

# Bianka Francistyová, Lucia Novanská Škripcová

## Emergence of New Male Leads in Korean Dramas

### Abstract

Korean TV production has been greatly influenced by the arrival of a wave of feminism in South Korea and the subsequent wave of anti-feminism. Moreover, writers and directors have taken the opportunity to update the main male and female characters of the series. The aim of this paper is to introduce two new types of male heroes that we notice in contemporary Korean dramas: an “underdog” and a “dream-like hero”. Through a narrative analysis that focuses on the personality development of characters within a narrative, we examine two heroes – Park Sae-ro-yi from *Itaewon Class* and Ryu Sun-jae from *Lovely Runner*. Park Sae-ro-yi introduces the character of an underdog whose life became worse after a tragedy and was left marked by the inaction of his surroundings when he entered this unfortunate situation. He can succeed despite adversity. The adversity in question can be aided by illegal practices, which is why the underdog often becomes a vigilante as well. Ryu Sun-jae embodies a dream-like hero, but he should not be understood as a person who exists solely for the heroine, and

loses himself. He is a character who is mature but willing to give the heroine anything she desires. In doing so, he fulfills feminist views, sentiments and expectations of actualization that came to Korean television production after 2012. At the same time, he does not have to be a selfless character because the character may not only be positive, but may also have certain negative character traits.

### Key words

Female Fantasy. Feminism in South Korea. Korean Drama. Main Male Characters. Male Hero. Narrative Analysis.

### Instead of Introduction

Contemporary South Korean society, which has become one of the global symbols of rapid industrialization and hypermodernization, continues to harbour traditional values that originated in Confucianism. While it may no longer be possible to speak of strict adherence to all values, as divisions of class and social status, formal etiquette, or adherence to good relations within the extended family are not as present, respect for elders and filial piety, hierarchy, and social order are still very much guarded values that many strive to uphold. Śleziak (2013) notes that contemporary South Korea (hereafter “Korea”) is a good embodiment of Confucius’ notion of an ideal country and society. However, Confucius’ idea emphasized the man’s status in society, which was always higher if he and the woman were of the same social level. We see the same practices, only in a different context, today. It is as straightforward as it was hundreds of years ago, while then it was a social norm and today a social consequence. According to statistics from the OECD (n.d.), as of 2023, the gender wage gap in Korea is 29.3%. This is a significant improvement in women’s conditions, as it was a 47% gap as recently as 1992. However, it should be noted that Korea is the country with the largest gender wage gap among all OECD and developed countries measured under the current conditions of hypermodernization and progress. At the same time, it

should be added that only 21% and 5% of women in Korean corporates have managerial and executive positions, respectively (Ahn, 2022; Hurajová et al., 2023). However, women’s frustration is not only because of the different salary levels, but also concerns social status. Kim (2021) notes that a fundamental change came to the society in 2015, when Korean society began to notice the changes or the resurgence of feminist activism. In 2015, the hashtag “#iamafeminist” appeared on Twitter in Korean, in response to hateful behaviour towards feminists and feminism (Kim, 2017). Previously, a gender gap had already been created within society, as women demanded to have their status in society equalized, and men, on the other hand, saw no reason to do so, as misogyny was created in the social subconsciousness as traditional values were upheld. It was 2015 that was a turning point, as since then there has been a constant struggle between the Korean feminist wave and the anti-feminism wave. As Katharine Moon, professor of political science, notes, this “gender war” is serious, especially among the younger generations, adding that “men feel that they are swallowing water, that they are just flailing in a sea that is changing upon them” (Steger, 2016, para. 4). These events have resulted in the formation of the 4B movement in 2019 – a feminist movement oriented against consumerism, patriarchy and rejecting heterosexual marriages that make women captives of the system, as their only role is to bear

children and take care of the family at the expense of their own careers and ambitions (Lee & Jeong, 2021).

Feminism and various liberal ideas have their support in society. This was also evidenced by the election of former President Moon Jae-in, who was considered a ‘feminist president’. However, society quickly split into two camps, with polling expert Jeong Han-wool also beginning to notice the opinion gap during Moon’s reign. “Conservative attitudes began to appear, especially among men in their 20s, first over gender issues. And then they proceeded to anti-Democratic Party, anti-liberal positions” (Gong, 2024, “Perceptions about gender inequality drive political differences” section, para. 3). Growing hatred brought victory to the current president, Yoon Suk Yeol, in 2022. Moon (2023) notes that the victory came through the “exploitation of an anxious young male demographic, blaming women for societal issues like a low birth rate, slow economic growth, and the collapse of meritocracy” (para. 3).

