51</sup> which explained that given its geographical placement in the center of great-power competition in Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula has traditionally been a target and victim of the drama of great-power politics. Further, South Koreans have not entirely recovered from the horrors done by the Japanese during their rule of Korea from 1910 to 1945, notably through the use of slave labor. This reasoning is consistent with what has been reported by the BBC.<sup>52</sup>

Later, some of the phenomena of racist acts committed by South Korea were closely related to South Korea's high ethnocentrism. South Koreans consider them to be strata superior. Therefore, South Korean society cannot see other cultures as equal entities.<sup>53</sup>

Then, from the scope of intragroup similarity and out-group difference, social factors or influences located outside the individual, and evolutionary factors, South Korea is one of the most homogenous nations on earth. Further, the differences are striking, only Koreans and immigrants.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Scott A. Snyder, (2018). *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers*. Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/snyd18548>

<sup>52</sup> BBC. 2019. "South Korea and Japan's feud explained", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49330531> (accessed August 9, 2021).

<sup>53</sup> Francis Brannen & Debra MacLellan (2014), A Perspective of Cultural Change in Korea and Its Effect on Multicultural Children, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 19-30

<sup>54</sup> Kang Shin-who, 2009, "Is Korea Homogeneous Country?",

There are no other indigenous groups other than Koreans in South Korea. Therefore, the evolutionary process may jump directly into the globalized era when cross-nation travel is simple and easy. Hence, differences may become a challenge for Korean Society, for example, in 2005, only 13% of marriages that comes from inter-culture families.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, from the perspective of proneness to simplification and ignorance, as mentioned by Zhang<sup>56</sup> explained that South Korean abroad may face a hard time adapting to other cultures. Thus, it describes the homogeneity of Korean imply both ways as hard to receive differences and to be adapted to other cultures in other locations, moreover, this could be a prove of xenophobia or fear of foreign entities as stated above regarding the hard time to adapt with foreign culture as the society remain intact for homogenous. Therefore, the effect is multiple from one factor to another and leads to cultural insensitivity, ethnically and historically.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, South Korea has had a hard time growing as a nation since the tragedy of great-power politics that hurdled the nation even until now. The hard time is crystallized in the socio-culture aspect of South Korean society, so it gives an imagery of ethnically and historically 'one' culture. It makes South Koreans feel bad and selective in interacting with new people.

The imagery of one culture often clashes with the necessity to be part of the globalization age where multiculturalism is

[https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/special/2009/10/242\\_36575.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/special/2009/10/242_36575.html) (accessed August 7, 2021).

<sup>55</sup> Nam-kook Kim. (2016). *Multicultural Challenges and Redefining Identity in East Asia*. Routledge.

<sup>56</sup> Jie Zhang. (2018). The Less Favored Foreigners: Public Attitudes toward Chinese and South Korean Residents in Japan. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies (Waseda University)* No. 33

often regarded as the best glue for such diversity among nations. This is none other than because of the high ethnocentrism in South Korea, which considers them as superior strata.

Further, as globalization become the mean of business as usual in the recent era, export, import, or other transaction need to be done in mutual respect of manner. This, however, brings South Koreans uneasy as mentioned before in terms of historical and cultural aspects. Thus, xenophobism often occurred as bad prejudices that other cultures see as tendentious acts of racism.

Furthermore, this homogenous-ness was then affected by factors that led to South Korea's insensitivity to the global culture that diverse. Therefore, the insensitivity of South Koreans to the culture of other countries makes it difficult for the Korean people of South Koreans abroad to adapt to the local culture.

Hence, the 'insensitivity' case, such as racism in movies or cultural appropriation in the pop culture industry, appeared in numeral times and gave diplomatic rifts between South Korea and other countries, for example, Indonesia and the case of alleged racism in a drama series or South Korean insensitivity during the 2020 Olympic broadcast.

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