

KCCI's Role in South Korean Cultural Diplomacy in Indonesia During The 2019-2022 Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

South Korea is one of the countries that prioritize diplomacy techniques to build the integrity of its country, one of which is through cultural diplomacy. KCCI is a cultural center located in Indonesia that aims to introduce Korean culture. In this research, the author intends to find out the role of KCCI in developing its cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic by using qualitative data collection methods such as quoting from several journals and direct KCCI website data. The findings of this study, through the role of KCCI which optimizes online media Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram to promote Korean culture as a form of cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the Covid Pandemic - 19. Besides the South Korean government which focuses on fighting the spread of the Corona virus, the existence of KCCI as a Korean cultural center during this pandemic is needed to promote Korean culture. Some of the activities it has carried out during this pandemic ranging from online to offline activities such as the Korean Food Carnival, several online cultural event sessions with the theme "Asah Kreativitas #dirumahaja, several K-movie screening events held directly at the Multifunction Hall, Kpop dance competition events, K - Travel for five episodes, holding a Hybrid Travel Fair festival, Cover Dance Festival 2022 in Indonesia, KCCI can help the Korean government achieve its national interests in the form of recovery in several economic sectors through its cultural diplomacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization makes it possible for every country to connect with each other in order to achieve their national interests, one of which is done by developed countries to developing countries by conducting diplomacy. Diplomacy is an important and desirable instrument for various countries in the current era of globalization, because the approach is carried out with a form of soft power, which does not need to sacrifice something to achieve a goal. Diplomacy is a country's effort to pursue its national interests in the international realm, it can also be interpreted as foreign relations carried out by a country with other countries to achieve its national interests.¹ In other words, diplomacy is also defined as a relationship or relationship, communication, and linkage. In addition, diplomacy is also said to be a two-way interactive process between two countries carried out to achieve each country's foreign policy.

One of the countries that prioritize diplomacy techniques to build the integrity of the country is South Korea, besides the diplomacy used is Cultural Diplomacy.² Cultural diplomacy issued by the Korean government has the aim of increasing foreign people's knowledge about Korean culture and then changing their views about the country, increasing people's appreciation of a country, and improving a country's relationship with other countries.³ Cultural diplomacy conducted by the Korean government will help create a foundation of trust with other countries. From this situation, trust will arise with other countries, and will get long-term benefits. Here, the government can utilize the personal closeness that has been formed from the influence that has been spread to achieve its national interests by building other collaborations.

Culture is an aspect that counts and has a significant impact on a country's economy. South Korea is a country that has succeeded in implementing its public diplomacy through culture. Through the Korean Wave phenomenon that has spread in various parts of the world including Indonesia, the South Korean government utilizes this momentum to achieve its national interests amid the conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic despite social restrictions. Korean Wave or better known as Hallyu, was first

¹ Adam Watson, *The Dialogues Between States*, 1984.

² Yun Young Cho, 'Public Diplomacy and South Korea's Strategies', *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, 10.2, 277
<https://doi.org/https://www.kjis.org/journal/download_pdf.php?spage=275&volume=10&number=2>.

³ Citra Henninda, 'Diplomasi Publik Dan Politik Luar Negeri', *FISIP UNAIR*, 2008, 4
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introduced by a Chinese journalist to refer to the popularity of South Korean pop culture in China in the 1990s. The Korean Wave is the phenomenon of the spread of South Korean popular culture in the form of drama series, movies, and pop music through the media to various countries in the world.⁴ The Korean Wave can help the spread of South Korean culture to introduce to the whole world about South Korean culture and help the development of cultural diplomacy of the South Korean government to foreign countries, one of which is Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the countries affected by Hallyu, especially the millennial generation.

