



Beyond the signs: A Semiotic Analysis of Bullying in the Korean Drama “The Glory”

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the signs that underlie bullying in a Korean drama entitled “The Glory”. “The Glory” is a Korean drama that is quite popular in several countries, especially in Indonesia, this drama raises the issue of bullying committed by a group of students against a student named Moon Dong Eun, where bullying often occurs in the school environment. This research uses a qualitative approach method, using documentation techniques for data collection, and applying Ferdinand De Saussure's theory. In the drama “The Glory”, the drama itself functions as a signifier, with the signifier being all the scenes from episode 1 to 16 depicting acts of bullying, and the signifier being the school, which serves as the place where the bullying incident against Moon Dong-Eun occurred. The conclusion of this study is that “The Glory” functions as a signifier, with the signifier being all the scenes from episodes 1 to 16 that were researched and related to bullying, and the sign is the school where the bullying incident against Moon Dong-Eun occurred. The contribution of this research lies in its ability to provide a semiotic analysis of bullying representation in popular media, particularly in Korean dramas, which can help raise awareness of bullying issues in educational institutions. Additionally, this study can serve as a reference for further research on the impact of media portrayals of bullying on public perception and policy-making related to anti-bullying measures in schools.

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1. Introduction

Bullying is a deliberate and conscious act of aggression that combines an imbalance of power and strength (Kasenda et al., 2023). Parents often do not take bullying seriously and tend to delegate such cases to teachers. However, due to its negative consequences, bullying has now gained significant public attention. Bullying can occur in various settings, such as entertainment media, the workplace, and schools (Aristya, 2020).

The unpleasant actions in question may harm, attempt to harm, or cause discomfort to the victim. These actions can be carried out physically (such as hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, etc.) or verbally (such as name-calling, threatening, mocking, teasing, spreading harmful rumors, etc.).



Such behavior may also include other forms of misconduct, such as making inappropriate facial expressions or body movements (of a sexual nature) or persistently engaging in harassing behavior (Gagola, 2022).

For victims, the consequences of bullying behavior in the school environment include feelings of fear, withdrawal from peers, passivity, and reduced focus on academic tasks (Eri et al., 2023). South Korea is often highlighted as one of the countries frequently scrutinized for bullying cases. However, it is not the country with the highest incidence of bullying in Asia, ranking instead at 75th place. Nonetheless, because bullying cases are also addressed by screenwriters and literary authors in the country, the issue is frequently portrayed in novels, films, and television dramas. As these works reach a wide audience, even internationally, South Korea has gained notoriety for severe cases of youth bullying (Agustina Dwi et al., 2023).

Since this industry contributes a significant portion of the national revenue, South Korea is one of the developed countries that heavily relies on creative arts industries, such as K-pop music, television dramas, and films. The government also supports this sector by standardizing internet infrastructure, making South Korea's download and streaming speeds among the fastest in the world. This enables South Koreans to access and enjoy the creative arts industries (Angela & Winduwati, 2020).

Korean dramas initiated the Korean Wave, which has spread to various countries, including Indonesia (Rivga Agusta & Elvira Wahyuni, 2023). The large number of Korean drama fans in Indonesia can also be observed through the many social media accounts dedicated to Korean dramas, one of which is the Twitter/X account @Kdrama_menfess, which has garnered 1 million followers and has posted over 700 thousand posts related to Korean dramas (Ardani et al., 2024). Korean dramas are not only renowned for their romantic themes. They also explore various other genres, such as fantasy, horror, action, and science fiction, with numerous themes addressing issues like the romanticization of infidelity and school bullying. An engaging plot is the foundation of a good drama (Seni & Rifqi, 2023).

Korean dramas typically follow common plotlines, often addressing mental health or psychological issues that have become widely discussed among people of various age groups (Gagola, 2022). The Korean drama that addresses the issue of bullying and features an engaging plot is titled "The Glory." The Korean drama "The Glory" has garnered public attention for its depiction of the life of Moon Dong Eun, a teenager who faces numerous social conflicts, including harassment. This drama portrays bullying in a profoundly harsh manner, drawing on real-life stories of children who have been victims of bullying in schools. It is narrated that such bullying occurs due to social disparities, wherein individuals in positions of power can ruthlessly subjugate

those from lower socioeconomic classes (Muswara Ariyani Hilda, 2024). Therefore, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the signs utilized in this drama to convey the message regarding bullying.

The present study employs Ferdinand de Saussure's analytical framework to understand and interpret the signs within the Korean drama "The Glory," particularly in relation to the issue of bullying. Saussure posits that a sign comprises a sound and an image, referred to as the signifier, and the concept that encompasses both the sound and the image is termed the signified (Laras & Rahmasari, 2023).

