

Identity Representation of Loyalty in Asian Women's Friendship Struggling for Happiness in *Sunny* (2011) and Its Remakes

*Luly Prastuty

Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

*Email: luly.prastuty@ui.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Historically, Asia has undergone a difficult situation after World War II and the financial crisis in the 1990s. This condition prominently affects urban Asian society and how women interact, as in *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes in Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. This qualitative research uses the *Cultural Studies* approach. To explore the data, the researcher applies representation and transnational feminism theories. This research shows the perspective of feminism in these films depicted through a robust patriarchal environment without questioning men's position. In this situation, collective women empower each other. They even obscure the socio-economics gap and enhance their identity as a part of the group by helping and protecting each other. They stand up for the members physically and mentally to achieve what they want and dream. Together, they strengthen their identity as women with harmony and life purpose. By their solidarity, they can bravely fight any other injustice. Collective women who genuinely care about members personally are the uniqueness of Asian feminism. From the discussion, we can conclude that women in several Asian countries need to support each other in the complex repression of capitalism in the strongly patriarchal society. Enhancing women's identity is crucial. Women's solidarity can be a metaphor for Asian women in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia who can be much stronger together globally.

Keywords: *identity, intertextuality, representation, transnational feminism, women friendship.*

1. INTRODUCTION

South Korea is a notable country that affects all around the world through Korean Wave or *Hallyu*. It is more than trends. *Hallyu* is a part of the system created by complex agents (creative industries, critics, audience, fans-clubs, mass media, others) and, most notably, the Korean government to expand their power to gain a positive image globally generated by economics motives. *Hallyu* works prominently through popular culture. *Hallyu*'s popular culture comes in various cultural commodities such as branded technologies, popular songs, television dramas, and movies. As a work of art, a film has unique characteristics that differ from any other cultural artifact. A film can manifest reality with some distortion, bias, and purpose to construct a similar shared meaning through representation on screen.

Recently, South Korea seized the global audience attention from CJ Entertainment film production entitled *Parasite* (2019), directed by Bong Joon-ho. As the first winning foreign film, *Parasite* (2019) won several awards and the most prestigious title as the Best Picture in the 92nd Academy Awards [1]. It makes South Korea

a promising potential country that can produce high-quality films other than Hollywood productions. The grand prize cannot be attained without the ambition of CJ Entertainment that aims to be the most significant film house production in South Korea and the world.

CJ Entertainment has been recognized, nationally and globally, as one of the most significant film production in South Korea that has produced and distributed some box office films. It is not only *Parasite* (2019). There is another masterpiece of CJ Entertainment that catches international attention, and it is *Sunny* (2011) that has been remade in other Asian countries such as in Japan entitled *Sunny: Our Hearts Beat Together* (2018), Vietnam entitled *Go-Go Sisters* (2018), and Indonesia entitled *Bebas* (2019). For the director, *Sunny* (2011) is a personal film compared to others as it is based on Kang Hyung Chul's mother as an ordinary housewife whose a memorable youth experience. Meanwhile, the representation of women in *Sunny* is a manifestation of the reality of young women in Korea and Asia in the producer's eyes [2].

Compared to television drama, the film is way more beneficial to consume and be reproduced in many

countries. It is why film remakes can gain economic advantages that bring *Sunny* (2011) as one of the lifetime top-grossing films in South Korea [2]. CJ Entertainment allows every director and house production to adapt the movie based on the country's background. The audience can relate to the social issues depicted on screen through its characters, plots, and settings. The locality of each country transforms the uniqueness that is distinct from one to another. Thus, it can be enjoyed even by foreigners. This film has similar characters and plots with minor adjustments (name, temporal, spatial settings, and a character addition/elimination) depending on the country's social, political, economic, and cultural context. CJ Entertainment regards local/national identity as a commodity that other Asian countries can also apply. However, as a strategy strengthening *Hallyu*, the remakes also promote *Sunny* (2011) as the source of ideas compared to the other. *The originality* is a product of global marketing that advantages South Korea. The house production does not prominently get recognition internationally as they still use a label (For instance, in Indonesia, there is a label *Adaptasi film BOX OFFICE HIT Korea SUNNY* that means Adaptation of Hit-Box Office Korean Film SUNNY) in the cover. South Korea still plays the central part beside the remake films are significantly helpful for the directors and scriptwriters.

South Korean films that use friendship as the central theme is not only *Sunny* (2011). The female company can be seen in *Little Black Dress* (2011), which tells

four 24-year-old women who graduated from an elite university looking for identity in urban society. Another female friendship film can be seen in *Samjin Company English Class* (2020) about female workers in a company. There is another flashback plot with the theme of friendship entitled *Pure Love* (2016). However, their characters are mixed gender, and the narration involves a love story between the main characters. For prior Korean film remakes, there is a Korean box office film, *My Sassy Girl* (2001), adopted in several countries. This romantic comedy is a love story between Gyeon-woo, who is less masculine, and a tough woman not named in the film. *My Sassy Girl* was adapted in America, Japan, China, Nepal, Lithuania, the Philippines, and India [3].