However, the media industry, which initially supported feminist ideas and movements as they emerged and had their support within society, quickly changed. This was due to the fear of losing consumers as the difference of opinion was not mirrored. On the other side, however, were the media creators, especially writers and directors, who continued to mirror a progressive society that was more liberal and allowed for new themes

to be brought in and allowed the characters to go through a rebirth so that they were no longer portrayed in a stereotypical way. Thus today, both series and films combine both Eastern and Western ideals, which producers place in the socio-cultural contexts of Korea. In the case of female protagonists in series, the characters have changed and Francistyová (2023) presents that they do not need a male hero for their existence, and at the same time these new heroines are moving away from the established standard and ideal of beauty. These heroines are no longer just the embodiment of Cinderella waiting for a prince, but very much become their own saviours. Also, it can no longer be said that these new heroines are optimistic and see the good in everything, as they are a “morally complex character” (Francistyová, 2023) who departs from the typical role of a princess. Thus, these new heroines reflect feminist perspectives on contemporary issues in society.

We can also identify a change in the main male protagonists, as we move away from the stereotypical unified concept to diversified male protagonists. The aim of this paper is to introduce 2 new types of male heroes that we notice in contemporary Korean dramas: an “underdog” and a “dream-like hero” (Francistyová, 2023). In order to achieve the stated goal, we employ narrative analysis specializing in the understanding of the character and his reaction and position

within the narrative. The method of analysis and the result is similar to the creation of a “narrative portrait” (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), but in our case it is a comparison of theoretical knowledge and of established and newly-implemented elements. At the same time, we are focusing on a single category – personality, and therefore we use narrative analysis, or as Leden (2021) calls it, “narrative analysis of character indicators”, because this method can highlight the representation of “norm-comforming and norm-breaking narrative” (p. 309), which we aim to point out with this paper. The research material for a better grasp of the issue is *Itaewon Class*’ Park Sae-ro-yi (2020) and *Lovely Runner*’s Ryu Sun-jae (2024). The chosen characters are not the first or even the only ones to possess the given characteristics, but they are interesting research material because they embody several characteristic and now commonly applied traits, that have been tested on previous characters of this type. In order to be able to comprehensively understand the issue at hand, we formulated 2 research questions:

- Q1: *How is the character of an underdog presented in comparison to other male protagonists in Korean dramas?*  
Q2: *How is the character of a dream-like hero presented in comparison to other male protagonists in Korean dramas?*

### 1 An Underdog

Stories in which the weaker defeat the stronger despite considerable disadvantage have been part of our history since time immemorial. The battle of David and Goliath, the battle of Thermopylae or the victory of the French army led by Joan of Arc have been and will long be the building blocks and inspiration for creative works. Vandello et al. (2007) argue that the most interesting characters, whether from history, mythology, literature, cinema, etc., are precisely the people who faced difficult obstacles, that no one expected (them) to win, or whose failure was expected. At the same time, as research by Goldschmied et al. (2017) confirms, it is the stories where the underdog wins that are more memorable to the viewer. Frazier and Snyder (1991) remark that an underdog’s success with viewers is “a reflection of the meritocratic ideology that anyone can make it to the top if they try hard enough. Thus the underdog concept may vary with the social structure of the society” (p. 387). In the context of Korean TV production, Chang (2024) notes that the presence of the underdog character is associated with *han*, i.e. Korean grief and sorrows stemming from the deep-rooted resentment of older populations as they lived through tough times, which may, among other things, contain some sense of injustice and motivate individuals to fight for their rights. Hence, revenge-oriented dramas resonate in society

today as audiences want to see justice done and for corruption to be punished (Chang, 2024; Radošinská & Magalová, 2022). In many cases, this is what the role of the underdog leads to, taking the role of the punisher upon himself, even though many assume that he will not succeed. The underdog thus becomes very much a vigilante.