Semiotic analysis is a valuable method for decoding visual and verbal communication in artworks or media. In the context of this research, semiotic analysis will be employed to identify the verbal and non-verbal signs utilized in the drama to depict the issue of bullying. The research is expected to enhance understanding of how the Korean drama "The Glory" portrays the phenomenon of bullying and its impact on the characters within the narrative. Furthermore, this study may provide insights into the role of media in shaping societal perceptions and understanding of bullying issues. This can be seen in Table 1, the researchers sought to differentiate and correlate this study with previous research. As a result, they identified several publications related to bullying in Korean dramas. From these documents, the researchers selected the five most relevant papers, as follows:

Table 1. Four previous studies of Publish or Perish

Authors	Title	Source
(Maliki & Fuady, 2022)	The representation of bullying in the Korean drama <i>The Penthouse</i> .	Bandung Conference Series Public Realtions
(Fadilla & Fuady, 2022)	The representation of bullying in the South Korean drama <i>True Beauty</i> .	Bandung Conference Series Public Realtions
(Agustina Dwi et al., 2023)	Analysis of the framing of adolescent bullying in the South Korean drama 'The Glory,' Season 1, Episode 1.	SEMAKOM prosiding
(Pratama et al., 2023)	Bullying Behavior in the Play <i>3 Nen a Gimi: Ima Kara Mina-san wa, Hitojichi desu</i> , by Komura Naoko and Suzuki Yuma.	Jurna Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya Jepang.

SOURCE: PUBLISH OR PERISH, 2024

The research entitled "Representation of Bullying in the Korean Drama The Penthouse" by Melinda Maliki and M. E. Fuady, published in 2022 in the Bandung Conference Public Relations journal, employs a semiotic analysis based on Roland Barthes' model. In this paper, Maliki and Fuady analyze the denotative and connotative aspects of bullying depicted in the drama The Penthouse, concluding that power, authority, and wealth are significant perspectives and attitudes influencing individuals' behaviors.

The research titled "Representation of Bullying in the Korean Drama True Beauty" by Dita Fadilla, published in 2022 in the Bandung Conference Public Relations Journal, employs a qualitative approach utilizing Roland Barthes' semiotic model. This study analyzes the denotation, connotation, and myth associated with the signs and meanings of bullying as depicted in the Korean drama True Beauty.

The research titled "Framing Analysis of Bullying Depictions Among South Korean Adolescents in the Korean Drama 'The Glory' Season 1, Episode 1" by Anisa Dwi Agustina, Merry Fridha Tri Palupi, and Beta Puspitaning Ayodya, published in 2023 by SEMAKOM Proceedings, employs a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist paradigm and utilizes the framing model developed by Robert N. Entman. This study analyzes the following elements: Define Problem (problem definition), Diagnose Causes (identifying issues/sources of the problem), Make Moral Judgment (moral decision-making), and Treat Recommendation (problem resolution) as depicted in the Korean drama "The Glory," specifically in Season 1, Episode 1.

The research titled "Bullying Behavior in the Drama 3 Nen A Gumi: Ima Kara Mina-san wa, Hitojichi desu," authored by Oktaviani Nindi Pratama, Yusida Lusiana, and Muammar Kadafi in 2023, was published in the Journal of Japanese Language, Literature, and Culture. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing reading and note-taking techniques for data collection. The research analyzes the forms and causes of bullying within the drama, applying Coloroso's theory of bullying as the analytical framework. In this paper, the authors examine the various forms of bullying and the factors contributing to bullying in 3 Nen A Gumi: Ima Kara Mina-san wa, Hitojichi Desu, written by Komuro Naoko and Suzuki Yuma.

2. Theoretical Framework

The term "semiotics" originates from the Greek word "semeion," meaning "sign," or "seme," which translates to "interpretation of signs." The foundation of semiotic studies is rooted in scholastic and classical inquiries into rhetoric, logic, and poetics, during which a sign was understood to possess meaning that indicates the existence of something else (Vidiyawati & Wibowo, 2023). Broadly speaking, the field of semiotics is divided into two domains: semiotics of signification, driven by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), and semiotics of communication, led by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) (Hajaria et al., 2022).

Saussure delineates four theoretical concepts, namely signifier and signified, langue and parole, synchronic and diachronic, as well as syntagmatic and paradigmatic (Hajaria et al., 2022). The scholar Ferdinand de Saussure, during the years 1857 to 1913, delineated his semiotic theory into two components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier, understood as a physical form, can be recognized through architectural works, while the sign, perceived as meaning, is expressed through

the concepts, functions, and/or values inherent in these architectural creations ([Hamama Madhona, 2019](#)).

Semiotics of Signification examines the relationships between sign elements within a system based on established rules or conventions ([Pikkarainen, 2018](#)). Social consensus is necessary for a sign to possess meaning. Saussure posits that a sign consists of sound and image, referred to as the signifier, and the ideas associated with the sound-image, known as the signified ([Leeuwen, 2004](#)). Signs are utilized in communication to convey the meanings of objects, which others will subsequently interpret. Saussure refers to the object as "referential." This approach closely aligns with Pierce's perspective, who uses the term "interpreter" for the signifier and "object" for the signified. However, Saussure conceptualizes the object as the referent and designates it as an additional component in the process of signification. The phenomenon known as the "Korean Wave," or "Hallyu," describes the global proliferation of South Korean culture, particularly through media such as music, television dramas, films, and fashion. This phenomenon began to experience significant growth during the late 1990s and early 2000s (O'Neill, 2008).

