



**REPRESENTATION OF ALPHA FEMALE CHARACTER IN THE
K-DRAMA “QUEEN OF TEARS”**

Undergraduate Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2024, Korean dramas have become more than just entertainment in Indonesia, they are a part of cultural phenomenon. Their influence is seen in many aspects of everyday life, from inspiring fashion trends and sparking a love for Korean food to introducing Korean words and phrases into daily conversations. K-dramas have captured the hearts of Indonesian audiences and have blended smoothly into the country's lifestyle. This growing popularity highlights the powerful way media can not only shape what people like to watch but also how they live, making Korean dramas an exciting area to explore in cultural and communication studies.

The South Korean K-drama *Queen of Tears* presents a unique and new narrative in which the main female characters portrayed a strong, confident, and independent qualities—treatment that define what is widely known as “Alpha women” in media. These new characters break the traditional portrayals of women as a passive or subordinate subject, instead they depict a women who exercise leadership, decision-making power, and emotional flexibility (Saputra, 2024). In *Queen of Tears*, these alpha women are central to the plot which revolves around their personal and professional struggles in a patriarchal society.

Queen of Tears drama also present messages towards the audience that gender roles are not only stuck within the traditional gender roles. The writers, Ms. Park Ji-eun, sent us a clear messages through this drama that she wishes to challenge the Korean traditional gender roles and societal expectation by putting out the alpha female characters in the storyline of *Queen of Tears*, for example, in the traditional gender roles, women are in charge of all house wife duties, meanwhile in *Queen of Tears*, Men is the one who in charge of the house chores. This example strengthen the narration in which this Drama wish to challenge the traditional gender norms in South Korea and to wider audience of the world.



Figure 1.1 Poster Queen of Tears Korean Drama
(Source: Netflix.com)

Queen of Tears drama tells a story of the couple Baek Hyun Woo (Kim Soo Hyun) and Hong Hae In (Kim Ji Won), who face various crises in their marriage. Released on March 9, 2024. The story tells us about a couple that goes through various of crises. The women who is portrayed as an alpha women character first was set to have higher position than her husband in their company which lead for the first problem to their marriage which was controlling power. Hong Hae In is a an alpha women character who has power and control over the husband character Baek Hyun Woo which indicating the first clash over the gender stereotypes about man and women in marriage.

Alpha women characters, defined women who have a strong mind and principles, their character often like to stand out, they also known as independent women who can stand on their own feet without have to depended on anyone (Sumra, 2019). They usually have the ambition to achieve their goals, have high self-confidence and are able to be a good leader because they can be a leader or role model for their colleague. The characteristics of alpha women, they have the sense of leadership, they live their life with purpose every single day, they do not afraid to be alone, they love learning new things, ambitious, they do not give up easily, and they usually willing to take risks (Adila, 2024).

Within the context of South Korean culture, where the confusion values and patriarchy have historically shaped gender roles, for example, men in South Korean these days tends to marry a career women but they still expected that their wife do the house

chores full time without considering that their wife is already working through the day (Choi, 2014). the portrayal of alpha women in K-dramas offers an incredible lens through which to study the impact of these evolving representation on alpha female characters.

Adding to the discussion, Indonesia is one of the unique context to see this kind of gender equality notion in terms of alpha female and gender norms through diverse of culture setting. The root of patriarchy in Indonesia comes from a history of control, power and ruler which ended up to violence (Bahlieda, 2015). According to Christ (2016) the patriarchy culture in Indonesia actually stems from ancient wars that 'authorized' violence, were sacred with religious symbols, and men were considered heroes while women were told to stay at home.

In 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) released an article on Indonesian gender equality, that gender is sometimes affecting your health, because unfortunately, women often face disadvantages in areas like education, work, and healthcare. Although things are getting better for women in some ways, there are still problems to solve to make sure everyone has fair access to healthcare. A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) says that it's important to look at all the different things that cause these unfair differences in health between men and women. They suggest that leaders should think about how these differences affect people when making health plans. The WHO also believes that everyone should have equal chances to get healthcare and that women should have a strong voice in decisions about health (World Health Organization, 2019).

Bintang Puspayoga, a former government minister, points out that Indonesian women and men are far from equal, especially when you look at things like education, jobs, and health. She says this is because society is set up to favour men, and that needs to change. To fix this, everyone – famous people, religious leaders, and local governments – needs to work together. Bintang wants all Indonesian women to support each other and become powerful, so Indonesia can become a better place for everyone. She thinks that if everyone works together, women will finally have the same chances as Men (Cabinet Secretary, 2022).