The important thing to do in diplomacy is communicate and how to communicate to establish a relationship so that the relationship can last in the long term. Likewise in cultural diplomacy, where culture is the instrument and must be packaged with methods that are as attractive as possible so as to be able to influence the Indonesian people. In Indonesia, the development of South Korean cultural diplomacy through Hallyu is now increasingly showing its success in economic and political terms. As many as 17.5 million foreign tourists have visited South Korea throughout 2019, the number of visits surpassed the highest number in 2018. Indonesia contributed to the increase in numbers in 2019 through data on Indonesian tourist visits until October which reached 225 thousand tourists.⁵ However, there was a drastic decrease in the number of Indonesian tourists visiting South Korea due to the spread of the Covid-19 Pandemic which was marked by social restrictions for prevention carried out by the Indonesian government to prevent the continued spread of the virus.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the spread of South Korean culture in Indonesia was stopped due to the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). However, efforts continue to be made by the South Korean government in disseminating the influence of Hallyu in various parts of the world, one of which is by opening its Cultural Center, including in Indonesia. The Korean Cultural Center or commonly called the Korean Cultural Center (KCC) is a place organized, sponsored, or supported by the Korean government to introduce Korean culture throughout the world under the direct supervision of the Embassy of the Republic of South Korea through the holding of Korean cultural events, musicals, traditional dances, traditional clothing, and promotion

⁴ Shim Doobo, 'Hibridity and The Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia', *Sage Publication* (Media Culture & Society, 2006) <https://doi.org/https://sites.duke.edu/culanth210_01_f2016/files/2016/08/ShimKoreanPop.pdf#:~:text=Hybridity%20and%20the%20rise%20of%20Korean%20popular%20culture,%E2%80%9393%20has%20gained%20immense%20popularity%20in%20China%2C%20Taiwan%2C>.

⁵ Rina Anggraeni, 'Tren Kunjungan Wisatawan Asal Indonesia Ke Korsel Meningkat', *SINDONEWS*, 2019 <<https://doi.org/https://ekbis.sindonews.com/berita/1481740/34/tren-kunjungan-wisatawan-asal-indonesia-ke-korsel-meningkat>>.

of the K-pop or K-drama entertainment industry at the cultural center.⁶ Based on data from January 2020, there are already 32 Korean Cultural Centers in 28 countries and Jakarta is one of the cities that has a Korean Cultural Center in Indonesia.

KCCI as a forum for the spread of South Korean culture in Indonesia is responsible for spreading its influence in Indonesia by presenting cultural content during the Covid-19 Pandemic through various online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube. Not only that, the spread of Korean Wave influence was also carried out through the K-drama series which was very booming during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Indonesian people, especially millennials, are in demand for K-dramas and they spend a lot of time watching Korean drama series played by their favorite Korean artists. During the Covid-19 Pandemic which has been running for almost 3 years in Indonesia, of course, the role of KCCI is very much needed for the South Korean government in supporting the development of Korean cultural diplomacy in Indonesia in order to achieve its national interests.

The utilization of cultural dissemination through online platforms is one of KCCI's leading instruments in spreading South Korean culture during the Covid-19 Pandemic. If we look at the content issued by KCCI through the Instagram platform before the pandemic took place, KCCI issued more content during the pandemic which was accompanied by competitions and joint activities carried out online. This was KCCI's momentum to increase the interest in Hallyu in Indonesia which declined during the pandemic due to the long-scale social restrictions and started its role by providing several online joint activities on Korean culture. The inauguration of the Korean Cultural Center makes it easier for the South Korean government to spread its influence to the people in Indonesia. In addition, for Indonesian people who love Korea, it can also make it easier to explore Korean Wave culture without having to go directly to the country of Ginseng. As for the making of this research, the author seeks to explain the role of the Korean Cultural Center (KCCI) in the development of South Korean cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2019-2022.

II. METHODOLOGY

The author uses qualitative research methods to describe the whole truth about the object under study. This qualitative research prioritizes the problem of process and meaning or perception which is expected to open up a variety of qualitative knowledge and information through meticulous and meaningful descriptions of analysis without denying quantitative information in the form of numbers and numbers. The presentation method in this study applies descriptive qualitative research methods that present a

⁶ 'Korean Cultural Center Resmi Dibuka', *KOREAN CULTURAL CENTER*, 2011 <<https://doi.org/https://id.korean-culture.org/id/486/board/232/read/3816>>.

description and analysis of a problem with relevant concepts. The object of this research is the Korean Cultural Center (KCCI) which plays a role in the development of South Korean cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic with the aim of knowing the direction of South Korea's national interests in establishing its cultural center in Indonesia on a macro level consisting of politics, economics, or military, as well as on a micro level, such as sports, arts, education, and the entertainment industry.