Moreover, another popular Korean remake featuring female characters is also seen in *Miss Granny* (2014) in the Philippines, China, and Indonesia. All of the films strengthen *Hallyu* through the world of global cinema. However, it is not many film adaptations focus on the lives of women and friendship groups. South Korean films with the theme of friendship tell more about male friendship groups. Meanwhile, the representation of female friendship groups in Korea is alienated in television drama series as female spectators are targeted as daily consumers. That is why, as a featured film, *Sunny* (2011) is attractive to analyze. *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes portray female friendship groups struggling for happiness. It represents Asian solidarity compared to other films.

Table 1. Information of *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes

Information	South Korea	Japan	Vietnam	Indonesia
Title	Sseo-ni / 써니	強い気持ち・強い愛	Thang Nam Ruc Ro	Bebas
Year	2011	2018	2018	2019
Language	한국어/조선말	日本語	Tiếng Việt	Indonesian
Date Release	4 May 2011	31 August 2018	8 March 2018	3 October 2019
Director	Kang Hyoung-chul	Hitoshi Ohne	Nguyễn Quang Dũng	Riri Riza

Sunny (2011) and its remakes narrate the nostalgic story of a female group who meet again after approximately twenty years apart. They met again because the group leader missed his group members at high school, and she wanted to build another unforgettable moment together. She had cancer and had been estimated to live about two months. At her request to the main character, all members are reunited. The plot is filled with some *back and forth* events between when they were high schoolers and their mature version—both narrations highlight how the girls pursue happiness despite social limitations in the Asian urban context. These four films present variations in the representation of women between generations—youth and adults with various socio-economic backgrounds and unified. Nevertheless, the four films succeeded in providing an understanding of transnational feminism in Asia.

Sunny (2011) is a research corpus because it is the only female friendship-themed film that has become a box office film in South Korea and is adopted in many countries. In addition, female friendship groups are rarely featured in feature films, unlike television series. As a major project lasting approximately two hours, *Sunny* (2011) became significant. *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes are worth examining South Korea's power to dominate the world through *Hallyu*. The presence of the films adaptation of *Sunny* (2011) in Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia has become a strategy for South Korea's power to dominate global capitalism through the entertainment industry without neglecting the local identity of each country. In other words, *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes can represent a group of Asian women in a coalition to strengthen each other, so it is essential. This study will see how the representation of Asian

women and friendship groups function as women's empowerment striving for happiness.

Here, the researcher will look at the previous studies. Previous research focused on *Sunny* (2011)'s analysis in a textual manner, namely how a nostalgic atmosphere is built up from specific cinematographic techniques. The most prominent element of *Sunny* (2011) is nostalgia. *Analysis on Creative Time and Space Production in Korean Cinema: Focusing on the Film "Sunny"* (2019) by Seonghoon Kim talks that film is the only medium that can distort time by bringing together one person at different times at the same time and place [4]. The uniqueness of the film makes the audience freer to express their thoughts and imagination into the film scene to dissolve with fictional characters or even make themselves the main character. The reflection of the audience who drifted away in the nostalgia stream made it easier for the film's creative team to become one with the audience—even with themselves. So, even though the plot is simple, *Sunny's* film emphasizes plot modifications, old-but-gold songs, and fascinating visualizations to emphasize euphoria.

The representation of women in the film adaptations of Korea and other countries can be seen in the transformation of *My Sassy Girl*, which was reproduced in several countries, and the representation of women also adapted to the local context. Undeniably, the female character stereotypes that oppress women's positive image are notably found [5]. Meanwhile, in its adaptation, *Il Mare* from Korea also underwent artistic changes when it was adapted to America, thus affecting the representation of women based on the difference in cultural context [6]. Moreover, the representation of women in Asian films is still widely studied from horror films full of threats and pressure. The representation of women in Korean cinema in 2000–early 2010 was primarily presented in the thriller genre. This film illustrates the figure of a mother who must be strong amid patriarchal repression. A formidable woman is described as a threat to the thriller genre. It is the same with the Korean films *The Ring Virus* and *The Wig*. Adapted from Japan, Ring, and Exte, women, are often represented as scary ghosts [7]. It implicitly conveys a meaning that women are dangerous and need to be avoided. However, when discussing *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes, it is not only about friendship. Research on *Bebas* (2019), *Sunny's* Indonesian version, upon family values [8]. Amalina analyzed the representation of female company in the film *Bebas* (2019) with the Semiotics theory of Ferdinand de Saussure and found utility, affirmation, ego support, stimulations, and security. The closeness of friends constructs the meaning of kinship. It is why family values seem minimal [9].

From the primary research, it can be said that it is still very few comparative studies on the representation

of Asian women from transcultural films, which will contribute to the field of *Cultural Studies* in Asia. Then, it is vital to analyze women's representation through cinema to see how Asian countries raise women's issues related to the socio-economic context in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Based on the research gap, the researcher formulated the research question: how is the representation of female teenagers and adults pursuing happiness in the film *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes?