Looking from the religious point of view, there are 6 recognized religions in Indonesia where each religion actually teaches that fellow humans who are His creations we must respect each other, although using different languages and teachings, the teachings have the same core, namely mutual respect between men and women. Here are some quotes taken from some of the religious teachings in Indonesia:

1. There are also views according to other religions, namely Christianity and Catholic, which state in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 11: 11-12, Paul expresses the equality of the roles and positions of women and men. “However, in God there is no woman without a man and no man without a woman. For as woman comes from man, so man is born of woman; and all things come from God.” The meaning of the above words is that we as men and women both need each other so go home with the explanation above that there is no man if there is no woman and vice versa.

3. The New World of Islam, which expresses the view of Islam, also discusses Islam which greatly honours women. Islam glorifies women as evidenced by the existence of QS. An - Nisaa' which in the surah discusses women, one of the contents is QS. An - Nisaa'[4]: 34 which means “Men (husbands) are protectors of women (wives), because Allah has preferred some of them (men) over others (women), and because they (men) have provided from their wealth”, clearly also stating at Islam supporting the notion of gender equality and the same position and woman and man.

4. The response from Buddhism, in the book of Nipata Sutta, is that discrimination that distinguishes human dignity based on birth/ descent is rejected.

5. The Confucian view also explains that there is no difference in roles between men and women as in Zhong Yong XI: 4: “The Sacred Way of a Jun Zi is found in the heart of every man and woman, and at its peak encompasses all researchable reality between heaven and earth.” Based on this verse, it can be interpreted that even in Confucianism, there is no distinction regarding who is superior among men and women.

5. Hinduism also does not support a patriarchal culture. This can be seen in the Manawa Dharmasastra III which states that, “Women should be respected and loved by their fathers, brothers, husbands and in-laws who want their own welfare. Moreover, the position of women is highly honoured.”

Religions and experts in Indonesia clearly stated that gender equality should be considered as a culture because both religion and law stated there shouldn't be differences

between men and women in terms of rights, obligations, and opportunities. However, looking from the patriarchal values that still exists in Indonesia, it can be seen that the existing religious teachings do not rule out the possibility that Indonesian people still remember their history during the colonial era where men were required to work in the house and women did domestic tasks (Vos, 2024).

Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups however, exhibit unique practices of patriarchy, deeply implanted in cultural traditions. Among the Dani people Papua, patriarchy is strongly evident in both family community structures. Men hold dominant roles, exercising full control over family decisions, while women are entrusted to do domestic duties and economic support through farming. Despite this, Dani women play a critical role in family resilience particularly during crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, where women often become the primary economic providers when their husband's income were insufficient (Kogoya, 2020).

In Javanese culture, patriarchal norms manifest in specific expectations of women, encapsulated in the concept of 3M "Macak, Masak, Manak" (to adorn oneself, cook, and bear children). This framework enforces domestic roles and subordinates women's status to their husbands. However, modern interpretations are beginning to challenge these traditional roles, as women balance these cultural expectations with opportunities for self-development and autonomy (Fitria, 2022).

In Bali, the patriarchal structure is intertwined with religious and customary practices. Women are central to ritual preparations, often balancing these responsibilities with domestic duties and economic contributions to the household. Despite their critical roles, women in Bali face systemic inequalities, including limited representation in public domains and societal pressures to fit to traditional gender roles. For example, the Balinese caste system can provoke this inequalities, with women often subjected to sharpen societal judgements based on their marriage choices or perceived failure to stand by the traditional norms (Nisa, 2018).

Shifts and challenge to the patriarchy culture which include modernization, globalization and education have gradually challenged traditional norms in Indonesia. Urbanization and increased access to education and content that are promoting gender equality have enable more women to enter the workforce and assume leadership roles in politics and business (Utomo, 2014). Social media and internet also played a critical role in amplifying feminist voices and advocating gender equality. It is also contributed in spreading the notion of Alpha Female character.

As claimed by another researcher, alpha women often demonstrate agency and empowerment, despite having to face various social and personal obstacles. One of the main female characters in the drama is a successful professional who must fight to maintain her position in the male-dominated workforce. She faces gender discrimination and must prove that her abilities are equal, if not superior, to her male counterparts. In

addition, the drama depicts various forms of injustice and discrimination experienced by women, both in the public and private spheres. For example, there are scenes showing the female characters' struggle against sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as the societal pressures that expect them to fulfil their traditional roles as mothers and wives (Siti Inayah & Ahmad Supena , 2024).