The type of data collection from this research uses qualitative data. The data source used in this research is secondary data through accurate collection techniques in carrying out this research is using data collection in the nature of library studies (Library Research). The data used is data obtained from book literature, scientific journals, articles, literature studies, various national and international news official websites, the Official website of the KCC, as well as news that has a relationship with the problems that will be examined by the author in this study. After all the data is collected, the data will be selected again and then grouped in the discussion.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

KCCI plays an important role in South Korean cultural diplomacy in Indonesia. The cultural diplomacy carried out by KCCI during the pandemic is through events that it organizes online and offline through small events and big events to promote Korean culture in Indonesia. Including the use of several means of art in its cultural diplomacy efforts, namely through exhibitions and competitions. The events held through exhibitions and competitions are divided into several sectors, including; Culinary, culinary can be an instrument of a country's culture in conveying the contents of diplomatic messages to other countries by carrying its cultural identity. Entertainment, through the entertainment industry, the Korean government slips traditional culture and tourism locations that have implications for the Korean people. Tourism, the introduction of culture through K-drama and K-pop can have implications for the tourism sector of the Republic of Korea.

This pandemic situation forced KCCI in its cultural diplomacy to make changes during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The South Korean government and cultural institutions have adapted to this difficult situation and developed new ways to promote Korean culture around the world. In addition to relying on offline activity programs, KCCI's cultural diplomacy appears to have undergone significant changes during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Developments in delivering cultural messages began to appear in its cultural diplomacy techniques since KCCI optimized online media to promote Korean culture in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Online media used by the South

Korean cultural center as a use of media globalization in carrying out its cultural diplomacy can be seen through Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

Instagram is used as a means of conducting simple and effective sales promotions that are utilized by KCCI in promoting South Korean Culture. Through the YouTube platform with video subscribers reaching more than 9 thousand subscribers, KCCI also provides a variety of video content ranging from competition events, My Campus Tour events, and cooking events, to events that invite Hallyu artists in Indonesia. Then Facebook is utilized as a website that mainly provides social networking services that describe how they relate because of social similarities, this momentum is utilized by KCCI with a total of more than 160 thousand active followers to invite hallyu to participate in Korean cultural events by disseminating various Korean cultural information, informing upcoming KCCI activities, live streaming about KCCI activities, and inviting hallyu to take part in cultural competitions.

The spread of the Covid-19 virus has made countries focus more on dealing with the problem of the spread of the virus. Covid-19 has been classified as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) due to the increase in cases every day since its discovery. WHO states in global health diplomacy that the G-20 countries are committed in terms of politics and political coordination at the global level to encourage cooperation to increase the production of personal protective equipment to avoid export bans and ensure equitable distribution of medical devices based on need. (WHO, 2023). Although the Korean government focuses on the goal of handling the prolonged spread of the Covid-19 virus related to global health issues, the Korean government still has its cultural centers in various parts of the world, one of which is in Indonesia, which is tasked with bridging their cultural exchanges in order to undergo cultural diplomacy.

The existence of the Korean cultural center is certainly needed by the Korean government during this pandemic to launch its cultural diplomacy. Through several activities that it has carried out during this pandemic ranging from online to offline activities, the effectiveness of KCCI as an instrument of Korean cultural diplomacy has begun to be seen in its success in assisting the South Korean government in carrying out its cultural diplomacy mission to achieve its national interests. This can be seen from the recovery of several economic sectors of the Republic of South Korea, namely in the Tourism sector, there has been a drastic decline in the tourism sector felt by the South Korean government since the last 2 years as evidenced by Tourist arrivals in South Korea averaging 632,877.54 from 1993 to 2022, reaching a record high throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic took place in early 2020 and a record low of 29,415.00 in April 2020. Then in the South Korean Entertainment Industry sector, the Covid-19 Pandemic triggered a

large consumption of Hallyu content from South Korea since the beginning of the spread of Covid-19. This is evidenced by a survey conducted in 18 countries as of December 2021, around 53.5 percent of respondents stated that K-drama consumption increased after the coronavirus pandemic began. Other video-based content, such as movies and entertainment programs, also saw a large increase in consumption, at around 52 percent and 51.5 percent respectively. Seeing this phenomenon, despite the situation of the spread of the coronavirus, the existence of South Korea's cultural diplomacy during the pandemic can be seen to boost the Korean government's economy in the entertainment industry.