This study aims to analyze how Asian women—teenagers and adults—are depicted in the four-film adaptations as a manifestation of Asian women who are united and support each other. At the same time, the films portray Asian values that are democratic, caring, working together, and fighting for equality. This research is expected to enrich the knowledge in *Cultural Studies* by emphasizing the significance of comparative studies of film adaptations as cross-Asian cultural products. The research was conducted to strengthen the position of empowered Asian women with unique and diverse identities.

This research is qualitative research with a *Cultural Studies* approach that focuses on case studies of four films adapted from *Sunny* (2011), *Sunny: Our Hearts Beat Together* (2018), *Go-Go Sisters* (2018), and *Bebas* (2019), which focuses on the representation of women. Here, the female friendship groups act as the agent of women's empowerment. For this reason, the researchers analyzed several scenes in the four films. The film analysis method is applied to extract data substantially from cultural products because cultural products are works of art that reflect society and culture in real life. Through film analysis, researchers can study society from the representation of community. The primary data sources used were the four film adaptations of *Sunny* (2011), *Sunny: Our Hearts Beat Together* (2018), *Go-Go Sisters* (2018), and *Bebas* (2019) by watching them in www.vidio.com and www.catchplay.com several times, observing the scenes, noting pivotal settings to draw the patterns built from the four films, classifying the data, and analyzing the data obtained. Secondary data were obtained from the literature study to explore the context of space and time in the film. The *Cultural Studies* approach allows the investigation of issues from several perspectives, such as Representation by Stuart Hall and Transnational Feminism.

This research will be based on the representation theory of Stuart Hall. Hall revealed, "Representation, as the process by which meaning, is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs, and images which stand for or represent things." [10] All forms of representation are markers of values held in a particular society. Culture is a continuous process because the interpretation of the representational markers can be consumed and

reproduced by other people. Representation theory tries to deconstruct what is behind the representation and its constituents—not just a description and from the surface. In this research, presentation is beneficial for analyzing and deconstructing female characters in young and mature versions from their social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, this research deals with transnational feminism—how feminism is spread and interpreted by people who inhabit certain countries. “Transnational feminist perspectives focus on the diverse experiences of women who live within, between, and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe; they transcend nation-state boundaries and speak to a wide range of interacting forces that have an impact on gendered relationships and experiences in a geopolitical context” [11]. Transnational feminism is depicted in *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes, especially in Asian regions with a similar background—being colonized by Westerners. South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia have historical similarities and likely engage with equal feminist energy. Countries populated by the West can share the same political issues, namely the conflict between communism and democracy. They also can have similar socio-economic problems. The experiences may vary, making the idea of transnational feminism in Asia fascinating to be investigated. The diversity presented will enrich the form of feminism amid the dynamics of global and local life.

2. IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION OF ASIAN WOMEN

The liberalization of women is related much to their access to express themselves, stand up, and be contributive. Contextually, it is also about females’ efforts to achieve socio-economic equality in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. These four countries are countries with a patriarchal system. This system has been rooted in their historical background until it constructs gender roles as a way of life. The gender differences form the identity of males and females. Asian females are expected to be submissive, obedient, soft, and responsible in domestic and fulfilling family needs. Not only that, the patriarchal system is increasingly gaining its place because the beliefs and religions held by the majority of Asian people seem to legalize patriarchal practices and so affecting the government rules over the people as what happens in South Korea [12].

Women in South Korea have to survive out of the repression of capitalism. President Park Chung Hee perpetuated this issue from the 1960s until the early 1970s to strengthen its economy by constructing ideal women as workers who serve the country because they participate in increasing exports [12]. The entertainment industry commodifies women's existence with the

proliferation of agencies that form beautiful and talented women into idols. The ideal representation of women is constructed based on industrial interest to become an object that appeals to international audiences to gain the country's income. In contemporary times, the global representation of South Korean women can be seen from the skyrocketing number of fans of Korean female idol groups such as BLACKPINK, Twice, Red Velvet, Everglow, GFriend, Mamamoo, EXID, Oh! GG, Itzy, IZ*ONE [13]. Representatively, the trend of idol groups presents the ideology of feminism in energetic women's groups.

In Japan, the ideology of feminism came from America, and this thought liberated women who had been dehumanized by placing women as sexual enslaved people. In contrast, the reality is that women are still oppressed. During the post-World War II American military surveillance, many women were raped and forced into sexual slavery [14]. The solid patriarchal system in Japan places a representation of women from prostitution in porn films, karaoke guides, nightclub guards, *geisha* (attractive and talented women to entertain men), and young mistresses. In Japan, the stereotype of women as prostitutes is widely associated with social status and is a strategy for women's socio-economic survival. Currently, the representation of *kawaii* women (an adorable Japanese idea) is also widely represented through idol groups. There are girl groups from Japan, namely AKB48, SKE48, SDN48, NMB48, and HKT48. Their affiliates in other countries are JKT48 in Indonesia, SNH48 in China, BNK48 in Thailand, SGO48 in Singapore, MNL48 in the Philippines, CGM48 in Thailand, and TPE48 in Taiwan [15]. This representation strengthens women's groups as an essential part of the entertainment world.