The emergence of alpha female characters like the main character in *Queen of Tears* marks an important change from traditional women representations. These women represent qualities such as confidence, independence, and power, which directly challenging the historical norms that have shaped gender relations in South Korea (Safira, 2024). This kind of changes, can provoke conflicting emotions, which society can feel drawn to or supportive of empowered women, or they may also feel resistance or discomfort if the portrayal is different with their own gender expectations. In Traditional Korean society, women tends to stay at home, from their youth women were trained about the goodness of subordination and endurance to make sure that they have prepared for their future roles as wife and mother. Generally, women could not participate in societal life as men did, their role was limited only for the household problems (KOIS, 2024).

In modern era, society's views on alpha women are increasingly diverse and shaped by cultural, social, and generational factors. Some view alpha women as equals and valuable partners in personal and professional settings. They tend to admire the alpha female qualities such as independence, emotional resilience, and the ability to lead

effectively. Societies often appreciate the balance and mutual respect that strong women bring to relationship and workplace. Studies show that modern men, particularly in younger generations, are open to share decision making and non-traditional gender roles, which aligns with the traits of alpha women (Al-Sadik-Lowinski, 2023).

However, according to other researcher, there are some men may experience challenges when interacting with alpha women due to their surrounding values on gender stereotypes. According to American Psychological Association, men in traditional environments may feel discomfort or see empowered women as a threat to established power dynamics. For example, alpha women in professional settings are sometimes seen as overly competitive which caused tension in male-dominated spaces (Eagly et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, in progressive contexts, there are many men becoming more supportive of gender equality, recognizing the balanced leadership. Mixed-gender teams, where alpha women contribute alongside men, are often seen as more effective in decision-making and innovation. These shifts point to a growing acceptance of alpha women as integral to modern workplace and relationship where the societal norms continue to evolve (Al-Sadik-Lowinski, 2023).

In correlation the phenomena of *Queen of Tears* Korean drama this author is curious about the representation of alpha female characters in *Queen of Tears*, interpreting this gender dynamics where in the drama that men is the one to served the women. Not only

serving as in they will do the house work, but in terms of the men position in the company who is portrayed didn't have higher position than the women, which is lead to the discussion regarding the representation on alpha female character in the drama. In correlation to this phenomena, it has always been a question of this author about how alpha women characters are presented by looking from point of view of alpha female characters in the drama.



Figure 1.2 Hong Hae In command her lawyer to intimidates her husband with a gun
(Source: Netflix.com)

In recent years, media representation has taken an important role in shaping societal views on gender roles, which influencing perception of masculinity and femininity in both local and global context (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). With the growth of K-Dramas (Korean Drama) as a worldwide phenomenon, their influence on traditional norms has become more obvious. These Dramas not only reflect traditional South Korean values but also challenge social expectation, in particular in terms of gender dynamics. The

character that was portrayed in K-dramas has changed, with stronger, independent, and confident women, commonly referred to as “alpha women”, in lead roles. One of the drama, *Queen of Tears*, Introduces alpha female characters that confront traditional gender expectations, by provide a compelling case for analysing the representation of alpha women character.

Looking from the Indonesian media perspective, gender inequality remains an important issues in Indonesia’s media. In 2024 there is a workshop in Jakarta which highlighted the need for gender equality and social inclusion in media outlets. For example, a study by Tempo Institute and Centre for Data and Analysis of Tempo (PDAT analysed news coverage from august 6th to September 6th, 2018, across seven print and three online media outlets in Indonesia. The finding revealed that out of 22.900 sources cited, only 11% approximately 2.525 were women (Wardhani, 2019).

This differences is partly due to journalists tendency to choose sources who are easily accessible and willing to discuss various topics, often leading them to male figures who are more prominently perceived as more authoritative in fields like politics, IT, and economics. According to Ratna Ariyanti, a journalists from Business Indonesia and a member of the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), noted that newsroom often looked for sources who are easy to reach and willing to answer any questions, even if they aren’t true experts.

