



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

Undergraduate Thesis

**Compiled to Fulfil the Registration For
an International Undergraduate Program**

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CHAPTER II

ALPHA FEMALE CHARACTER REPRESENTATION FROM KOREAN DRAMA *QUEEN OF TEARS*

2.1 Overview of Korean Drama *Queen of Tears*

Queen of Tears is a Korean Drama that was aired on Netflix which raises issues about domestic conflicts, feuds between companies in the field of trade, gender conflicts and issues about alpha females. This drama was officially released on the streaming site Netflix on 9th March 2024. The movie is directed by Jang Young-Woo, based on a screenplay written by Park Ji Eun. A line up of top actors and actresses such as Kim Soo Hyun, Kim Ji Won, Park Sung-hoon, Kwak Dong-yeon, Kim Young-min, and also features top actor Song Joong-ki as a cameo in this 16-episode series (Queen of Tears, 2024).

The drama follows the story of a powerful and independent women navigating personal and professional challenges in male-dominated world. Through its portrayal of corporate rivalries and domestic struggles, Queen of Tears highlights the complexities in gender roles and societal expectation. The central female character, played by Kim Ji Won, embodies the concept of an "alpha female"—a woman who is assertive, ambitious, and unafraid to take control. Her character challenges traditional stereotypes, showing that

women can be both successful in their careers and capable of handling family conflicts, despite societal pressures to conform to more submissive roles (Prastiyo, 2024).

Hong Hae-in's character offers valuable insights into the challenges that women in leadership positions face, particularly in balancing professional ambitions with societal expectations of femininity and domestic roles. Her assertiveness and strong decision-making skills often put her in conflict with both personal and professional relationships, reflecting the real-life struggles of women who break traditional gender barriers. By placing an alpha female character at the center of the narrative, *Queen of Tears* challenges the stereotypical portrayal of women in Korean dramas, shifting from passive and dependent roles to active and dominant leadership figures.

The significance of Hong Hae-in's portrayal extends beyond entertainment, as it contributes to ongoing discussions about gender representation in media. Research on gender roles in K-dramas, such as a study by Moestopo University, highlights how strong female leads influence audience perceptions of women's empowerment in contemporary society. The drama serves as a reflection of changing attitudes toward gender roles, offering a more progressive depiction of women in power. Through its intricate storytelling and layered characterization, *Queen of Tears* not only captivates viewers but also sparks critical discussions about gender dynamics in both Korean and global contexts (CITATION DARI JURNAL QUEENMAKER).



Figure 2. 1

Korean Drama *Queen of Tears* Poster

2.1.1 Korean Drama *Queen of Tears* Production Team

Hangul : 눈물의 여왕

Sutradara : Jang Young Woo and Kim Hee Won

Producer : CJ ENM

Scriptwriter : Park Ji-Eun

Production Company : TVn and Studio Dragon

Genre : Romantic Comedy
Release Date : 9th March 2024
Duration : 16 Episodes
Cast : Kim Soo-Hyun, Kim Ji-Won, Park Sung-hoon, Kwak Dong-Yeon, and Lee Joo Bin

2.1.2 Cast of Korean Drama *Queen of Tears*

A. Kim Soo Hyun



Figure 2. 2

Actor Kim Soo Hyun

Kim Soo-hyun is a Korean actor born on 16th February 1988 in Seoul, South Korea. He is one of the highest-paid actor in South Korea in 2020, Kim Soo-hyun has received multiple prestigious awards throughout his career, including five Baeksang Arts Awards, two Grand Bell Awards, and one Blue Dragon Film Award. He has also been recognize *by Forbes in the Power celebrity 40* and *30 under 30 Asia* lists and named Gallup Korea's Television Actor of the Year.

Encouraged by his mother to take acting classes to overcome his introverted nature, Kim Soo-hyun made his TV debut in *Kimchi Cheese Smile* (2007) after performing in theatre. He rose to fame with lead roles in *Dream High* (2011) and *Moon Embracing the Sun* (2012), winning a Baeksang Arts Awards for Best Actor. His success continued with hot films like *The Thieves* (2012) and *Secretly, Greatly* (2013). Cementing his status as a top Hallyu star, he starred in *My Love from the Star* (2013) and *The Producers* (2015), earning three Daesang awards. After completing military service in 2019, he returned with *It's Okay to Not Be Okay* (2020), followed by *One Ordinary Day* (2021), and *Queen of Tears* (2024). In *Queen of Tears* Kim Soo-hyun played as Baek Hyun Woo: Hae-in's husband who works as a Legal Director at the Queens Group company. He is a lawyer with a law degree from Seoul National University who was born in Yongdu-ri, a rural area (Wikipedia, 2024).