The following are several key components of the Korean Wave: (1) K-Pop: This genre of pop music from Korea is characterized by captivating songs, engaging choreography, and visually appealing music videos. Music groups such as BTS, BLACKPINK, EXO, and TWICE have achieved immense global popularity. (2) Korean Dramas: Korean television series are renowned for their compelling storylines, high production quality, and talented actors. Popular dramas like "Winter Sonata," "Descendants of the Sun," "Crash Landing on You," and "The Glory" have garnered a wide international audience. (3) Korean Films: Films such as "Parasite," which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and several Academy Awards, including Best Picture, have propelled the Korean film industry to international acclaim. (4) Fashion and Beauty: Korean beauty products and fashion trends have also gained popularity worldwide. Many individuals have been influenced by K-beauty, which emphasizes skincare and makeup. (5) Culture and Cuisine: In numerous countries, Korean restaurants, dishes such as kimchi, bulgogi, and bibimbap, as well as traditional Korean culture, including hanbok and traditional festivals, are increasingly recognized and appreciated.

Various aspects of South Korean culture have been significantly influenced by the Korean Wave. Currently, it is exceedingly easy to watch the dramas and films of our choice; with platforms such as Netflix, WeTV, Video, and Prime Video, there is no longer a need to visit cinemas or purchase CDs/VCDs to enjoy the movies and drama series we desire. Korean drama refers to a television series produced in South Korea, encompassing a cultural phenomenon that highlights television dramas in South Korea in a miniseries format. These dramas often portray narratives of human life, presented in Korean as the primary language ([Tuti Oktapiani et al., 2023](#)). Korean dramas have gained immense popularity among audiences ranging from teenagers to older adults, a trend that

has been exacerbated by the pandemic, which necessitated individuals staying at home ([Ramadhan et al., 2022](#)).

"The Glory" is a Korean drama that narrates the story of Moon Dong Eun, a woman who suffers severe trauma and both physical and emotional scars as a result of brutal bullying during her school years. Years later, Dong Eun meticulously plans her revenge. She becomes a teacher and approaches the child of one of her former tormentors. Dong Eun courageously and intelligently infiltrates the lives of those who have wronged her, orchestrating each step to dismantle them one by one. Themes such as injustice, violence, and the struggle for justice are integral to this drama. "The Glory" underscores how past trauma can profoundly influence an individual's future and how the desire for revenge can compel someone to undertake extraordinary actions.

3. Method

Before The research method employed by the researcher is a descriptive qualitative research method utilizing Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic analysis ([Culler, 1986](#)). The data collection technique involves documentation, aiming to identify the signs and signifiers present in the Korean drama series "The Glory." The data used for this study comprises 16 episodes of "The Glory" related to the theme of bullying. Denzin and Lincoln assert that qualitative research is conducted within a scientific context with the intention of interpreting occurring phenomena, employing various existing methods in the process ([Fahrel, 2024](#)).

The documentation method is a technique for data collection that involves recording existing data. The data collection technique using documentation refers to the acquisition of data obtained through various documents. Documents pertain to records of past events and can take various forms, including written texts, images, or monumental works created by individuals ([Muzakky et al., 2023](#)).

The data collection technique employed by the researcher involves visual observation, wherein the researcher will carefully watch the drama The Glory to identify visual signs related to bullying. The theory of signifier and signified will be applied to analyze each scene that depicts acts of bullying. In addition, the researcher will document the dialogues occurring in the bullying scenes to be used as linguistic signifiers ([Rivkin & Michael, 2004](#)). The researcher will also refer to relevant supporting literature that discusses the analysis of bullying and Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. This semiotic method enables the researcher to provide an in-depth explanation of the meanings embedded within The Glory. Furthermore, this content analysis aids in understanding how the use of signs in the film influences audience comprehension and perception, as well as how the film interacts with society and culture as a whole.

4. Result and Discussion

The Korean drama titled *The Glory*, created by renowned writer Kim Eun-sook and directed by Ahn Gil-ho, narrates the story of a child named Moon Dong-eun who experiences severe bullying, ultimately leading her to leave school. Upon reaching adulthood, she harbors thoughts of revenge against her cruel peers in an effort to make them aware of their actions. As she embarks on her mission of vengeance, numerous dramatic and intense events unfold. The central conflict of this drama revolves around the bullying endured by Moon Dong-eun at the hands of her schoolmates. In the results and discussion section, 17 scenes are selected for analysis, employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework to elucidate the depicted sequences.