This underrepresentation of women as sources in the media set a clear indicator of gender inequality. It not only reflects social biases but also perpetuates them by limiting the visibility of women's perspectives and expertise in public discourse. Addressing this issue, media organizations need to make a conscious effort to include more women as sources and ensuring that their voices are heard in news coverage and other media content in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of media interpretation shows how the audience bring their own values, experiences, and beliefs to the act of consuming media, which result in multiple interpretations from the same content (Morley, 1980). The portrayal of alpha women characters in *Queen of Tears* offers a new case study for the representation analysis, as the characters give a new picture of assertiveness and independence that may see different with men in patriarchal societies. Inayah and Supena have studied this drama from the perspective of Feminism that are embedded in the drama, they found out that the drama manage to show a complex and diverse female characters which transcend traditional stereotypes in gender roles (Siti Inayah & Ahmad Supena , 2024).

Media play a powerful role in shaping the society attitudes on gender by either reinforcing or challenge the current stereotype (Wood, 1994). In the case of alpha female character like the one portrayed in *Queen of Tears*, their portrayal have the ability to contribute in developing gender norms by offering alternative model of femininity—models that prioritize power, leadership, independence, and confidence. This research,

will be focusing on the representation of alpha women character in the drama *Queen of Tears*, it is important because it will explore how the media representations of empowered women are depict in the Korean society.

1.2 Research Problem Statement

The portrayal of alpha female characters in popular media, for example the Korean Drama *Queen of Tears*, represent an important shift in gender representation, especially in societies where patriarchal values have been dominant for a long time. These new characters have the courage in challenging traditional concept of femininity by demonstrating traits such as confidence, emotional strength, and independence qualities that often associated with men roles in media portrayals. Some researcher try to focusing on the representation of this alpha female characters from western popular content, because the popular views on feminism meanwhile in the Asian culture Men still holds power in many society. In addition, there are few studies that tries to study the representation of alpha female characters that come from eastern popular content such as Korean drama. This research aims to address that research gap, with a specific focus on the representation of alpha female portrayals in Korean Drama societies.

Adding this discussion to the Indonesian context is crucial, since both South Korea and Indonesia practically share deeply rooted patriarchal values, though the values is shaped by different culture and religion influences. In Indonesia, traditional gender norms

are mostly influence by Islamic values, Javanese culture, and patriarchy where men are often expected to be the primary leaders figures, while women are largely seen as caretaker of house-holds affairs. Media in Indonesia often reflecting these gender norms, strengthening the stereotypes of women as submissive and nurturing being. The popularity of Korean Dramas in Indonesia introduces a new dynamic.

Moreover, Indonesia's evolving media landscape and its increasing exposure to global media which include Korean Drama, provide a unique opportunity to examine how male perceptions of gender that influenced by foreign cultural products. Looking at the Korean cultural diversity and the crossline between modern and traditional values, the way men see alpha women character in media can be different a cross regions and social groups. It makes it important to study how Korean drama portrayals of alpha female characters are perceived and interpret by male and the results of these research may bring impact to a broad conversation on gender roles in society.

In responding to these discussion, this research not only tends to fills a gap in existing study but also tries to contributes to the broader conversation on gender and media representations in Asian culture and societies. By trying to analyse the representation of the alpha female characters in the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*, this study try to expose how the media portrayal of alpha women challenges or reinforces traditional gender norms that already exists.

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives to be achieved in this research are:

1. To understand the representation of the alpha female portrayals from the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*, whether the drama will depict them as challenges or will they support the existence of alpha female characters.
2. This research tries to understand the representation of alpha women character from the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* derived from chosen scenes that show the dynamics upon the existence of alpha female characters.

1.4 Research Significance

The author aims for readers, themselves, or other interest parties to gain information from the results of this study. The significance of this study are as follows:

1.1.1 Theoretical

This research offers new insights on how media give portrayals of alpha women which contributes to the gender communication fields, representation through text analysis theory by John Fiske and Feminism theory. it tends to fill a gap in existing literature, which has often focusing on western feminism through their popular content, by focusing on the Asian representation of the alpha female characters. Additionally, this research provides a cross-cultural perspective by

examining the representation of alpha women characters in the drama, enhancing theories on how media representation correlated with gender dynamics and feminism theory.

1.1.2 Social

Through understanding how alpha female characters in Korean dramas are represented, especially in patriarchal society, this study offers important insights into how media portrayals can challenge or supports traditional gender roles. It contributes to a conversation on gender equality and helps inform discussions on changing societal views about leadership, power, and relationships between women and men. The results can also support advocacy groups in promoting gender equality and sensitivity in media and society.