The position of women has received considerable attention in Vietnam. Vietnam is one of the countries in Asia that prioritizes gender equality. It is evident from Vietnam, which is in 87th place, compared to Indonesia at 100, Korea at 101, and Japan at 210 [16]. Historically, women made many coalitions in the Vietnam war by becoming health workers and war assistants. However, the significance of the existence of women in Vietnamese history is sidelined compared to men [17]. In addition, women are used as a tool to seek sympathy from the masses of the government by taking into account women in the political field. It is one of North Vietnam's strategies to win the people's hearts to side with the government compared to South Vietnam, which the West controls. Gender equality was pursued in the first Constitution of 1946 and has been maintained until now [18]. Even today, Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan is the first female chairman of the Vietnam National Assembly. Gender equality in the political field is the priority agenda as long as women's participation is under the ideology of the communist state. Vietnamese women contribute a lot to the country by driving in many

sectors such as health, political participation, and education. Gender equality aims to improve welfare and protect peace nationally and internationally [18].

The representation of women's groups contributing to the economy can be seen from women's participation in the MSME sector (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). Many women form coalitions by establishing cooperatives to help the business economy and fulfill their daily needs. Culturally, mothers in Indonesia are familiar with the social gathering, when a group of women gathers and draw names from random selections from small rolls of paper while enjoying time together. In addition, Indonesia knows *Dharma Wanita*. *Dharma Wanita* is a particular organization for women who are the wives of Civil Servants. *Dharma Wanita* unites women to be active in activities and hone their skills. In the realm of work, the representation of women in Indonesia is still closely related to female

workers (TKW). The profession as a laborer abroad is considered prospective. Even the government is awarded female workers for being the hero. This reality proves Indonesian women are united with each other to survive. The emergence of groups consisting of women strengthens their position in society.

The economic repression experienced by Asian women in their environment can be minimized by joining them in women's friendship groups. On the principle of sharing the same fate, women's groups can understand each other and protect their members from various threats. The built identity strengthens their position in a society with a patriarchal system and the ideology of capitalism. This representation is shown through the characters of female friendship groups across two generations in the film *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes, *Sunny: Our Hearts Beat Together* (2018), *Go-Go Sisters* (2018), and *Bebas* (2019).

Table 2. Research object data

Title	Country	Year	Duration	Time Setting	
				Youth	Adults
<i>Sunny</i>	South Korea	2011	02:15:42	1980s	2010
<i>Our Hearts Beat Together</i>	Japan	2018	01:58:46	1990s	2018
<i>Go-Go Sisters</i>	Vietnam	2018	01:57:15	1975	2000
<i>Bebas</i>	Indonesia	2019	02:00:01	1995	2019

The analysis is close to the context of each country. Historical context builds up the tense that females have a right to freedom. Freedom is the central of happiness for women. By having space, women are not burdened with social expectations. *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes deliberately involve the historical context prominent for the women's movement and empowerment.

3. WOMEN IN ASIAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1. South Korea

Historically, the representation of women in South Korea has been heavily influenced by how the government has used the Neo-Confucian ideology, which is widely embraced by society and created discrimination between men and women in the industrial sector. In industry, women are not paid commensurate with men and do not have the opportunity to occupy high positions. The unfairness of the payment system against women is a construction of women who should be responsible for taking care of their husbands and children, not working in companies.

This issue affected the existence of women in the industrial sphere when President Park Chung Hee tried to revive South Korea from the post-civil war with North Korea in 1950-1953. In the 1960s and early 1970s, many young women in South Korea worked as laborers in the lighting, electronics, textile, and shoe

industries. "Through the end of the 1970s, light industries produced most of South Korea's exports, and female workers comprised more than half of the workforce in these industries: electronics 55.2%, textiles 72.4%, and rubber footwear 52.4%" [12]. To improve the economy, the government seeks the productivity of all its people by creating representations of women who voluntarily become factory workers to advance the country. South Korean nationalism was built on the government's promise to relieve economic hardships and burdens in the 1980s. Despite this, the fact is that women are paid very cheaply—less than half the wages of male workers. Another discrimination occurs a lot, such as women being seen as children alike, the short contract period due to women's limitation of taking care of their family after marriage, low job positions, and others.

Discrimination against women in Korea is still ongoing today and can be seen in the workplace. Many companies do not prioritize female applicants. Recruiters often ask sexist and personal questions to assess commitment, professionalism, and unique kinds of stuff [19]. Recruiters limit women's possibility of working in a company because women are regarded as reducing the company's productivity. Productivity, success, and high salaries are attached to men. On the other hand, women are considered less competent.

Sunny (2011) is set in Gwangju City in 2010 in modern times and 1980. The year 2010 became the

heyday of South Korea as a developed industrial country in Asia. Meanwhile, the 1980s became a period when the people of South Korea were fighting for political and economic stability. The year 1980 was when South Korea faced a war between soldiers and students as a form of pro-democracy. About 200 women were victims of rape and sexual violence by the Korean emergency army. These soldiers were initially assigned to encounter the demonstration in Gwangju City—culminating in uncontrollable mass violence. “The victims of sexual violence include teenagers and young women, as well as pregnant women and students who did not even take part in the protests,” said South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo [20]. The government deliberately silenced this issue for decades until Jeong Kyeong-doo publicly apologized to the victims.