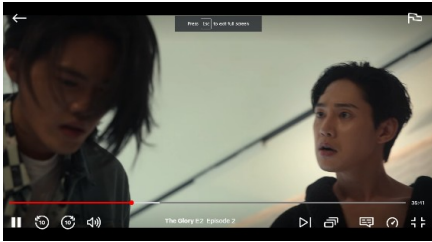
Table 2. The act of applying a hair straightener to the hand of Moon Dong-Eun.

Visual	Dialog
 scene 1, episode 1 minute 10:53.	Park Yeon-jin: "Excuse me, Dong-Eun, could you please check if the curling iron is sufficiently heated?" Moon Dong-eun: "Let go of me! This is an assault! Release me!" Lee Sa-ra: "Hey, it's just a small favor. What's so wrong with it? She has already apologized. I merely want you to verify whether it is hot or not." Lee Sa-ra: "Is it heated?" Park Yeon-jin: "It is ready."
Signfier	Signified
Lee Sa-Ra intends to press a heated curling iron against the hand of Moon Dong-Eun, as a means of bullying perpetrated by Park Yeon-Jin, Lee Sa-Ra, Son Myeong-oh, and Choi Hye-Jeong against Moon Dong-Eun.	In the scene, Park Yeon-Jin, Lee Sa-Ra, Son Myeong-oh, and Choi Hye-Jeong engage in a conversation inside the gymnasium. During this interaction, Lee Sa-Ra is observed placing a curling iron against Moon Dong-eun's hand under the pretext of checking whether her curling iron is hot. This action is illustrated by her hand movement as she presses the curling iron against Moon Dong-eun's hand

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic Analysis: As seen in [Table 2](#), Lee Sa-Ra's hand is depicted applying a hot hair straightener to Moon Dong-Eun's hand. Through the interplay of images, dialogue, signifiers, and signifieds, it can be concluded that within the confines of the gymnasium, Park Yeon-Jin, Lee Sa-Ra, Son Myeong-oh, and Choi Hye-Jeong intend for Moon Dong-Eun to check whether their hair straightener has heated up by pressing it against her hand. The act of placing a hot hair straightener on Moon Dong-Eun's hand signifies that they are engaging in bullying behavior under the pretense of asking her to verify the temperature of the straightener. Their actions constitute a form of bullying among female students ([Watson & Hill, 2015](#)).

Table 3. Son Myeong-Oh slapped Jeon Jae-Joon

Visual	Dialog
 Scene 2, episode 2 minute 15:38 	Jeon Jae-Joon: "Hey, Sa-Ra said you keep stealing her marijuana." Son Myeong-Oh: "I didn't steal it. I was just worried about Sa-Ra, so I checked on her..." Jeon Jae-Joon:(slapping Son Myeong-Oh repeatedly). Jeon Jae-Joon: "Do you think this is a joke? You think I'm still friend with you just because we hang out? I have substantial inheritance. Isn't that right, Myeon-oh? But if you drive while using drugs and I die young, that's not fair to me, is it? Answer me, damn it!"
Signifier	Signified
Jeon Jae-joon slapped Son Myeong-Oh because he was caught stealing marijuana belonging to Lee Sa-Ra.	Jeon Jae-Joon slapped Son Myeong-Oh because Lee Sa-Ra informed Jeon Jae-Joon that her cannabis orders were frequently stolen by Son Myeong-Oh. Son Myeong-Oh denied Jeon Jae-Joon's accusations. This scene illustrates Jeon Jae-Joon raising his hand to Son Myeong-Oh's cheek with the intention of slapping him.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

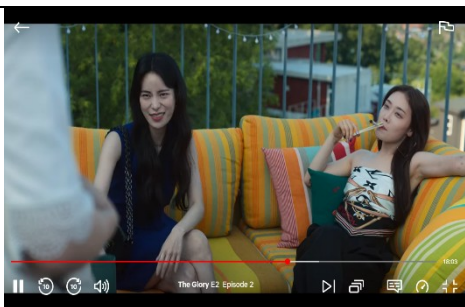
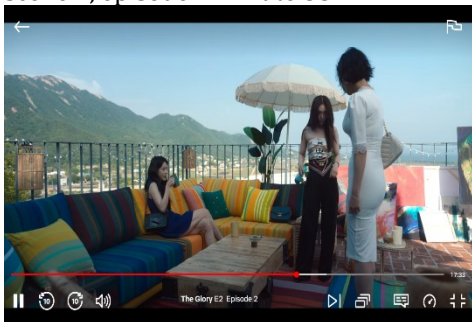
Semiotic analysis: As seen in Table 3, the scene depicts Jeon Jae-Joon slapping Son Myeong-oh out of anger for stealing drugs from Lee Sa-Ra. In scene 2, Jeon Jae-Joon appears furious with Son Myeong-Oh because Son Myeong-Oh mistakenly believes they are still friends, while Jeon Jae-Joon perceives Son Myeong-Oh's actions as playful. Jeon Jae-Joon is also angry because Son Myeong-oh uses drugs, fearing that if Son Myeong-oh drives under the influence, he could crash, die young, and not enjoy his inheritance, which Jeon Jae-Joon considers unjust. Through visuals, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, a meaning is constructed that Son Myeong-Oh frequently uses drugs stolen from Lee Sa-Ra's orders, and that Jeon Jae-Joon no longer considers Son Myeong-Oh a friend but rather his personal driver. Jeon Jae-Joon fears dying young due to Son Myeong-oh's drug use.