1.1.3 Practical

In practical terms, this research gives media producers, content creators, and film makers important insights into how alpha female representation in the drama affect to gender portrayals in media. With the growing global popularity of Korea drama, understanding the existence of alpha female characters can help generate more gender-sensitive content. By understanding the importance of alpha women

presentation, this study can help develop more balanced and progressive gender portrayals in media.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

1.5.1 Research Paradigm

This study employs the Critical Social Science Research Paradigm to analyse the representation of alpha female characters in the Korean Drama Queen of Tears. According to Neuman (2014), the critical paradigm tries to expose and challenge underlying power structures, which aiming not only to understand social phenomena but also to advocate for transformation and social justice. This framework is well-suited for examining media portrayals of empowered women as potential disruptors of traditional gender roles, critiquing how cultural narratives shape male perceptions of authority, leadership, and power dynamics.

Following Neuman's emphasis on practical, this research also highlights how theory and empirical findings can actively contribute to societal change by fostering critical awareness among the society. By exploring how the alpha female characters are depicted, this study identifies mechanism that sustain patriarchal ideologies representations. Hence, this paradigm focus on critical reflection and emancipations supports the study's aim to explore how these portrayals challenge traditional gender norms and encourage more equitable gender relations.

1.5.2 State of The Art

This study refers to earlier research conducted both locally in Indonesia and globally.

The first study is titled “Feminism in *Enola Holmes* Films: A Semiotic Lens” by Alfi Syahriyani (2022). This study tries to explore the representation of feminism set in the 19th century. This study employs qualitative descriptive analysis by using the guidance of feminism theory. The gap with this study is that this study is focusing on the feminist sign from the main character of the film which is a girl called Enola, it tries to seek on how feminist challenge the gender stereotypes during the Victorians era by using the rebel characters who is a girl and have a feminist mind setting, which categorize as challenging the gender stereotype. This study is focusing on the signs, and objects that was presented by the female main characters and not from the male characters.

The second study is titled “Female Action Hero’s Superpower Representation: Audience reception on Twitter in *Disney’s Mulan 2020*” by Winda Nur Pratiwi and Fitria Akhmerti Primasita. This study is focusing on how the women empowerment is portrayed through a female hero with superpower like the one in *Mulan* live-action. The focus is that the differences between the original and live-action movie where supposedly *Mulan* gain her superpower through training and her own strength while

in the live-action she get the power through Chi. The study is using the qualitative content analysis to examine tweets posted from September 7th to 27th 2020, using keyword “Mulan,” “Power”, “Superpower”, and “chi”. Then using the Hall’s reception theory the tweets were gathered, and categorized into three audience positions: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional.

The result reveals that a lot of women audiences preferred the original portrayal of Mulan as an ordinary women who becomes strong through her own hard work and perseverance. Majority of the audiences thinks that by giving her the superpower through Chi undermined the original message of empowerment from the animated version. This study have similar method with this author research however, this study is focusing on the character *Mulan* 2020. On the other hand this author wish to analyse about the alpha female character from *Queen of Tears*, and focus on how male audience perceive and interpret an empower women character from *Queen of Tears*.

The third study is titled “Audience reception analysis of Elsa’s Leadership in Disney *Frozen 2*” by Yunia Anindya. The study is focusing on Elsa’s leadership and how it is represented on a women characters, how it is perceived by different audiences and it focusing on how media influence the perception of leadership which came from a female character, and how this representations align with or challenging the social norms about gender roles. This study is completed by using qualitative

approach through content analysis and audience reception analysis. The result of this study shows that while most viewers is supporting the portrayal of women in leadership roles, there are other viewers who challenge this depiction due to traditional gender biases.

The fourth study is titled “Avenging Women: an Analysis of Postfeminist Female Representation in the Cinematic *Marvel’s Avengers* Series” by Mary Louise DeMarchi. This study is focusing on postfeminist ideology impacting the portrayal of female characters. The problem is rooted in the failure of film industries to provide diverse, and empowered female representations, and relying on stereotypes and patriarch construct that present empowerment by actually reinforce sexism and disempowerment. This research is using qualitative content analysis to analyse the portrayal of female characters in the MCU series. The result of this study shows that Postfeminist representation of these women emphasize individualism and sexual agency while neglecting collective feminist ideals or critiques of structural inequalities. these representations provide the illusion of empowerment but ultimately maintain traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The fifth study is titled “Studi Semiotic feminism pada Film *Marlina Si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak* (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes) by Sharifa Arifin in 2022. The film challenges traditional portrayals of women within a patriarchal society. This study is using semiotics analysis that proposed by Roland

Barthes analysed for visual cues, gestures, and dialogue. The differences with this study is focus on analysing from the Charles Sanders Pierce's triangle elements of semiotics. and focusing on the male point of view of the drama recognizing their life experience through the guidance of psychoanalytic feminism theory where life experience can influence someone in seeing feminism in life which will found through the male character in the drama *Queen of Tears*.