3.2. Japan

Meanwhile, in the 1990s, as in *Sunny: Our Hearts Beat Together* (2018), Japan experienced a decade of economic downturn. Economic recovery has been slow. The fiscal expansion was carried out even though the country's economic development was relatively small. The Japanese government and society are trying to define their identity and regulate their economic survival [21]. It is why throughout the 1990s, Japan experienced many social and economic conflicts as depicted in the film. However, youth activism does not define the social and financial disputes in question.

Far from representing society as an opposition to the state, the Japanese adaptation of the film emphasizes the power of Japanese popular culture—which in reality greatly influences South Korea. The sparkling world of youth in Japan is illustrated by the culture of consumerism and prostitution that has become commonplace among school teenagers. As an adult, the film was set in 2018. Japan has become a more economically stable country with much technology that people use. Even so, Japanese women still experience endless patriarchal repression. The prostitution of teenage girls is still mushrooming in this country with slow population growth. Thus, both established and not established women are ultimately involved in prostitution conflicts. An established married couple can get divorced because their husband is having an affair with a prostitute. Meanwhile, women under the poverty line cannot escape capitalism's bondage, which requires them to become prostitutes.

3.3. Vietnam

In the film adaptation in Vietnam, *Go-Go Sisters* (2018) is set in Saigon, South Vietnam, during the Saigon Collapse in 1975. The collapse of Saigon became the culmination of the Vietnam War, which South Vietnam masterminded as the representative of

the West Block and North Vietnam as the representative of the East Block. This war was won by North Vietnam and became the starting point for Vietnam to become a communist country [22]. This historic event also gave Vietnamese women the freedom to participate in politics. The political identity shown in the Vietnamese adaptation is very much felt. The number of men dressed as soldiers who stand guard at night makes this romantic comedy film political. Moreover, the historical events chosen as the background likely confirm Vietnamese people's identity as a part of a communist country. Youth activism is quite prominent compared to other film adaptations because the characters enjoy the moment when there is a rebellion between students and the army, without any boundaries between those still in school.

Meanwhile, the context of the adult characters, which is 2000—immensely raises a question mark compared to the year of film production, which was 2018, so that the film production team had to adjust the setting more strictly according to the context of time and place. This time setting coincides with the historical moment of the Vietnamese people, namely when November 17, 2000, President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton came to visit Vietnam National University in Hanoi for the first time. The arrival of the American president signified that Vietnam-America's political and economic relations were established [23].

3.4. Indonesia

In Indonesia, 1995 was a challenging year because Indonesia was affected by the Asian economic crisis. 1995 was the year leading up to the reformation, namely when the Indonesian people reclaimed their freedom from the authoritarian Suharto government. During the new order, there was much socio-economic instability, so that many problems occurred between youth and law enforcement. This incident is reflected in the workers who demanded their rights on May 1, 1995, which later became National Labor Day [24]. The younger generation is a symbol of the courage and freedom of the Indonesian people. In addition, Marsinah became a female activist who was mentioned in the film *Bebas* (2019). Marsinah became a symbol of the liberation of the Indonesian people, who represented the working class.

However, the female figures are not very concerned with the social and political situation around them. The non-participation of young women in youth activism seems to be a form of diversion of the younger generation as state agents. Giving the term youth rather than youth tends to place the younger generation as mere consumers of popular culture—political awareness is sidelined.

4. ASIAN FEMALE FRIENDSHIP AND HAPPINESS

Friendship is crucial to develop the emotional sphere of women’s members and so their happiness. The sense of belonging, security, support, and protection makes women feel unbeatable regardless of the obstacles and challenges in society. All of these benefits point out the need for human beings’ existence by keeping alive and reproducing. Friendships among people historically become the reason why humans’ adaptability to other animals in nature exists. This coalition is a sort of a naturally social cycle. Human beings can support themselves by their identification with several similarities and similar purposes [25].

Same-sex friendship offers costs and benefits. Commonly, a same-sex company is built from the importance of physical appearance to attract high-quality males [25]. However, in *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes, the focus on physical is not always for males, but for themselves—the women’s existence. The power of friendship occurs when the members belong to one another through physical appearance, for instance, in a scene where the main character needs to adapt to the urban female style. Moreover, physical strength also helps the women emphasize their power when fighting with the other mean girls’ group competitors and other challenges when they grow up. Their look does not significantly affect their friendship. It can be said that the cost of physical protection is low. *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes show different perspectives than other chick-flicks, usually pointing out the competitions among members to get a boy’s attention.

The other motive in friendship is to maintain socio-economics stability. Befriend wealthy friends can be

helpful for the other member who is poor. In *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes, all members have a pure intention to support other poor members to survive in difficult situations. There is no force in helping. The female friendship truly empowers women to position in a harsh patriarchal society that puts women under pressure. This financial support is significant in female company.