In this intense scene from the second episode, the dynamics of friendship, betrayal, and the consequences of drug use are starkly illustrated. Jeon Jae-Joon confronts Son Myeong-Oh about the theft of marijuana belonging to Lee Sa-Ra, revealing a deeper layer of tension in their relationship. The act of slapping serves as a physical manifestation of Jeon Jae-Joon's anger and frustration, not only at the theft but also at the perceived recklessness of Son Myeong-Oh's behavior (Putri & Putri, 2020).

The dialogue highlights Jeon Jae-Joon's sense of betrayal; he feels that their friendship is being undermined by Son Myeong-Oh's actions. Jeon Jae-Joon's mention of his substantial inheritance adds a layer of complexity to the situation, suggesting that he views their relationship through a lens of financial security and future potential. His fear of dying young due to Son Myeong-Oh's drug use underscores the stakes involved, as he believes that Son Myeong-Oh's actions could jeopardize not only his life but also his future (Safira et al., 2022).

The semiotic analysis reveals how visual cues, such as the slap and Jeon Jae-Joon's furious expression, communicate the gravity of the situation. The scene encapsulates a moment of confrontation that is both personal and existential, as it raises questions about loyalty, responsibility, and the impact of substance abuse on relationships. Ultimately, this moment serves as a turning point, illustrating the fragility of their friendship and the harsh realities of their choices.

Table 4. Park Yeon-jin and Lee Sa-Ra instructed Choi Hye-Jeong to become self-aware

Visual	Dialog
 scene 4, episode 2 minute 33:42  Scene 5, episode 2 minute 34:10	Park Yeon-jin : "Hye-Jeong, is Sa-Ra your current girlfriend?" Lee Sa-Ra: "Are you wearing your customer clothes?" Park Yeon-jin: "I told you she would appear wearing the dress you left in the store." Lee Sa-Ra: "There are the only two in this country. Look at yourself and your high standards. Hye-jeong be aware. In the past, it was either Dong-Eun or you. You could have been the victim, understand?"
Signifier	Signified
Choi Hye-Jeong approached Lee Sa-Ra and Park Yeon-Jin, who were awaiting her arrival on the balcony while drinking water and smoking cannabis cigarettes.	Park Yeon-Jin discovered that the clothing currently worn by Choi Hye-Jeong belongs to Lee Sa-Ra, deliberately left by Lee Sa-Ra at Choi Hye-Jeong's store. It was evident from Lee Sa-Ra's body language that she was displeased with Choi Hye-Jeong wearing her clothes.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic analysis: As seen in Table 4, it can be observed that Park Yeon-Jin is sitting together on the sofa in the living room, while Choi Hye-Jeong approaches them both. Park Yeon-Jin notices that

the blouse Choi Hye-Jeong is wearing belongs to Lee Sa-Ra, and Park Yeon-Jin has already deduced that Choi Hye-Jeong would wear the blouse intentionally left by Lee Sa-Ra at Choi Hye-Jeong's store. In scene 5, Lee Sa-Ra visits Choi Hye-Jeong and sprays perfume on her, telling Choi Hye-Jeong that she needs to see herself and that Choi Hye-Jeong's standards are too high. Through images, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, it can be inferred that Lee Sa-Ra disapproves of Choi Hye-Jeong wearing her clothes left intentionally at Choi Hye-Jeong's store. Choi Hye-Jeong, from a less affluent family, must come to terms with her high standards to balance with her friends. Choi Hye-Jeong could potentially become a victim of bullying, considering her past choice between being bullied, Moon Dong-Eun, or Choi Hye-Jeong.

Table 5. Jeon Joon-Joon struck his friend.

Visual	Dialog
 Scene 6 episode 3 minute 15:10  Scene 7, episode 3 minute 15:34	Jeon Jae-Joon: "Repeat that again, you keep blabbering about it. Why are you silent now? What did you say about my eyes? What's wrong with my eyes, you bastard? And what color is this? Try answering me too!" Son Myeong-Oh: "Hey, he's fainted. Stop it" Jeon Jae-Joon: (Kicking Son Myeon-Oh) Jeon Jae-Joon: "Bastard, I might be color-blind, but I'm not blind! I know he's fainted."
Signifier	Signified
Jeon Jae-Joon became angry and struck his friend because his friend spoke about Jeon Jae-Joon's color blindness.	The scene depicts Jeon Jae-Joon appearing angry and striking his friend who mentions that Jeon Jae-Joon is color-blind, while their friend Son Myeong-Oh attempts to intervene but is instead kicked by Jeon Jae-Joon. This is evident from facial expressions, hand gestures, and kicking movements.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

As seen in Table 5, semiotic analysis: In scene 6, it is observed that Jeon Jae-Joon pushes and pulls his friend by the collar, hitting him until he bleeds and faints on the classroom floor, with other classmates witnessing the assault. In scene 7, Son Myeong-Oh attempts to intervene to stop Jeon Jae-Joon, but instead, he is kicked by Jeon Jae-Joon. Through visual cues, dialogue, signifiers, and

signified elements, it can be concluded that Jeon Jae-Joon feels enraged because his shortcomings were discussed by others, and he feels offended by what Son Myeong-Oh said to him.