The last study is titled “Semiotic Analysis of Gender Inequality in the Series Gadis Kretek” by Nurul Sukinah in 2024. The study explores gender inequality as depicted in the Indonesian film series Kretek Girl. this study is focusing in the struggles that main female characters with the narrative that she is a female leader in a patriarchal society. by using the Roland Barthes semiotics approach, this study tries to examine the series through signs, and dialogue that the main character did in the series. the difference with this research is that this research will be studying the male characters perspective of the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* to alpha female characters depictions through signs, symbols, and dialogue that is embedded throughout the series.

Previous research shows that popular media content such as movie and drama series are a powerful tools for reflecting and shaping societal norms and perceptions, especially about gender roles and empowerment. These studies collectively highlight

how feminist ideals, gender representation, and audience reception crossed in various ways to either challenge or support traditional narrative.

This research shifts the focus to how male audience perceive alpha female characters in the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*. Unlike previous studies that mostly analyse feminist symbols or female characters from a woman's perspective, this study uses a postcolonial feminist approach to understand women representation through the alpha female characters portrayed in the drama. By applying John Fiske's semiotic framework, it explore the representation of alpha female characters through signs, symbols, and dialogues, by considering the characters personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. This fresh perspective aims to deepen our understanding of gender roles in media and their impact on conversations about feminism and equality.

1.5.3 Theory

1.5.3.1 Representation Theory by Stuart Hall

In 1997 Stuart Hall developed theory of Representation of Cultural Representations and signifying Practices, this theory argues that media texts rarely offer a "true" or fixed portrayal of events, people, places, or history. This is because meaning is never singular and can always be debated. Media producers often shape their work to convey a specific meaning, but this meaning reflects their perspectives and intentions. Those with social power and privilege may use media to promote their

own ideas or preferred interpretations, shaping public understanding to align with their ideology. By analysing the messages in media, we can uncover the biases, viewpoints, and political agendas of its creators (Hall, 1997).

This theory have three approaches to give further explanation of how representation of meaning through language works:

1. Reflective Approach, suggests that film or series usually reflect real-live events, cultural realities , or people, where meaning is captured in the actual subject that being represented. In addition, meaning is produced by people through experiences and ideology, which is reflected in individuals culture or reality.
2. Intentional Approach, declare that meaning is created based on the point of view of the writer, or speaker.
3. Constructionist Approach, emphasis the active role of the audience and shared cultural in constructing meaning. Declare that meaning is design or constructed by the reader or writer.

1.5.3.2 Feminism Theory

The fifth edition of Rosemarie Tong explain about the Postcolonial Feminism theory that will be used in this research. Postcolonial Feminism focuses on the critical perspective to examine how colonial histories, global power dynamics, and cultural

traditions influence in shaping women's experiences and representations. This theory is rooted in the critique of western feminist ideals, it emphasizes the important of contextualizing gender roles within specific cultural, historical, and social politics settings. This theory seeks to address how local traditions, colonial legacies, and global influences contribute in the narratives of empowerment in non-western societies (Tong, 2017).

The first focus of this theory is Intersection of tradition and modernity, this theory highlight the traditional culture and modern feminist ideals. In many Asian societies, gender roles have been historically shaped by patriarchal structures rooted in religion, Confucianism, and colonial influences. These traditional roles often emphasize women's passiveness, domestics duties, and community-oriented behaviour. Alpha women characters, on the other hand, embody traits like leadership, independence, and confidence which challenging this expectations.

The second focus is cultural hybridity, postcolonial feminism enables the analysis of how hybrid portrayals negotiate cultural authenticity while engaging with global feminist ideals. For this case, an alpha women characters may demonstrate independence and agency an attributes that often associated with western feminism which maintaining a strong connection to family or community, which aligns with Asian cultural values.