The uniqueness of Asian female friendship is the aim to achieve their happiness without interference from males that breaks their meaning of friendship. Female competitions may happen from the violence of two female groups. Moreover, another potential competition among members shows from having the same crush, causing jealousy and heartbreaks. However, the conflicts do not change their friendship. Nevertheless, the power of teammates is unbreakable. They focus on supporting the members for their happiness, although they are separated twenty years apart.

5. REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE FRIENDSHIP IN SUNNY (2011) AND ITS REMAKES

The main characters in the film *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes are all members because their entire lives are under the spotlight. In terms of the number of members, each movie has different personnel. The Korean version consists of seven members, while Vietnamese, Japanese, and Indonesian adaptations comprise six members. The female members are depicted with the same stereotypes and omitted character adjustments—even merged. The following is a table of classification of the group members in each film based on their appearance and traits.

Table 3. Characters’ details

Roles	Korea	Japan	Vietnam	Indonesia
Transfer Student	Im Na Mi	Nami	Hiều Phương	Vina
Leader	Ha Chun Hwa	Serika	Mỹ Dung	Kris
Fat Girl	Kim Jang-Mi	Ume	Lan Chi	Jessica
Bookish	Seu Geum Ok	-	-	Gina
Fierce Girl	Hwang Jin-Hee	Yuko	Thuy Linh	Jojo
Cover Girl	Jung Su-Ji	Nana	Tuyet Anh	Suci
Beauty Queen	Ryoo Bok-He	Shin	Bao Chau	-

It is not difficult to differentiate the members in each remake even though they have different names based on their culture in each country. The characters’ similarity is because they follow a similar plot. Generally, members are female students who live in the city. In a moment, they have a transfer student from a village. From this description, The Transfer Student must adapt to her new environment. As a consequence, she turns to be similar to her friends by following urban trends.

The uniformity is one way to make the girls belong to another without pressuring anyone. In the Vietnam

version, The Leader Girl lends her bag and shoes for the Transfer Student. It is pretty similar to the Japanese version. All members in the group help to retouch The Transfer Student to be more trendy, modern, and cute. This appearance change positively affects The Transfer Student to be brave, bright, and fun. It is more than a harmful effect. She can blend it well. Her smiley, intelligent, and friendly personality make her friends adore her.

This representation in Table 3 likely shows the audience that similar female stereotypes construct all-girls members. As The Transfer Student, she is expected

to be pure, plain, and easily bullied. The Leader Girl is brave, strong, energetic, and a bit masculine. Like it is widely stereotyped, The Fat Girl is always humorous. Her funny side makes her joke for her teacher, but surprisingly, she is the class captain. The Bookish loves to read and intends to be a successful figure in the future. The Fierce Girl likes to utter some curses. She does it only on some occasions, not all the time to hurt her friends. Her sharp tongue is a weapon for her to fight her enemy—her friends' enemy from the other female friendship group from a different school. Then, another common stereotype about girls can be seen from the representation of the Cover Girl and Beauty Queen. They aim to be public figures whom many people love because of their beauty.

All of the representations are very conventional. It is like a template for *Sunny* (2011) to be easily adapted by other countries. From the stereotypes, the female audience can relate to the screen's characters. Their self-identification helps a lot to be blend in with the film. However, it is also enforcement the girls' stereotypes. Fortunately, their common stereotypes do not bring them to be suppressed objects. They have unique characteristics that make them strong and unbeatable.

5.1. Patriarchal System and Female's Identity

The solid patriarchal system can be seen from how all young characters depend on their father's occupation identity. Fathers are the breadwinner who influences their family's socio-economic status, affecting their children's recognition in society. Fathers are excluded from being questioned about their absolute social power that determines family background. This socio-economics status becomes a part of the girls' identity with their unique personalities and interests. However, they do not reveal too much about their fathers or brothers. Their patrilineal identity is introduced when they first become friends. It is widespread in Asian society.

However, the system does not change at all, even when they grow up. The patriarchal system is solid, as seen from the members' recounts about their experience with their husbands. It is the reason why their relationship/marriage defines their status in society. In the public's perspective, they are not the ideal women. They have personal problems that affect their quality. The dependence with males is also seen from how their grown-up versions have to survive having a busy husband, getting heartbreaks, betrayals, divorces, and having trust issues to begin a relationship.

The members have different experiences of being with men. On top of all, men forced women to be independent and unbreakable in a problematic situation. Thereby, men do not affect women's existence. All women members finally find their light of life purpose with their best friends. The reunion brings them to a

self-discovery that is helpful to support themselves in difficult situations. Together, they find authenticity. The bravery to be honest with themselves leads them to peaceful happiness.

5.2. Females are Brave To Voice Up, Stand Up, and Have Dreams

In an Asian society with a robust patriarchal system, women are taught to be obedient. From a young age, girls are expected to follow their father's orders and expectations. In this film, the main character, a transfer student from a village, is obliged to be intelligent, submissive, and diligent. Being a daughter means following what the family wants. It is different with her brother, who is determined to participate in student demonstrations to defend the liberalism of the nation from the government or capitalists' oppression. Even so, there is a moment when a girl is brave voicing up her opinion, and that is when she gathers with her family at the dining table. Togetherness eases the girl to open up her thoughts to get a solution or be granted by her parents if she wants something.