Table 6. Moon Dong-Eun Faints

Visual	Dialog
 Scene 8, episode 4 minute 2:43  Scene 9, episode 4 minute 3:10	(Without dialogue).
Signifier	Signified
Moon Dong-Eun regained consciousness from fainting and attempted to crawl	Moon Dong-Eun regained consciousness beneath Park Yeun-Jin, attempting to crawl away and escape from Park Yeun-Jin. However, she was pulled back by Son Myeong-Oh. Moon Dong-Eun's hands and legs were seen making efforts to flee, while Son Myeong-Oh's hands were observed dragging Moon Dong-Eun.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

As seen in [Table 6](#), semiotic analysis: In figure 8, the camera focuses on Moon Dong-Eun, who appears lying limp beneath Park Yeun-Jin. Figure 9 depicts Moon Dong-Eun attempting to crawl away, but Song Myeong-Oh drags Moon Dong-Eun back under Park Yeun-Jin's feet. Through visuals, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, it can be inferred that Moon Dong-Eun seems to have been beaten unconscious and rendered helpless.

In this gripping sequence from episode 4, the visual narrative captures a moment of desperation and vulnerability for Moon Dong-Eun. The scene begins with her regaining consciousness, a powerful symbol of resilience amidst trauma. As she attempts to crawl away from Park Yeun-Jin, the act of trying to escape signifies her will to survive and reclaim her agency, despite the overwhelming circumstances ([Rosita & Prathisara, 2021](#)). The visuals are stark and evocative; Moon Dong-Eun's limp body beneath Park Yeun-Jin conveys a sense of helplessness and defeat. The camera's focus on her struggle to move highlights the physical and emotional toll of her situation. The contrast between her efforts to flee and Son Myeong-Oh's forceful grip pulling her back creates a palpable tension, illustrating the dynamics of power and control at play.

The absence of dialogue in this scene amplifies the emotional weight, allowing the audience to feel the intensity of Moon Dong-Eun's plight without the distraction of words. The visual cues, her hands and legs straining against the pull of Son Myeong-Oh, serve as a poignant reminder of her struggle against oppression and violence. Through this semiotic analysis, it becomes clear that the scene encapsulates a moment of profound conflict, where Moon Dong-Eun's desire for freedom is met with physical restraint. This interplay of visuals and signifiers not only conveys her immediate danger but also reflects broader themes of victimization and the fight for autonomy in the face of overwhelming adversity. The imagery leaves a lasting impact, inviting viewers to empathize with Moon Dong-Eun's plight and consider the implications of her struggle.

Table 7. Choking Moon Dong-Eun's neck

Visual	Dialog
	Lee Sa-Ra: "What? She didn't faint within eight seconds. That's a lie. Hit his chest." Son Myeong-Oh: "What?" Lee Sa-Ra: "you have to hit hard enough. If she doesn't faint, it means your punch is weak"
Scene 10, episode 5 minute 38:20	
Signifier	Signified
Moon Dong-Eun was choked by Son Myeong-Oh, while Lee Sa-Ra timed with a stopwatch.	The scene depicts Son Myeong-Oh choking Moon Dong-Eun in the sports building, and Lee Sa-Ra is shocked because Moon Dong-Eun did not faint despite being choked for 8 seconds. Lee Sa-Ra instructs Son Myeong-Oh to hit Moon Dong-Eun's chest. Moon Dong-Eun appears breathless and exhausted, as evidenced by her faint expression, while Lee Sa-Ra displays a shocked expression.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic analysis: As seen in Table 7 scene 10, Son Myeong-Oh is seen choking Moon Dong-Eun against the wall of the Sports Building, while Lee Sa-Ra looks at her cellphone to time a stopwatch. Through visual cues, dialogue, signifiers, and signifieds, it can be inferred that they are testing how long and how strongly Moon Dong-Eun can endure Son Myeong-Oh's chokehold, eventually leading to him forcefully striking her chest until she faints.

This scene not only highlights the cruelty experienced by Moon Dong-Eun, but also reflects the indifferent and manipulative attitude of the bully, who perceives violence as a form of entertainment and a measurement of power. It shows how serious the psychological impact of bullying can be, both for the victim and the perpetrator, and emphasizes the need for awareness and action on this issue in society.

Table 8. Moon Dong-Eun was told to stand in the rain.

