

The Influences of Korean Drama “The Glory” on Perceptions of School Bullying: A Case Study of Bengbu in Anhui (2023-2024)

Yiren Wang

Department of Economics,
University of Colombo, Colombo,
Sri Lanka
Email: wangyiren8712@outlook.
com

Abstract:

This study aims to explore how the Korean drama “The Glory” influenced college students’ perceptions and attitudes towards school bullying between 2023 and 2024. Through a questionnaire survey of 276 freshmen to senior students at C University in Bengbu City, Anhui Province, along with one focus group and two in-depth interviews, the research found that “The Glory” significantly increased college students’ awareness of school bullying. The drama strengthened students’ reflection on the root causes of school bullying, promoted their pursuit of justice and rights protection, and emphasized the importance of mental health development. It also enhanced students’ anti-bullying awareness and self-reflection, increased their attention to the balance between artistic expression and social issues, and encouraged them to seek more TV series addressing social topics. This study reveals the role of “The Glory” in shaping college students’ value orientations and analyzes the function of Korean popular culture in raising social awareness, providing a new perspective for understanding the dissemination effects and influence of Korean bullying-themed TV series on Chinese university campuses.

Keywords: School bullying; college student perceptions; social issues.

1. Introduction

Bullying has become a globally recognized social issue. Although this negative campus phenomenon has long existed, it has only received increased attention, discussion, and focus from society in recent years. TV series, as a medium with a broader audience, can

more effectively evoke viewers’ empathy and social reflection.

This study focuses on students from four different grades and various majors at C University in Bengbu, Anhui Province. The research methods combine online questionnaire surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews. We attempt to explore the specific

impact of school bullying content and conveyed values in the Korean drama “The Glory” on college students.

This research helps college students better recognize the harm and consequences of school bullying, enhancing their awareness of campus bullying and anti-bullying consciousness. It may also reduce the likelihood of school bullying incidents. The study aims to promote relevant departments, schools, and families to find effective prevention and intervention measures, jointly creating a safe, harmonious, and respectful campus environment.

With the popularity of “The Glory” in China, it has attracted high attention from the industry, resulting in numerous studies from different perspectives. Some scholars, from a cultural criticism standpoint, revealed the social class conflicts and human alienation reflected in the drama, and explored possible paths for individual and social trauma healing [1]. Other researchers focused on the symbolic metaphors and media shooting techniques used in the drama, analyzing the metaphorical content and strategies of “The Glory” to provide reference for the encoding methods of Chinese dramas [2]. Some scholars discussed the portrayal of female characters in “The Glory,” analyzing the personalities and qualities of female roles in the drama to reflect the attention and importance given to women in Korean society [3]. Some research analyzed the portrayal of antagonist characters in “The Glory” from the aspects of external image and internalized consciousness, exploring how to shape antagonists to achieve the convergence of realism and mainstream values [4]. In terms of the impact of visual works on audience behavior, scholars used revenge-themed web series as examples to explore the influence of different narrative techniques on online group behavior [5]. Some research from the perspective of educational neuroscience revealed the mechanism by which long-term exposure to violent visual works may lead to aggressive behavior in adolescents and proposed new methods using virtual reality technology to predict and assess potential bullying individuals [6]. These studies provide multi-dimensional theoretical support for our analysis of the impact of “The Glory” on college students’ perceptions and attitudes.

There is still a shortage and inadequacy in research on how Korean dramas like “The Glory,” which focus on social issues (school bullying themes), affect Chinese college students’ perceptions and attitudes towards school bullying. Although studies have found that exposure to violence in daily environments significantly predicts aggressive behavior [7], this finding has not been fully applied to analyzing the impact of “The Glory.” While international research has revealed the close relationship between gender, aggressiveness, feelings of isolation, unpopularity, and school bullying [8], as well as the connection between

school bullying and suicide risk [9], the applicability of these findings in the Chinese context still needs further verification. These research gaps limit our comprehensive understanding of the dissemination effects and influence of Korean bullying-themed TV series on Chinese university campuses, providing an important entry point for this study.

2. Research Methodology

This research report employs a combination of online questionnaire surveys, focus groups, and in-depth personal interviews. It aims to understand how Korean popular culture, particularly works addressing social issues like “The Glory,” influences college students’ perceptions and attitudes towards specific social topics (such as school bullying).

2.1 Data Collection for the Questionnaire Survey

The research used the Tencent Online Questionnaire tool in WeChat Mini Programs as our survey instrument. The first step involved listing specific questions based on the research topic (e.g., basic information about the target group including gender, grade, major, followed by the main body of the questionnaire, such as questions designed based on the dissemination method and impact of “The Glory”). It combined closed-ended questions (providing one or more standardized answers for respondents to choose from) with semi-open questions (designing some clear options while adding an “Other” option, allowing respondents to provide additional explanations when the given options don’t fully apply). Subsequently, the author conducted a pre-test and revision of the questionnaire, ultimately finalizing the questions.