The *Itaewon Class* story is one of many Korean underdog stories that have resonated both in Korea and on the global market. Park Sae-ro-yi’s father was murdered by the son of a prominent CEO who owned a major food company – the Jangga group. When Sae-ro-yi found out who murdered his father, he wanted to kill him, but instead was himself imprisoned through the CEO’s efforts and corruption. There, he decided what his dream would be – to open a restaurant in Itaewon and defeat the Jangga group, while at the same time wanting to reveal to the public the real circumstances of his father’s death, which were destroyed by the CEO during the investigation. Of course, as is the case in most stories, Sae-ro-yi manages to uncover the truth and gets his father’s killer thrown in jail, but he also fulfilled his dream of becoming one of Korea’s most successful foodservice-oriented companies. So he defeats the CEO who has tried in various ways to prevent him from succeeding.

From the very beginning, we see the difference between Park Sae-ro-yi and typical male heroes. Because the typical protagonist as Lee (2012)

describes him, is a socially powerful and financially secure protagonist. Park Sae-ro-yi, on the other hand, grew up in an environment where, although he did not have endless financial resources, he was content. However, after the death of his father, he lost this background and his social status was equally diminished because he was in prison, which in many cases, and not only in Korea, means a difficult reentry into life. Even before he went to prison, he was expelled from school, so within the narrative we see a symbolic cutting off of his possible return to a happy, normal life.

The character does not change into a morally superior one within the story because the premise is that an underdog represents a morally upright being who represents goodness from the beginning, and his opposition is the very people on whom he wants to take revenge. Typically, it is the female protagonist who is the embodiment of goodness that the male protagonist later gravitates towards, but in *Itaewon Class*, the female protagonist is more of a tool for Sae-ro-yi to manifest his desires and dreams. An interesting observation is that in *Itaewon Class*, we see the female protagonist take on the typical role of the hero as she strives to morally improve herself to see the world the way the hero does. The male protagonist, on the other hand, adopts strict moral values and does not undergo moral rebirth because he is morally good from the start. Another interesting finding is the

fact that the main male character adopts traits typically attributed to the female protagonist, who is, in stereotyped mini-series, not aware of love (Lee, 2012), i.e. whether she is in love with someone, or someone is in love with her. This is exactly the aspect that Sae-ro-yi’s character undertakes. He only becomes aware of Jo Yi-seo’s feelings after their dramatic confession, but also rejects them because he has other priorities at the time. Thus, the protagonist assumes the heroine’s initial passivity towards love, or self-denies it (Lee, 2012).

The underdog character is very different from the typical character traits of male protagonists, because as the characters evolved and feminist ideas entered the production, male characters were also given traits that had long been typical only for female protagonists. An underdog is usually a person who, at the cost of some misfortune (arbitrary or self-inflicted), has arrived at a worse life situation – social, economic, individual-personal. A character can only arise, and a narrative can only move if the hero is marked by the inaction of the environment when he has entered the unfortunate situation. The inaction, however, does not mean nothing-doing, but on the contrary, such an action that goes against the moral principles and teachings of the male protagonist. Thus, the protagonist tries to prove that he is capable of succeeding in spite of adversity. A given unlikability can be supplemented by illegal practices, and thus the underdog

often becomes a vigilante. That is, an initiator who is “challenging the established system” (Francistyová, 2023). The underdog character can be encountered in the *Vagabond* through Cha Dal-geon, or Kang Cheol’s journey from *W: Two Worlds* to fame and fortune as he is described as an underdog within the story.

## 2 A Dream-like Hero

An equally new type of hero in Korean series is the dream-like hero who embodies female fantasy. This type of hero embodies newly formed ideals from a feminist perspective. Iwicka (2021), who describes the hero with such ideals and character traits, refers to him as a “sensitive lead”. According to her, he is a hero who does not blame others for his misfortune, does not exploit women for his well-being, is mature and supportive, but also has the characteristic traits of the main heroine. He is not willing to lose his humanity, is quietly kind and willingly helps others. However, what makes him different from other main characters is his patience (see: Iwicka, 2021). Such a hero thus confirms Chaudhary’s (2021) statement, that today’s male protagonist embodies “a unique feminist perspective” (p. 14).