Visual.	Dialog.
 Scene 11, episode 8 minute 7:43	Son Myeong-Oh: "Stand here, raise your hand and you die. Walk through here" Jeon Jae-joon: "(looking towards Moon Dong-Eun in the rain)." Son Myeong-Oh: "lower it! I said I'll kill you"
Signifier	Signified
Jeon Jae-Joon instructed Moon Dong-Eun to stand in the middle of the rain.	Son Myeong-Oh instructed Moon Dong-Eun to stand in the middle of the rain and threatened her not to move, as evidenced by his facial expression.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic analysis reveals that as seen in Table 8 scene 11, Jeon Jae-Joon and Son Myeong-Oh instruct Moon Dong-Eun to stand in the rain and forbid her from raising her hands under threat. Through visuals, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, the intention of the scene and the threat is to observe the contours of Moon Dong-Eun's body, who is wearing a white uniform at that time.

Table 9. Moon Dong-Eun declined Park Yeun-Jin's request.

Visual.	Dialog.
 Scene 12, episode 8 minute 16:02	Park Yeun-jin: "I can't stand the smell of bleach. Yet, it's my turn to clean the bathroom. What do you think?" Moon Dong-Eun: "What do you mean?" Park Yeun-JIn: "you know I mean. Would it hurt your dignity to answer directly? Can you clean the bathroom for me? Another friend helped me until last week, but she transferred schools." Choi Hye-Jeong: " So-Hee transferred schools?" Son Myeong-Oh: "Apparently. No we need to find out where she went." Park Yeun-Jin: "Answer me now. I really want to hear your voice." Moon Dong-Eun: "What do you want... if I refuse?" Park Yeun-JIn: "I prefer quick answers, and I'm not very patient. So why wouldn't you? Oh my, I can't wait. It can't be like this. Hey, Myeong-Oh." Son Myeong-Oh: "Can't you wait even a minute?"
 Scene 13, episode 8 minute 16:47	



Scene 14, episode 8 minute 17:06

Signifier	Signified
Park Yeun-Jin arrived at the sports building, where Choi Hye-Jeong, Son Myeong-Oh, and Moon Dong-Eun were already present.	Overall, Park Yeun-Jin's scene depicts her attempt to order Moon Dong-Eun, which is initially rejected. Subsequently, Park Yeun-Jin becomes angry and ultimately slaps Moon Dong-Eun on the cheek, instructing Son Myeong-Oh to kick Moon Dong-Eun, as evidenced by her hand gestures, leg movements, and facial expressions

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic analysis: As seen in Table 9 scenes 12, 13, and 14, Park Yeun-Jin is seen speaking to Moon Dong-Eun, attempting to instruct her, but her request is refused. Through visuals, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, it can be concluded that in the dialogue between Park Yeun-Jin and Moon Dong-Eun, Park Yeun-Jin intends to ask Moon Dong-Eun to replace her in cleaning the toilets, as the usual replacement for Park Yeun-Jin So-Hee transferred to another school, but Moon Dong-Eun did not want to do so and refused, which made Park Yeun-Jin angry.

Table 10. The same clothes

Visual.	Dialog.
	Choi Hye-Jong: "Damn! Your clothes are the same! Poor you, Yeun-jin. must be so embarrassing." Lee Sa-Ra: "This means you two are friends. A moment worth capturing." Park Yeun-Jin: "Quite down, you two. Hey you!"

Scene 15, episode14 minute 10:09.

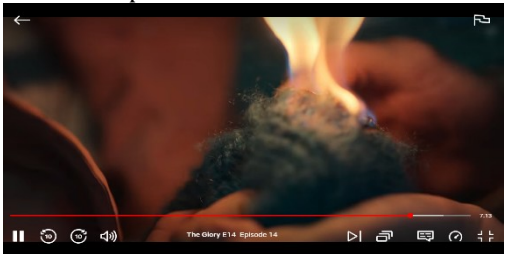
Signifier	Signified
Park Yeun-Jin, Choi Hye-Jeong, and Lee Sa-Ra coincidentally encountered So-Hee on the street, where Park Yeun-Jin shouted at So-Hee.	The scene where So-Hee meets Park Yeun-Jin, Choi Hye-Jeong, and Lee Sa-Ra, visibly upsets and angers Park Yeun-Jin, as seen from her facial expression.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic Analysis: As seen in Table 10 scene 15, it is evident that Park Yeun-Jin, Lee Sa-Ra, and Choi Hye-Jeong encounter So-Hee unexpectedly in the middle of the street. However, this encounter provokes anger in Park Yeun-Jin. Through visual elements, dialogue, signs, and indicators, it can be concluded that Park Yeun-Jin is upset with So-Hee because So-Hee is wearing the same outfit as

Park Yeun-Jin. Furthermore, the outfit worn by So-Hee is identified as counterfeit. Park Yeun-Jin also expresses a desire not to wear the same items as So-Hee.

Table 11. The conversation between So-Hee and Park Yeun-Jin.