Indonesia is one of the largest contributors to the connoisseurs of Hallyu culture in the entertainment industry. This is evidenced by the results of an online Katadata Insight Center (KIC) and Zigi.id data survey of 1,609 Indonesian respondents who like Korean entertainment, the majority or 41.1% of fans in Indonesia access South Korean content on average for 1 to 3 hours per day, 24.7% of respondents access South Korean content on average for less than 1 hour per day, then as many as 18.9% of respondents who listen to music or watch South Korean films on average for 3 to 6 hours per day, and also as many as 10.2% of respondents who access South Korean content on average for more than 6 hours per day. Not only that, through the Bangtan Boys (BTS) video which is included in the list of the most watched K-pop videos on Youtube, Indonesia ranks fifth with a total of 59.1 million views, preceded by Japan in first place with 120 million views and India in second place with 110 million views. Based on the income of the Korean entertainment industry, the well-known K-pop agency SM Entertainment through several business units producing music, films, dramas, and variety shows experienced fluctuations in revenue to net profit during January-March 2022. The agency was able to incise KRW 114.9 billion or equivalent to Rp 1.3 trillion with a net profit of 20.8 billion won as of February 28, 2023. In contrast to July-September, the well-known agency was able to make a net profit of up to 22.1 billion won with a total revenue of 135.1 billion won.

Indonesia shares in the progress made by the South Korean government in the entertainment industry during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This is because Indonesia is one of the biggest cultural fans in the world. This is certainly supported by the role of Korean cultural centers in Indonesia during this pandemic. This is evidenced by several events that have been held during this pandemic related to K-pop / Kdrama in supporting the development of the entertainment industry. Through several cultural promotion events such as the one they held at the Jakarta LRT Station, KCCI in its performance event always features Kpop cover dance music. In addition, KCCI also uses the competition-

themed events that it has run during this pandemic until the second round with the theme Cover Dance Festival 2022 in Indonesia in attracting Indonesian Hallyu attention in the Kpop Industry.

In this study, although the important role of Korean cultural centers in Indonesia during this pandemic is needed, there are other factors that cause the continued development of Korean culture, especially in the entertainment industry even though the Covid Pandemic is still ongoing. This is supported by the technological advances of South Korea which utilizes its technology in the development of its culture. Seeing the pandemic conditions that force people to keep themselves in their homes. This is utilized through the entertainment industry which can be accessed anywhere and anytime so that it can generate a market for the Korean government to reap profits in the Kpop and Kdrama industries.

Conglomerate or Chaebol investment support also plays an important role in the spread of Hallyu, namely as a party that sponsors cultural activities. As stated earlier, chaebols use this opportunity to support the South Korean cultural industry. One of the actions taken by these chaebols is to provide funding for cultural industry activities such as filmmaking and K-Drama production, as well as the organization of music programs. Not only chaebols are involved in the spread of Hallyu, but also a number of other private parties such as music agencies and record labels namely SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, Cube Entertainment, and others.

IV. CONCLUSION

The diplomatic relations that have been established between South Korea and Indonesia, which are 49 years old, and the two countries continue to strive to improve relations and cooperation both regionally, regionally, and multilaterally. The Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge in itself to keep uniting the two countries so that the cooperation that has been established can be even stronger to be able to mitigate its influence on the economic and social fields. The existence of KCCI as Korean cultural diplomacy during this pandemic is needed to promote Korean culture. Through several activities that it has carried out during this pandemic ranging from online to offline activities such as, Korean Food Carnival, several online cultural event sessions with the theme "Asah Kreativitas #dirumahaja, several K-movie screening events held directly at the Multifunction Hall, Kpop dance competition events, K-Travel for five episodes, and also held a Hybrid Travel Fair festival, Cover Dance Festival 2022 in Indonesia.

The success of Korean cultural diplomacy through KCCI's role in promoting its culture through events it has organized helps the South Korean government achieve its

national interests. The role of KCCI which optimizes online media Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram to convey cultural messages as a form of cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic is very important. Through these online media, the Korean cultural center in Indonesia can still carry out its mission in spreading Korean culture through the activities it organizes during the pandemic. In addition to the role of the KCC during the Covid-19 Pandemic as a Korean cultural center that is quite important, the support of several other actors such as government policies, private institutions, conglomerates (Chaebol) also has a very important role to help KCCI in spreading its culture in Indonesia. The involvement of non-government actors such as conglomerates (chaebol), private parties, intellectuals and so on shows the relevance of diplomacy theory.

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