The second step involved selecting students from different majors, from freshman to senior year, at C University in Bengbu, Anhui, as the target population. The author distributed the questionnaire through social media platforms, set a deadline for survey collection, and after the sample collection system closed, the author removed incomplete and invalid questionnaires, cleaning up errors and anomalies in the sample data. The third step involved using statistical software for analysis, repeatedly reviewing various indicators of valid questionnaires, and writing up the research results.

2.2 Data Collection for Personal Interviews

The author has clarified the research topic, drafted interview outlines complementary to the questionnaire survey, and through recruitment and screening (screening criteria:

interviewees' familiarity with Korean wave culture, with the key being having watched the Korean drama "The Glory"), we finally determined two interviewees. We scheduled interview times with the subjects, conducted the interviews (both interviews lasted about 80 minutes), recorded the interview content, organized interview notes, conducted in-depth analysis and review of the interview content, and extracted valuable information and conclusions.

2.3 Data Collection for the Focus Group

Through recruitment and screening, consistent with the criteria for personal interviews (screening criteria: participants' familiarity with Korean wave culture, with the key being having watched the Korean drama "The Glory"), we formed a focus group. The focus group consisted of 4 students from different grades and academic backgrounds. Unlike the questionnaire survey and personal interviews, the focus group used a brainstorming approach. Participants separately shared their impressions of "The Glory" in terms of plot, theme, and characters, which led to an in-depth discussion of similar Korean dramas, extending and expanding the results of this study.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

By the time the questionnaire system closed, the author had collected 276 surveys from college students of different grades and academic backgrounds at C University in Bengbu City, Anhui Province. Of these, 237 were valid questionnaires, while 39 were invalid. According to the research data, among the 237 students who participated in the survey, 62.9% reported not having watched the Korean drama "The Glory," while 37.1% had watched

it. The research data shows that among the students who had watched the drama, "The Glory" had a significant emotional impact, positively influencing their values and serving as a warning. The vast majority of these students believed that their awareness of school bullying and anti-bullying consciousness had increased, leading to a deeper understanding and analysis of school bullying. The specific reasons, thematic categories, and research details are summarized as follows:

3.1 Increasing College Students' Awareness of School Bullying

"The Glory," through its unique narrative approach and character development, exposes school bullying as a serious social issue. The drama, through brutal scenes of the protagonist Moon Dong-eun experiencing school bullying, profoundly demonstrates that school bullying is not merely physical violence, but also a form of mental destruction and harm that can cause long-term psychological trauma and far-reaching effects on victims. The realistic portrayal sparked widespread public attention and discussion about school bullying issues, raising college students' awareness of bullying behaviors.

As shown in Table 1, after watching "The Glory," 51.1% of students reported a better understanding of the severity and prevalence of bullying, while 45.5% became aware of the harm bullying causes to individuals and society. Additionally, 69.3% of college students believed that watching "The Glory" somewhat increased their attention to bullying issues, while 20.5% reported a significant increase in awareness. Together, these two groups account for 89.8%, indicating that the drama had a significant impact on raising awareness of bullying issues among college students (Figure 1 and 2).

Table 1 Changes in College Students' Perception of School Bullying and Impact on Awareness After Watching "The Glory"

Changes in perception of school bullying after watching "The Glory"			Impact on college students' attention to bullying issues		
Better understanding of the severity and prevalence of bullying	Recognizing the harm of bullying to individuals and society	No significant changes	Increase visibility significantly	have a certain enhancing effect	Not a significant impact.
45	40	3	18	61	9
51.1%	45.5%	3.4%	20.5%	69.3%	10.2%

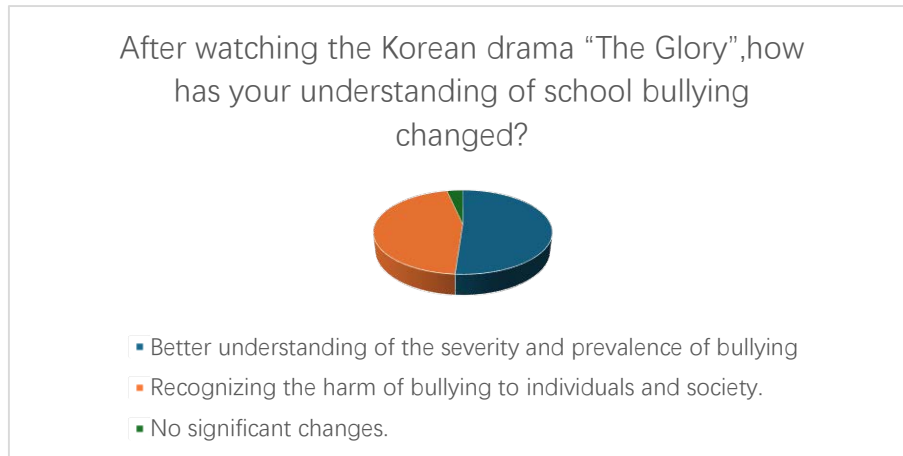


Fig. 1 Changes in university students’ understanding of school bullying after watching The Glory