The story of *Lovely Runner* is based on the webtoon. The long-delayed reason for the adaptation was the fact that many of the actors thought it was just the story of a “crazy fan girl” (Grover, 2024). However, when *Lovely Runner* came out in

2024, it became a hit due to the type of main character presented. The series tells the story of Im Sol, who becomes paralyzed due to an accident and did not want to live anymore. Thanks to a surprise phone call from Ryu Sun-jae of the newly-debuted *Eclipse*, Sol begins to live her life to the fullest again. From that moment on, he becomes Sol’s favorite. However, on the day of their concert, where she coincidentally meets her idol, she learns that he commits suicide later that night. She cannot believe it, but when she finds herself back in high school through a magical watch, she is determined to help Ryu Sun-jae, or rather save him from his future decision. Through various obstacles and events, Im Sol learns that Sun-jae knew her in the past and that he saved her in the accident that led her to be with impairment. To prevent his death, Im Sol does everything in her power to save him.

From the story, we can tell that there is an update of the characters, as not only is the main female character locked away as a damsel-in-distress, but also the main male character needs rescuing. This is thus a reciprocal rescue, which An (2022) also discusses and notes that because of this, the characters, originally as “male as saviour” and “female as damsel”, have also been updated in *Crash Landing on You*. The update is also visible in other parts, for example Iwicka (2021), but also An (2022), mention that nowadays male protagonists ask permission before kissing the female protagonist. Ryu Sun-jae

does not ask if he can kiss the main character, he suppresses his desire and waits for the heroine to make the first move. The character thus presents a different view of the male protagonist in Korean dramas who makes the first move, with or without permission. Ryu Sun-jae waits for Im Sol to be ready, and to desire it as well.

Ryu Sun-jae, as a character, breaks away from the stereotypical concept of main male characters to a great extent. In his case, it does not matter if he is economically secure or if his status in society is high. It is not important to the narrative because the character has no need to flaunt his finances. For example, he has a great bathtub with a view, which is envied and often occupied by Baek In-hyuk (the leader of *Eclipse*), but he does not enjoy it. Although the character’s set-up agrees with Lee’s (2012) premise that hero comes from a family that led him to become a professional, it is okay for Ryu Sun-jae to walk away from the direction his parents want him to go. It’s important for him to do what he enjoys. At the same time, he takes on the character traits usually attributed to main female characters – positivity, patience, or/and loyalty.

Lee (2012) argues that the protagonist embodies the masculine ideal of South Korean culture. However, after updating, it should be added that even though he embodies the masculine ideal, contemporary characterization of this type of hero leans more

towards female fantasies. However, in order not to make this character type appear too feminine, as opposed to the typical *sangnamja* (stereotypically strong macho man), Elfving-Hwang (2011) notes that shower scenes are inserted into the narrative where the main male characters are given the opportunity to show their torsos “to dispel doubts about the main character bodies, albeit in dramas involving action scenes these scenes are also used to empathise the hypermasculinity of the male characters” (p. 11).

A dream-like hero, however, is not to be understood as a person who exists solely for the female protagonist, until he loses himself, his own mission, and self-realization. On the contrary, the character maintains his existence, but orients it towards the main heroine, with whom he wants to spend time. On the other hand, however, he realizes that he has to give her space (Iwicka, 2021). He is a character who is mature but willing to give the heroine anything she desires. Although he can realize the seriousness of the situation, he sometimes lacks *nunchi*<sup>1</sup>, which can cause the character to have a few silly scenes as well. The character presents feminist views, sentiments and expectations of actualization that reached Korean television

<sup>1</sup> Authors’ note: *Nunchi* (눈치) is a Korean word for high social awareness of the situation. It is similar as to having 6th sense and common sense, and (re)act according to it.

production after 2012. Although the character may not automatically represent selfless needs, the needs are within the boundaries of a female lead. We encountered a dream-like hero in *Crash Landing on You*, where Ri Jeong-hyeok embodied this character, and in *Queen of Tears* Baek Hyun-woo.

## Conclusion

The new types of heroes (an underdog and a dream-like hero), which are very different from the originally stereotyped male protagonists, represent the current state of South Korean society. The wave of feminism and anti-feminism have brought new male and female main characters into television production. Heroines no longer need to be rescued and are not fixated on the hero, and heroes have moved away from the symbolic position of king. Previously, heroes were referred to as a “young CEO at one of Korea’s top corporations” (Ju, 2020, p. 34), but today they may not have the highest status in society. In the case of the underdog who tries to beat the higher-ups and replace them, the motivation is not the vision of affluence, but the moral value that someone like that should not be at the top. Of course, within the context we must also understand revenge as a prime motivator. Here, the underdog character can morph into a vigilante because typically the underdog has moral values in accord with societal values and beliefs, but the vigilante deepens those values and considers his moral compass to be better