The urban female high school students have the privilege to dream high, to be whatever they want. They documented their dreams in a video recording until they watched together twenty years later. From Table 4 below, the girls' dreams are various. Even though some of them still depend on their aspirations with men, they are brave enough to show off as high-skillful individuals and focus on a career. Having a family and children is a choice, not repression. Moreover, it is not the most absolute and singular happiness. They love to do other exciting things to get their satisfaction.

The girls have dreams, but they are not on the top level of success in reality. Their visions and passions lead them to the journey they want. The social and financial limitations determine their steps. They realize that they cannot fight back the patriarchy alone, which weakens their position. Female solidarity is the engine for women to stand up. Even so, their difficult conditions never define their happiness. They create their definition of happiness when they gather and to be brave defending equality, rights, and freedom.

The women's representations depend on their social and cultural backgrounds. The Indonesian version omitted the prostitute because it is taboo and is not friendly to the young audience watching this film with their parents. Meanwhile, it is different from Korean, Japanese, and Vietnam's versions. For instance, in Japan. Japanese women are close to the prostitutes—even daily for the nightclub ladies or female high schoolers. Women work in some ways, and it is seen as a part of the entertainment industry where women are commodified. Patriarchy constructs this system and likely disguises the crucial women issue in a country.

5.3. Empowering Each Other As A Family

When female members are young, they aim to dream high without any pressure. Girls love listening to popular songs on the radio and dancing together. It is similar to when they are grown up. Popular songs and dancing become the medium to express themselves. They are happier and joyful than they were in high school back then. Their solidarity is also strengthening their position. They can fight the other threats from outside. They also protect all of the members and are brave to defend justice. It can be seen from the scene in Korea, Vietnam, and Indonesia versions that shows the female members trying to solve one of the member's daughters who is bullied in school by fighting the gangsters. In the Japanese version, all members help fight one of the member's husbands as he cheated on her.

Moreover, from the economy, all members help each other as far as they can. The wealthy women give their money to the poor ones. They do it because they do not want to make friends in difficult situations while pursuing dreams and happiness. A patriarchal system that limits women from achieving the highest career position does not become why they cannot be delighted. After the leader dies in the ending, unexpectedly, the members get a precious legacy. Here, it indicates that their relationship is not only friends, but they become family. In Asian culture, it is known that all of the wealth of died person can be commonly given to the family. Here, as The Leader Girl is alone (divorced and not having a child), she provides all of her assets to her best friends, her family.

6. CONCLUSION

The female characters in *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes are based on each countries' socio-economics context. The historical background emphasizes how women in Asian countries have to survive despite the patriarchal system of the nation and capitalist control. From these films, audiences understand that Asian women are still getting conventional stereotypes and portrayed that they cannot be separated from men's power or the other power outside themselves. Even though males have unquestionable positions, men cannot interfere the women's existence in a group. Women's identity does not always depend on their fathers' or husbands' social status as in what they do when introducing themselves. Most importantly, they know each other from their personality, dreams, uniqueness, and interests. Women can dream and follow what they want even though they are not in the ideal abstraction as in their vision. They do what they love and survive.

Nevertheless, in these films, women's stereotypes do not fully aim to humiliate women. Despite the gender

stereotypes enforcement, it provides various women representations in cinema to make women spectators identify themselves. The self-identification, however, is a strategy to widen the potential audience and contribute financial advantages. At the same time, *Hallyu* or Korean Wave becomes significant through the agents of filmmakers in other Asian countries. However, from the global perspective, the Asian female friendship in *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes offer a unique representation, different from hedonistic white female groups that have dominated the world entertainment industry, Hollywood.

The representation of Asian female friendship from *Sunny* (2011) and its remakes is more personal, attentive, and long-lasting than westerns. With this solid solidarity, Asian women can voice up opinions and strengthen their position in society. Asian women in this representation are not merely textual but become a tangible reminder for all women over Asia to build up their strong identity together as the one. Female unity is not simply about friendship. It is a family, a sisterhood, on the land which is called Asia. However, even though *Sunny* (2011) and its adaptations highlight women's togetherness merely on-screen, they have not yet significantly united women in several countries. Attaining real transnational feminism requires a long process.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Luly Prastuty is a graduate student in Cultural Studies, Literature Department, Universitas Indonesia. In 2018, she obtained her bachelor's degree with honour in the literature (*Sarjana Sastra*) from English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Brawijaya. Her recent researches are about urban-rural dynamics related to digital literacy during pandemics. It was published and presented at international conferences, ICONIC 2020 and ULICOSS 2020. Moreover, she has published some essays and fiction works such as poems and short stories for anthologies and books. From her study, she is interested in gender, media, popular culture, and postcolonial analysis. Now, she involves in the Association of Indonesian Translators (*Himpunan Penerjemah Indonesia*).