Visual.	Dialog.
 Scene 16 episode 14 minute 45:34  Scene 17 episode 14 minute 47:20	Park Yeun-Jin: "just open it. It's not too late" So-Hee: "Yeun-Jin, please. Our clothes aren't even the same." Park Yeun-Jin: "What nonsense are you wearing? Why can't someone like you follow my simple request? Are you wearing a sweater or a fiber cloth? One minute. That's your time. I said open it." So-Hee: "Enough, I'm not afraid of you anymore. You're nobody alone." Park Yeun-Jin: "What do you mean? Are watching a teenage movie?" So-Hee: "I'm only afraid of your money, I'm even more compassionate. So, I will forgive you. Because I am better person than you." Park Yeun-Jin: "Wow, you make me feel miserable. Worse than you. Damn, that's hard to digest all at once. Really? If so, let this sorry excuse take the fibers from your sweater? You say you're better, then dress properly."
Signfier	Signified
Park Yeun-Jin spoke with So-Hee on the rooftop of a building at night while snow was falling.	This scene depicts Park Yeun-jin speaking with So-Hee and instructing her to remove her clothes. Park Yeun-Jin appears angry with So-Hee, evident from her facial expression, while So-Hee appears frightened, as indicated by her facial expression.

SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S PROCESSING, 2024

Semiotic analysis: As seen in [Table 11](#) scene 16, it can be observed that Park Yeun-Jin is conversing with So-Hee and instructs So-Hee to unbutton her shirt. In scene 17, it is evident that Park Yeun-Jin sets fire to So-Hee's sweater while it is still on her. Through visuals, dialogue, signs, and signifiers, it can be inferred that Park Yeun-Jin, who was angry and upset at So-Hee for wearing a similar sweater, continues to hold onto this issue. She even directs So-Hee to unbutton her sweater, despite it being different from Park Yeun-Jin's own, and So-Hee attempts to resist Park Yeun-Jin. So-Hee repeatedly apologizes and expresses regret to Park Yeun-Jin.

The results of the discussion in this study show that the representation of bullying in the Korean drama "The Glory" has similarities with the findings of previous studies conducted by ([Fadilla & Fuady, 2022](#); [Maliki & Fuady, 2022](#)). Both studies also reveal how bullying is depicted in Korean

dramas, focusing on power dynamics and the psychological impact experienced by victims. In [Agustina Dwi et al., \(2023\)](#), a framing analysis of teenage bullying in “The Glory” showed that the depiction of bullying not only serves as entertainment, but also as a tool to raise social awareness about issues faced by teenagers. This is in line with the results of this study which emphasize the importance of the media in shaping public perceptions of bullying. Meanwhile, research by [Pratama et al., \(2023\)](#) who analyzed bullying behavior in the Japanese drama “3 Nen a Gimi” showed that bullying is often triggered by social and economic factors, similar to the context faced by the characters in “The Glory”. This research reinforces the argument that bullying is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by various factors, including social backgrounds and interactions between characters.

While this study provides significant insight into the representation of bullying in “The Glory”, there are some limitations that need to be noted: (1) Scope of Analysis, This study only focuses on 16 episodes of the drama “The Glory”, thus not covering the entire context of the story and characters that may influence the depiction of bullying. (2) Methodological Approach, Analysis used Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach, which may not fully cover other aspects of visual and narrative communication that could provide a deeper understanding of the issue of bullying. (3) Data Limitations, Data used in this study was sourced from visual documentation and dialog in the play, which may not include the perspective of the audience or the emotional impact felt by them. (4) Cultural Factors, This study did not consider cultural differences that may affect the way bullying is understood and accepted in various social contexts, both in South Korea and in other countries. (5) With these limitations in mind, future research is expected to explore more deeply the representation of bullying in the media, as well as its impact on society and education policy.

5. Conclusion

This research has successfully analyzed the representation of bullying behavior in the Korean drama “The Glory” through Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic analysis approach. The results of the analysis show that the bullying behavior committed by Park Yeun-Jin's character towards So-Hee reflects the power dynamics and social injustice that often occur in the school environment. Through strong dialog and visuals, the drama successfully conveys a message about the psychological impact of bullying, as well as the importance of awareness of this issue in society.

The contribution of this research, then, lies in its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the representation of bullying in popular media, particularly in the context of Korean dramas. By using semiotic analysis, this research not only reveals the meaning contained in each scene, but also highlights how the media can shape public perception of bullying issues. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for further research on the impact of bullying portrayals in the media on

anti-bullying policies in educational institutions. For future research, it is suggested that researchers further explore the long-term impact of bullying portrayals in Korean dramas on audience behavior and attitudes, especially among teenagers. In addition, the research can expand the scope of analysis by comparing the representation of bullying in various other genres of Korean dramas, as well as exploring cultural differences in the depiction of this issue. Thus, future research can provide more comprehensive insights into the relationship between media, social behavior, and educational policies related to bullying.

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