than the societal or even legal. Thus, the vigilante becomes the executioner he thinks society needs and in his mind he is doing it for the greater good. On the other hand, there is a dream-like hero whose existence is closely tied to the female protagonist’s character. This is a character that in many cases is born out of female fantasy, and it is hard to find such a character in the real world. It is thus an archetypal character who, although he devotes his existence to the heroine, does not forget his own life. Although he is a dreamy character, he may not be morally perfect or selfless. The development of new character types in a relatively long-standing narrow cinema is undeniably a response to current socio-cultural issues in South Korea and feminist movements’ responses to them. Episodic series must necessarily adapt to current trends or risk becoming irrelevant to society and potentially losing their audiences.

## Acknowledgement

Funded by the EU NextGenerationEU through the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia under the project No. FPPV-10-2024.

This study was elaborated within the research project supported by Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) No. APVV-21-0115, titled ‘Hypermodern Media Culture – Film and Television Production as Mirror of Sociocultural Phenomena of the 21st Century’.

## References

Ahn, A. (2022, December 3). *Feminists are protesting against the wave of anti-feminism that's swept South Korea*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/03/1135162927/women-feminism-south-korea-sexism-protest-haeil-yoon>

An, J. (2022). K-Drama 2.0: Updating tropes with intertextuality and cinematic visuals in *Crash Landing on You*. *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, 14(2), 131-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17564905.2022.2120999>

Chang, J. Y. (2024). *How K-dramas can transform your life: Powerful lessons on belongingness, healing, and mental health*. Wiley.

Chaudhary, N. (2021). An eye for an eye: The female gaze in action in Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*. *Gap Bodhi Taru - A Global Journal of Humanities*, 4(1), 14-17. [https://www.gapbodhitaru.org/res/articles/\(14-17\)%20AN%20EYE%20FOR%20AN%20EYE%20THE%20FEMALE%20GAZE%20IN%20ACTION%20IN%20JONATHAN%20GLAZER%20UNDER%20THE%20SKIN.pdf](https://www.gapbodhitaru.org/res/articles/(14-17)%20AN%20EYE%20FOR%20AN%20EYE%20THE%20FEMALE%20GAZE%20IN%20ACTION%20IN%20JONATHAN%20GLAZER%20UNDER%20THE%20SKIN.pdf)

Elfving-Hwang, J. (2011). Not so soft after all: Kkonminam masculinities in contemporary South Korean popular culture. In *KSAA 7th Biennial Conference*. The Korean Studies Association of Australasia (KSAA). [https://www.academia.edu/22503546/Not\\_So\\_Soft\\_After\\_All\\_Kkonminam\\_Masculinities\\_in\\_Contemporary\\_South\\_Korean\\_Popular\\_Culture](https://www.academia.edu/22503546/Not_So_Soft_After_All_Kkonminam_Masculinities_in_Contemporary_South_Korean_Popular_Culture)

Francistyová, B. (2023). Emergence of new female lead in Korean

dramas. In M. Prostináková Hossová, M. Graca, & J. Radošinská (Eds.), *Marketing & Media Identity: At the Future of Today | Hypermoderná mediálna kultúra vo filme a televízii* (pp. 22-31). Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius.

Frazier, J. A., & Snyder, E. E. (1991). The underdog concept in sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8(4), 380-388. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.8.4.380>

Goldschmied, N., Ruiz, J., & Olagaray, S. (2017). The underdog narrative in movies: When our memories fail us. *Heroism Science*, 2(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.26736/hs.2017.01.02>

Gong, S. E. (2024, April 10). *Elections reveal a growing gender divide across South Korea*. <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/10/1243819495/elections-reveal-a-growing-gender-divide-across-south-korea>

Gover, A. (2024, May 7). *Lovely Runner without Byeon Woo Seok? Here's why tvN waited for years to find the perfect match for Ryu Sun Jae*. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/web-series/lovely-runner-without-byeon-woo-seok-heres-why-tvn-waited-for-years-to-find-the-perfect-match-for-ryu-sun-jae-101715007012955.html>

Hurajová, A., Slezák, A., & Hladíková, V. (2023). Women in the world of digital games: The case of Slovakia. *Acta Ludologica*, 6(2), 92-115. <https://doi.org/10.34135/actaludologica.2023-6-2.92-115>

Iwicka, R. (2021). Redefining new masculinity in Korean television

dramas series. In R. Iwická (Ed.), *Manifestations of male image in the world's cultures* (pp. 113-135). Jagiellonian University Press.