REFERENCES

- [1] P. Brzeski, Oscars: 'Parasite' Makes History as First Foreign-Language Film to Win Best Picture, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 9 February 2020. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/oscars-bong-joon-hos-parasite-wins-south-koreas-first-oscar-1277161/>
- [2] A. Petkova, Interview: Hyeong-Cheol Kang, Director of 'Sunny', *Cinevue*, 23 April 2012. <https://cine-vue.com/2012/04/interview-hyeong-cheol-kang-director-of-sunny.html>

- [3] J. Jung-Kim, *My Sassy Girl Goes around the World, The Korean Wave: Korean Popular Culture in Global Context*, Yasue Kuwahara (Ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, pp. 85–100. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137350282_5
- [4] S. Kim, Analysis on Creative Time and Space Production in Korean Cinema: Focusing on the Film “Sunny”, *Journal of the Korea Contents Association* 19(11) (2019) 168–177. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2019.19.11.168>
- [5] L. Stephens, S.A. Lee, Transcultural Adaptation of Feature Films: South Korea’s My Sassy Girl and its Remakes, *Adaptation* 11(1) (2018) 75–95, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/apy001>
- [6] P.K. Sari, *Komparasi Unsur Sinematik Dalam Film Korea dan Amerika Studi pada Film “Il Mare” (Korea) dan “The Lake House” (Hollywood)*, Undergraduate Thesis, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, 2009.
- [7] J. Byrne, Wigs and Rings: Cross-Cultural Exchange in The South Korean and Japanese Horror Film, *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 6(2) (2014) 184–201. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17564905.2014.961708>
- [8] H.N. Amalina, *Representasi Persahabatan dalam Film Bebas Melalui Analisis Semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure*, Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Sebelas Maret, 2020.
- [9] M.R. Novianto, *Persepsi Mahasiswa Untag Surabaya Angkatan 2016 Ilmu Komunikasi Tentang Pesan Kekeluargaan Pada Film Bebas*, Undergraduate Tesis, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, 2020.
- [10] S. Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, Sean Nixon (Eds.), Sage in association with the Open University, United Kingdom, London, pp. 15–64, 1997.
- [11] C.Z. Ennsa, L.D. Diaz, T.B. Davisc, *Transnational Feminist Theory and Practice: An Introduction*. *Women & Therapy*, 44(1–2), 2021, pp. 11–26, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2020.1774997>
- [12] S.K. Kim, *Class Struggle or Family Struggle? The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511571084>
- [13] Diana, Top 10 Most Popular K-Pop Girl Groups, *Spinditty*, 7 August 2020, <https://spinditty.com/genres/top-10-best-k-pop-girl-groups>
- [14] N. Jang, *Capturing Shadows of the Wars: Memories of Camp Town Women in South Korea and Japan*, *Photographies* 14(1) 2021, 119-13, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2020.1848909>
- [15] D. Mayangkoro, *Cerita Komplet Ekspansi Agresif AKB48 di Jepang dan Asia*, Brilio, 1 February 2018 [Online]. <https://www.brilio.net/creator/ekspansi-agresif-akb48-di-jepang-dan-asia-020111.html#>
- [16] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, 30 March 2021. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>.
- [17] B. Will, *American Women died in Vietnam, Too, The Conversation*, 30 March 2021. <https://theconversation.com/american-women-died-in-vietnam-too-84405>
- [18] T. Hoa, *Vietnam Berhasil di Bidang Kesetaraan Gender*, *VOV5*, 28 October 2020. <https://vovworld.vn/id-ID/ulasan-berita/vietnam-berhasil-di-bidang-kesetaraan-gender-916322.vov>
- [19] Nathasia, *Wanita Korea Selatan Masih Dapat Perlakuan Seksis di Dunia Kerja*, *IDN Times*, 30 November 2019 [Online]. <https://www.idntimes.com/news/world/desy-27/wanita-korea-selatan-masih-dapat-perlakuan-seksis-di-dunia-kerja-c1c2-1/3>
- [20] R. Baylon, *Sunny (South Korea, 2011)*, *VCinema*, 14 June 2012. <http://www.vcinemashow.com/film-review-sunny-south-korea-2011/>
- [21] B. Surendro, *Jepang Bergelut dengan Jebakan Likuiditas*, *Kompas*, 29 November 2019. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2010/11/29/03374535/twitter.com?page=all>.
- [22] G. Prabowo, *Runtuhnya Vietnam Selatan (1975)*, *Kompas*, 30 November 2020. <https://www.kompas.com/skola/read/2020/11/30/153352569/runtuhnya-vietnam-selatan-1975?page=all>.
- [23] Clinton White House, *Remarks by The President to Vietnam National University*, 2000. https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/New/november2000/speeches11_17.html
- [24] A. Maharrani, *Sejarah hari buruh di Indonesia*, *Berita Tagar*, 2019. <https://beritagar.id/artikel/berita/sejarah-hari-buruh-di-indonesia>
- [25] D. M. G. Lewis, L. Al-Shawaf, E. Russell, D. Buss, *Friends and Happiness: An Evolutionary Perspective on Friendship*, In: Demir M. (Ed.), *Friendship and Happiness*, Springer, Dordrecht, 2015, pp. 37–57. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9603-3_3