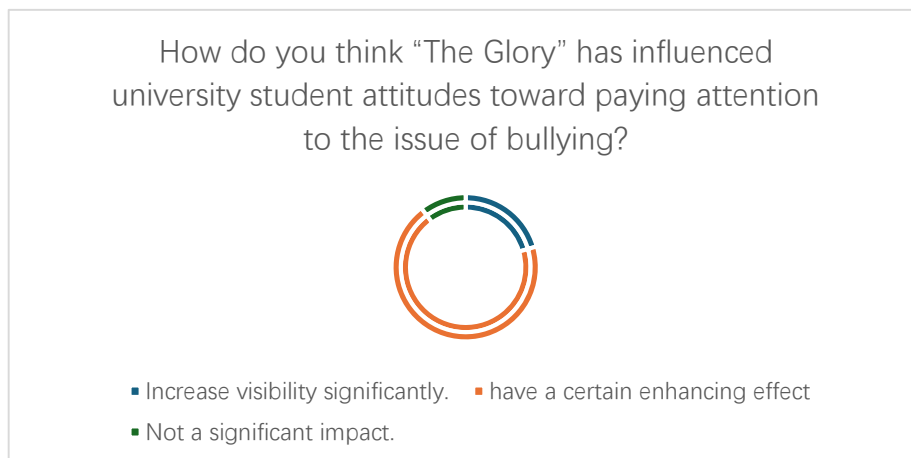


Fig. 2 The impact of The Glory on university students’ attitudes toward addressing the issue of bullying

3.2 Strengthening College Students’ Root-Cause Analysis of School Bullying

“The Glory,” through its exposure and critique of class rigidity and social injustice in Korean society, prompts viewers to consider issues at the social structural and institutional levels. Interviewee A believes that “The Glory” is not just a drama about school bullying, but a work that reveals social class disparities and power struggles. The characters’ identities, status, and wealth differences all constitute important factors in the perpetrators’ violence, and these class differences are also the root cause of school bullying. School bullying and class stratification have a symbiotic relationship and seeking a more just and equal social environment is a crucial step in curbing school bullying.

Interviewee A said: “In the drama, bullies gain a sense of class superiority and status elevation through their bul-

lying behavior. This false joy and satisfaction stimulate them to bully again, entering a vicious cycle. Bullying and class inequality are intertwined.”

3.3 Motivating College Students to Seek Justice, Protect Their Rights, and Prioritize Mental Health Development

“The Glory” also delves into the themes of revenge and redemption. The protagonist, Moon Dong-eun, does not simply seek eye-for-an-eye revenge but meticulously plans her vengeance, accompanied by complex psychological struggles and moral considerations. This not only shows viewers the hardships and costs of revenge but also prompts college students to deeply reflect on how to face school bullying, seek justice, and find inner redemption.

The research shows that 55.7% of college students indicated they would consider seeking help or reporting

to the police when facing school bullying issues, while 38.6% said they would be more courageous in standing up against school bullying. Interviewee B stated that after watching “The Glory,” his awareness of his own mental health and rights protection significantly increased. He became more vigilant of potential bullying dangers around him and learned to seek help and support promptly when encountering bullying. As he put it: “Justice, rights, and mental strength - after watching this drama, I better understand how to face school bullying.” This concise statement powerfully summarizes the drama’s impact on him. “Justice” reflects his pursuit of fair treatment, “rights” emphasizes his awareness of self-protection, and “mental strength” reflects his determination to stay strong in the face of adversity.

3.4 Increasing College Students’ Anti-Bullying Awareness and Self-Reflection

“The Glory” also portrays the perpetrators’ denial, ignorance, and avoidance of their own actions, which exacerbates the psychological compensation for victims, making viewers realize the urgency of opposing school bullying. As shown in Table 2, 90.9% of college students expressed a greater inclination to participate in or support

anti-bullying activities or initiatives after watching “The Glory.” This extremely high percentage indicates that the broadcast of “The Glory” significantly increased their willingness to participate in such actions. A total of 207 college students (87.3% of the questionnaire respondents) believed that the drama had significant advantages and benefits in enhancing anti-bullying awareness during its dissemination.