The third focus is representation of power and authority, postcolonial feminism examines how power and authority are portrayed in media. The alpha women character representation in Asian drama often represent a change in societal attitudes, showing that women can be decision makers and leaders. However postcolonial emphasis that these portrayals are not always straightforward and may include compromises that reflect the cultural challenger of claiming authority in patriarchal settings.

1.6 Research Assumption

This research tries to examine how Korean drama *Queen of Tears* represent the role of alpha female characters in the Drama, exploring the complexity of these portrayals are able to challenge traditional gender norms and influence perceptions of femininity and masculinity. While studies of female empowerment in media often focusing on the female perspective in a dominant male world in the western contexts. This study addresses a gap by focusing on how alpha female character is represented in patriarchal societies in Asian societies. Using a critical social science paradigm and John Fiske's semiotics approach, the research tries to understand how these alpha female characters are presented in the middle of patriarchal societies. by exploring these cross-cultural topics, the study provide a new point of view on the role of media

in shaping and potentially changing gender norms inside a diverse cultural frameworks.

1.7 Operational Concept

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of alpha female characters in the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* that has conceptualized the theme of gender dynamics. This study also focuses on message that the filmmakers is trying to deliver regarding the position of alpha female characters by using the John Fiske's semiotics research approach. This analysis focusing on the critical reflection of gender portrayals in media and their potential to challenge or supporting societal norms. This study examines the following aspects in order to understand the representation of alpha the female characters.

1. Media encoding the alpha female persona: through John Fiske's semiotic analysis, the drama encodes dominant messages about confidence, independent female leadership in a traditional patriarchal setting. The character of the alpha in *Queen of Tears* represents a shift in stereotypical portrayals of women in Korean drama. These encoded messages are central to audience interpretation and vary depending on their own personal values, cultural background, and unintentional through from the audience.

2. Alpha female characters representation in patriarchal societies: the representation of the alpha female characters is analysed through how the media portrayed the characters it by exploring the drama signs, objects, and then studied with the writer interpretations towards the second person point of view. This study assumes that the meaning of media messages is co-constructed by both the media and its audience. Then, the analysis considers how John Fiske's semiotics elements within *Queen of Tears* interact with social and cultural context where the author can analyse the how the alpha female characters is represent in order to generate multiple possible interpretations, revealing the complex interplay between media texts and patriarchal constructs.

1.8 Research Method

1.8.1 Research Approach

This research the author is using a qualitative research method based on critical social science. The Critical Social Science approach aims is to critique and transform the social relations by revealing underlying sources of power relations, inequality, and social control (Neuman, 2014). The goal of Critical Social Science approach is to help uncover hidden realities in social relations in order to improve them through analytical investigation. The research approach used in this research

was the John Fiske's semiotic approach (Fiske, 2011), this approach was applied to explore three interconnected dimensions in the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*:

1. The level of reality, which examines the extent to which narrative reflects real-life social conditions, events, or norms.
2. The level of representation, which focuses on how characters, settings, and events are constructed and portrayed through different cinematic techniques which include dialogue, camera settings, and dialogue.
3. The level of ideology, which focuses into the message, values, or beliefs embedded in the story that have the possibility to influence audience perceptions and cultural discourse.

In order to critically analyse how *Queen of Tears* reflects, construct, and influence social realities, this study employs a qualitative research method based on critical social science, combined with John Fiske's semiotic approach. Given that media serves as a powerful tool in shaping cultural discourse, this approach helps uncover the hidden messages, power dynamics, and values within the drama. By looking at how the story reflects real-life situations, how characters and events are portrayed, and what deeper ideas that are being communicated, this method provides a way to understand gender roles, social status, and cultural norms in *Queen of Tears*. The reasons for choosing this method will be explained in the following sections.

a. Aligns with the research objective: the research aims to critique and transform social relations by revealing power dynamics, inequality, and ideological influences. The critical social power approach is ideal because it is designed to uncover hidden structures of power that shape narratives, making it highly suitable for analysing how gender roles, social hierarchy, and cultural values that are showed in *Queen of Tears*.

b. Uncovers social realities through media representation: this study examines the three level of the media semiotic representation reality, representation, and ideology in order to understand how the drama reflects and constructs social norms. Fiske's semiotic approach helps in cutting these layers, making it an effective tool to analyse the embedded social meanings in the drama's narrative, characters, and cinematic techniques.

c. Emphasizes power relations in media: media has power to shape how people see the world it can either support of challenge traditional beliefs and values. Using the critical social science approach, this study explores whether *Queen of Tears* supports or questions ideas about gender roles, social class, and patriarchy. This is important because the way these themes are presented in the drama can influence how audiences view female empowerment and traditional family dynamics.