Ju, H. (2020). *Transnational Korean television: Cultural storytelling and digital audiences*. Lexington Books.

Kim, J. (2017). #iamafeminist as the "mother tag": Feminist identification and activism against misogyny on Twitter in South Korea. *Feminist Media Studies*, 17(5), 804-820. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1283343>

Kim, J. (2021). The resurgence and popularization of feminism in South Korea: Key issues and challenges for contemporary feminist activism. *Korea Journal*, 61(4), 75-101. <https://doi.org/10.25024/kj.2021.61.4.75>

Kim, S.-Y. (Director). (2020). *이태원 클라쓰 [Itaewon Class]* [TV series]. Showbox; Zium Content; Itaewon Class Production Partners.

Leden, L. (2021). *Adaption av flickskap Normbegräftande och normbrytande i flickböcker översatta från engelska till svenska och finska 1945 - 1965*. Department of Finnish and Nordic Studies, University of Helsinki.

Lee, J., & Jeong, E. (2021). The 4B movement: Envisioning a feminist future with/in a non-reproductive future in Korea. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(5), 633-644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2021.1929097>

Lee, S. (2012). The structure of the appeal of Korean wave texts. *Korean Observer*, 43(2), 447-469. [https://www.tobiashubINETTE.se/hallyu\\_5.pdf](https://www.tobiashubINETTE.se/hallyu_5.pdf)

Moon, R. (2023, January 15). *Feminism is the new f-word -*

Populism & patriarchy among young South Korean men. *Harvard Political Review*. <https://harvardpolitics.com/feminism-is-the-new-f-word-populism-patriarchy-among-young-south-korean-men/>

OECD. (n.d.). *Gender wage gap*. Retrieved September 6, 2024, from <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/gender-wage-gap.html?oecdcontrol-96565bc25e-var3=2023&oecdcontrol-324c268e53-var1=OECD%7CKOR%7CSVK%7CSVN%7CCZE%7CJPN%7CCHE%7CNOR%7CFIN%7CSWE>

Radošinská, J., & Magalová, L. (2022). Super, Inc.: Episodic television drama *The Boys*, antiheroism and society of performance. *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 5(1), 28-52. / [https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2\\_Jana-Radosinska-Lucia-Magalova.pdf](https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2_Jana-Radosinska-Lucia-Magalova.pdf)

Rodríguez-Dorans, E., & Jacobs, P. (2020). Making narrative portraits: A methodological approach to analysing qualitative data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(6), 611-623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1719609>

Śleziak, T. (2013). The role of Confucianism in contemporary South Korean society. *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 66(1), 27-46.

Steger, I. (2016, October 23). *An epic battle between feminism and deep-seated misogyny is under way in South Korea*. <https://qz.com/801067/an-epic-battle-between-feminism-and-deep-seated-misogyny-is-under-way-in-south-korea>

Vandello, J. A., Goldschmied, N.

P., & Richards, D. A. R. (2007). The appeal of the underdog. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(12), 1603-1616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207307488>

Yoon, J.-H., & Kim, T.-Y. (Directors). (2024). *선재 업고 튀어 [Lovely Runner]* [TV Series]. Bon Factory.

## Authors

Mgr. Bianka Francistyová  
francistyova1@ucm.sk  
ORCID-ID: 0000-0001-5865-0952

Mgr. et Bc. Lucia Novanská Škripcová, PhD.  
lucia.novanska.skripcova@ucm.sk  
ORCID-ID: 0000-0002-1547-241X

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava  
Faculty of Mass Media Communication  
Nám. J. Herdu 2  
Trnava, 917 01, Slovak Republic

## Profile of the Authors

Bianka Francistyová is a PhD candidate in media and communication studies at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. She specializes in South Korean popular media, with an emphasis on Korean television production. During her studies so far, she has published several studies dealing with this topic, but her interests also include K-pop and other products of Asian popular culture, as well as various other socio-cultural aspects in media.

Lucia Novanská Škripcová is an Assistant Professor in media and communication studies at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. Her scientific and research activities in recent years have focused mainly on new trends in media culture, the behaviour of media audiences and broadcasting systems. Her scope also includes community media and the ways in which media audiences may participate in the creation of media content.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/ejmap-24-02-08>