Additionally, both interviewees pointed out that the empathy and sense of responsibility sparked while watching the drama motivated more college students to actively participate in anti-bullying actions. They deeply felt the importance and urgency of anti-bullying efforts, calling for schools to strengthen anti-bullying education, raise students’ awareness and attention to bullying issues, and simultaneously take practical and effective measures to prevent and stop bullying behaviors. After watching this drama, both interviewees expressed that they would reflect on whether their behavior on campus was appropriate and whether they had intentionally or unintentionally participated in bullying behaviors. They both emphasized that while avoiding becoming victims themselves, they would also reflect on whether they had inadvertently played the role of bullies or bystanders in school bullying.

Table 2. College Students’ Willingness to Participate in Anti-Bullying Activities or Initiatives After Watching “The Glory”

After watching, are you more inclined to participate in or support anti-bullying activities or initiatives?		
Yes	No	Unsure
80	2	6
90.9%	2.3%	6.8%

3.5 Increasing College Students’ Attention to the Balance Between Artistic Expression and Social Issues

“The Glory” challenged viewers’ traditional aesthetics with its unusually explicit scenes. This bold attempt enhanced the work’s emotional impact and artistic value, but it also produced some flaws and shortcomings. The study found that 59.1% of college students believed “The Glory” lacked effective solutions or suggestions during its dissemination, while 51.1% of viewers thought the distribution channels were limited, with narrow audience coverage. Interviewee A believed that this type of Korean drama might blindly process or distort facts and induce negative behaviors such as violence in response to violence for the sake of ratings and attracting attention. They questioned and expressed concern about whether the recreation of scenes and experiences might cause secondary

trauma to victims. Interviewee B also believed that a reasonable balance needs to be found between the artistic expression of visual works and the objective reality of social issues.

3.6 Prompting Deep Reflection and Encouraging College Students to Seek More TV Series on Social Issues

Unlike the questionnaire survey and personal interviews, the focus group used a brainstorming approach to describe their broader cognitive experiences after watching “The Glory.” They noted that in recent years, Korean dramas have expanded beyond traditional idol dramas, romance dramas, and family ethics dramas, exploring more social realities, human depth, science fiction, and fantasy. More TV series on social issues (like “The Glory”) have entered the public eye, showing that Korean dramas are no longer satisfied with mere entertainment but continually present

diverse and in-depth social issues. This is closely related to Korea's political, historical, cultural, and social environment, as well as market demands.

The main reasons for "The Glory" becoming a critically acclaimed work are its meticulously crafted script, profound understanding of characters, and thoughtful scene arrangements. It allows viewers to see the multifaceted nature of humanity and creates emotionally resonant storylines. The subject matter not only exposes social realities but also aligns with psychological realities. The high production quality enhances the viewing experience. The broadcast of "The Glory" helps break public indifference and neglect towards school bullying, sparking collective discussion and reflection on sensitive topics. It prompts various social institutions to take more active measures to reduce the occurrence of school bullying. At the same time, through the portrayal of positive characters and the transmission of positive values, it guides college students to establish correct values and moral views. The focus group unanimously expressed hope to see more TV series on social issues in the future.

Meanwhile, among the 237 valid questionnaires collected, 59.9% of respondents expressed hope for more TV series like "The Glory" that address social issues, to guide college students in ongoing attention, reflection, and discussion of social issues.

4. Conclusion

The research results show that the popularity of "The Glory" had a significant emotional impact on college students. The positive transmission of values in the drama helped college students better understand how to protect themselves and defend their legal rights when facing school bullying. The warning and cautionary role conveyed in the drama enhanced college students' awareness of bullying and anti-bullying consciousness. "The Glory" also prompted active thinking among college students, leading to dialectical interpretations of plot settings and character roles, and teaching them to introspect and reflect on their own campus behavior.

Through studying how "The Glory" influences college students' perceptions and attitudes towards specific social issues (such as school bullying), we have expanded our understanding of the dissemination effects and influence of Korean bullying-themed dramas on Chinese university campuses. This study integrated data from questionnaire surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups, providing a more comprehensive research perspective and data inter-

pretation. Although this study achieved some meaningful results, certain limitations exist. For instance, the sample data in this questionnaire survey had imbalances in gender ratio, grade ratio, and major type ratio, which may have led to some bias in the research results.

Finally, research on school bullying is not limited to universities but also includes elementary, middle, and high school groups. Future research could expand the sample range and research subject groups, continuing to study the dissemination and influence of "The Glory" among different research subject groups, as well as exploring the role of such themed dramas in guiding social discussions on sensitive topics.

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