1.8.2 Research Corpus

The subjects for this qualitative research are the alpha female characters in the Korean Drama *Queen of Tears* with the focus on the main alpha female characters named Hong Hae-In who are represent as a strong characters compared to the male characters. These character will be the perfect example of how the representation of alpha female in a patriarchal societies whether they are seen as a challenge or a part of changes to the traditional gender norms, and she deal with all the dynamics as an alpha female characters in the world of patriarchal societies in South Korea.

1.8.3 Types of Data

The type of data used in this study is qualitative data, which includes the researcher analysis upon the selected scenes which shows the conflict regarding the existence of alpha female characters, textual notes, and observational data.

1.8.4 Source of Data

The source of data that will be used for this particular research are primary and secondary data

1.8.4.1 Primary Data

Primary data will be collected by the researcher herself through conducting research, analysis from the selected scenes from the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* that is design specifically to understand and solve the research problem directly from the informant.

1.8.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data referring to other additional information that the author obtained from already-published sources, for example literature reviews, citations from books, articles, theses, journals, website, blog, and other relevant sources. It is also describes information that has already been gathered and compiled by another researcher and also including reports, articles, databases, and books.

1.8.5 Data Collection Method

In this qualitative method, the process involved a detailed and thorough examination of selected scenes from the Korean drama *Queen of Tears*. The researcher carefully selects specifics scenes that best represent the portrayal of the alpha female character and relevant gender dynamics. These scenes are then critically analyse by using the John Fiske's semiotic approach, which explores subconscious biases, gender power struggles, and symbolic portrayals of femininity and masculinity through three level of understanding reality, representation, and ideology.

In addition, the semiotics approach is employed to interpret the visual and narratives symbols embedded in the drama, such as dialogue, expressions, camera angles, and characters interactions, which convey deeper meanings about gender roles.

The next step involves correlating these analyses with the broader social and cultural context in which the drama is consumed. The researcher studies how the encoded messages within the scenes interact within patriarchal settings. Using the critical research paradigm, the goal is not only to identify patterns in interpretation but also to reflect on how media can challenge or support traditional gender ideologies.

In conclusion are drawn based on the result of this multi-faced analysis by providing insight into the representation of alpha female characters in Asian context. The finding highlight whether these portrayals influence their attitudes toward gender roles, revealing the complexities of media influence in shaping cultural perceptions.

1.8.6 Data Analysis Technique

In this study, the data analysis process is guided by the Postcolonial Feminism Theory, John Fiske's Semiotics Research Approach, and the Critical Research Paradigm. These frameworks are applied systematically to analyse selected scenes from the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* and to uncover how alpha female characters are portrayed and represented.

1. Scene selection and data collection

- The researcher identifies and selects important scenes from *Queen of Tears* that depict the alpha female character's confident traits, behaviour, and dialogue that challenge or support traditional gender roles.
- The selection focuses on scenes that highlight interactions, behaviours, and dialogues that challenge or support traditional gender roles.
- Narrative and Visual elements, for example the character expressions, gestures, wardrobe, camera angles, and settings, that will be collected as data for analysis.

2. Semiotics analysis of the selected scenes

- Using the John Fiske's semiotic approach by employed the three level of representation which are reality, representation, and ideology, this author will decodes the signs and symbols within the selected scenes to understand how meaning is constructed and communicated.
- The analysis identifies how symbolic codes such as camera angles, lighting, symbols, signs, face expression, and dialogue construct a dominant or subversive narrative around the alpha female character.

1.8.7 Data quality

To ensure the quality of this research, this author will carefully select some scenes from *Queen of Tears* that align with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. The process begins with watching and thoroughly analysing the drama to identify scenes that are effectively portray the alpha female character and her interaction within a patriarchal context. This careful observation ensures that only relevant and impactful scenes are chosen for analysis. Furthermore, to enhance reliability, this author will also using the Pierce's semiotic triangle—comprising the sign, the object, and the interpretant—as a guiding framework. By applying this approach, this author will examine the meaning-making process within the selected scenes, ensuring that the chosen data accurately represent the intended themes and provides a strong foundation for analysis. This two approach ensures that the data is both meaningful and reliable, supporting the study's aim of analysing the representation of alpha female characters.