

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN KOREAN TELEVISION DRAMAS

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## INTRODUCTION

With the growing popularity of Korean dramas, a problem that is important to examine is the prevalence of violent acts that appear in recent dramas and that are often glamorized.

Some scholars argue that violence present in Korean dramas can have a negative influence on viewers particularly considering their prevalence on Korean television. (Ha et al, 2007)

In this vein, the purpose of this study is to analyse the quantity, frequency and types of violence against women (VAW) shown in Korean dramas in order to better understand the content viewers abroad are exposed to.

## KOREAN DRAMAS IN CAMBODIA

Since the 1990s, Korean TV dramas have been exported to other Asian countries, such as Japan and China and access to these dramas from outside has become much easier.

The demand for Korean dramas has also been gradually increasing in the Southeast Asian market. The romantic comedy genre, starring top rated Korean actors has dominated among Korean dramas exported to Southeast Asia. (Lee, 2012)

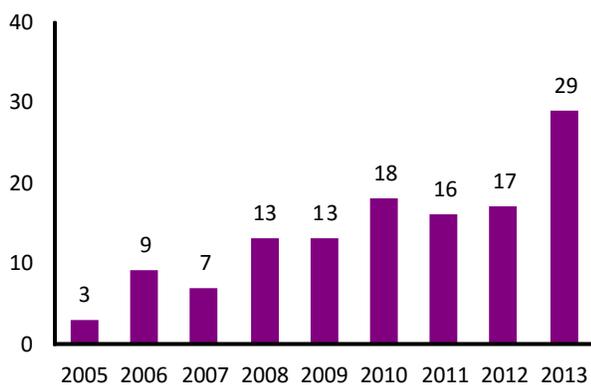


Figure 1: Number of imported Korean dramas per year (Lee, 2015)

In the case of Cambodia, over the last decade, 125 different dramas were imported from Korea's two national TV broadcasters. Particularly since 2010, the proportion of trade in dramas between Cambodia and Korea has increased, reflecting the growth of the Korean wave in this market. (Lee, 2015) (Figure 1)

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN A KOREAN DRAMA ON CAMBODIAN TELEVISION

The Korean drama *Inspiring Generation* was aired in December, 2015 by Cambodian Television Network (CTN). Using a 15 minute time slot as unit of analysis, the number of aggressive acts against women in the total 24 episodes of the series were monitored.

Most of its content substantially depicted general violent acts with 95.8% of total time slots.

Every 15 minute viewers were exposed to around 0.4 aggressive acts against women, which adds up to a total of around 1.6 cases of violence on average per episode.

25% of all time slots contained at least one type of violence against women. Of these, 18.8% of time slots contained physical violence, 6.3% contained sexual violence and 12.5% contained emotional violence. (Figure 2)

91.7% of violent acts portrayed were carried out by men. Intimate partner violence (IPV) against women did not appear in the drama apart from one case of physical violence.

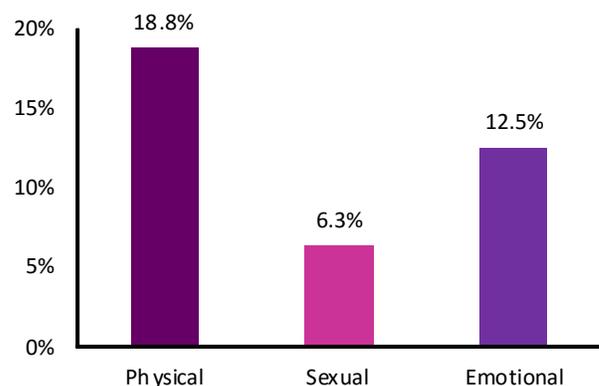


Figure 2: Amount of violence against women by type

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## COMPARISON OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TWO POPULAR KOREAN DRAMAS

Two Korean dramas with similar characteristics were examined for the study. Both *All About My Mom* (drama A) and *My Daughter, Geum Sawol* (drama B) were initially broadcast in 2015, received equally high viewership scores and were categorized as weekend family soap operas.

40% of time slots in drama B contained general violent acts whereas none were found in drama A. Overall, drama B has six times higher proportion of time slots that contain some form of violence against women than drama A.

Intimate partner violence against women appeared only one case in drama A while 45% of violent acts portrayed in drama B were carried out by intimate partners.

In drama A, 15% of all time slots contained at least one type of violence against women. Of these, 5% contained physical violence and 10% contained emotional violence.

In drama B, 90% of all time slots depicted at least one type of violence against women. 55% contained physical violence and 80% contained emotional violence.

Neither were found to contain sexual violence. (Figure 3)

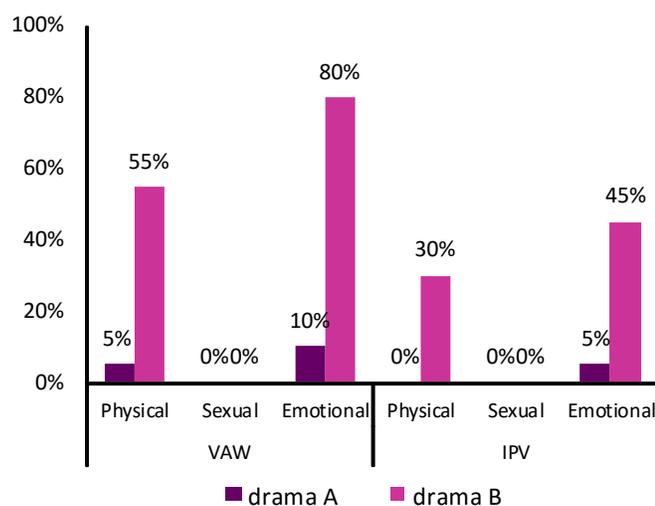


Figure 3: Amount of violence against women and intimate partner violence by type

## Potential Explanation

It is possible that drama B contains more substantial amounts of violence against women because it is considered as a “makjang drama”. The term “makjang” in Korean refers to a dead end in a coal mine.

Korean “Makjang dramas” are characterized by low-cost production and dramatic storylines focusing on relationships involving forbidden love, incest, revenge and other similar themes in order to shock and thrill the audience. (Lim and Oh, 2009)

The main audience of this type of drama are middle-aged women. Due to this, these dramas are usually broadcast during the morning or the evening which guarantee safe audience ratings.

Therefore, drama imports to Cambodia could favor “non-makjang” dramas such as drama A that contains less negative content.

## REFERENCES

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