B. Kim Ji Won



Figure 2.3

Actress Kim Ji Won

Kim Ji Won is a Korean Actress born on 19th October 1992 in Seoul South Korea. She was scouted in 2007, she joined an entertainment agency and trained for three years before debuting in 2010. While pursuing her career, she enrolled in Dongguk University's Theatre Department in 2011. She gained fame with *The Heirs* (2013) and *Descendants of the Sun* (2016) before securing lead roles in hit dramas like *Fight for My Way* (2017), *Arthdal Chronicles* (2019), *Lovestruck in the City* (2020–2021), *My Liberation Notes* (2022), and *Queen of Tears* (2024). Her collaborations with renowned screenwriters further solidified her status as a prominent Hallyu star.

In Queen of Tears, Kim Ji Won Played as Hong Hae In, Hyun-woo's wife who works as the Director of Queens Department Store. She is a third generation chaebol and the daughter of the Queens Group family. Her life motto is 'What can't be done? It's just what you don't do!'. In this drama she was the character who is represented as the Alpha Female characters through how she carried herself in a man-dominated world. Hong Hae-in portrayals was someone who is strong, fierce, independent, and capable of being a leader in her company (wikipedia, 2024).

C. Park Sung-hoon



Figure 2.4

Actor Park Sung-hoon

Park Sung-hoon is a Korean Actor born on 18th February 1985 in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi Province, South Korea. Park Sung-hoon began his acting journey with a minor

role in *A Frozen Flower* (2008) before making a name for himself in theatre with performances in *Rooftop Room Cat*, *The History Boys*, and *Model Students*. His early TV career included supporting roles in *Three Days* (2014), *Six Flying Dragons* (2015–2016), and *Don't Dare to Dream* (2016). However, it was his performances in the horror film *Gonjiam: Haunted Asylum* (2018) and the drama *My Only One* (2018–2019) that brought him greater recognition. He later landed his first leading role in KBS2's *Memorials*.

Park has recently gained widespread recognition for his intense and complex roles, particularly as a villain. His chilling performances in *The Glory* (2022–2023) and *Queen of Tears* (2024) have solidified his reputation as a standout antagonist. He also took on a bold and transformative role as Cho Hyun-ju, a transgender ex-soldier, in *Squid Game* season 2 (2024), further showcasing his versatility as an actor. In *Queen of Tears*, Park Sung-hoon portrays as Yoon Eun-sung, a sharp and enigmatic mergers and acquisitions (M&A) specialist with a background as a Wall Street analyst. A renowned investor, he returns to Korea after years abroad and becomes entangled with the powerful Queens Group. With an exceptional ability to predict investments, Yoo Eun-sung is a charismatic yet mysterious figure whose true motives remain uncertain, adding intrigue to the drama's unfolding power struggles (2024).

2.1.3 Storyline of Korean Drama *Queen of Tears*

In *Queen of Tears*, Hong Hae-in (Kim Ji-won) is the third-generation heiress of the Queens Group, a powerful conglomerate. She is married to Baek Hyun-woo (Kim-Soo-hyun), a man from a modest farming background, introduces to a significant power imbalance, both socially and economically. This disparity becomes a source of tension, as Hyun-woo grapples with feelings of inferiority and resentment, while Hae-in struggles to balance her authoritative role in the corporate world with her personal life (2024).

Hae-in's assertiveness and ambition, traits that define her as an alpha female, which often clash with the Korean traditional gender expectations, leading to conflict with her husband and other characters who are uncomfortable with her dominance. These tensions are provoked by societal norms that favour male leadership, forcing Hae-in to continually prove her capabilities. Her role challenge the conventional portrayals of women on Korean drama, shifting from passive and dependent roles to active and giving dominant leadership figures.

As the narrative progresses, Hae-in faces personal crisis with a brain cancer diagnosis, compelling her to re-evaluate her life choices and relationships. This vulnerability exposes the emotional toll of her relentless pursuit of success and control. All at once, Hyun-woo begins to confront his own insecurities and the societal pressures that have influenced his perceptions of masculinity and partnership. Their journey toward mutual understanding highlights the complexities of gender roles and the sacrifices required to maintain both personal and professional identities (Jae-Ha, 2024).

Throughout the series, Hae-in's journey highlights the struggles women in power often face, especially when balancing between strength and vulnerability. She starts as confident and authoritative business leader but gradually reveals a more reflective and emotional side. This transformation shows that being strong isn't just about control, it's also about resilience and the ability to embrace one's emotions. *Queen of Tears* carefully explore gender roles, portraying the difficulties women encounter in asserting themselves both at work and in personal relationship.

Beyond its gripping story, *Queen of tears* sparks meaningful conversations about gender dynamics in Korea and beyond. By centering on an alpha female lead, the drama challenges traditional expectations of women and sheds light on how female representation in media is evolving. It not only show the challenges faces by women in leadership but also encourage audience to reconsider the long-standing ideas about gender, power, and societal expectations.