

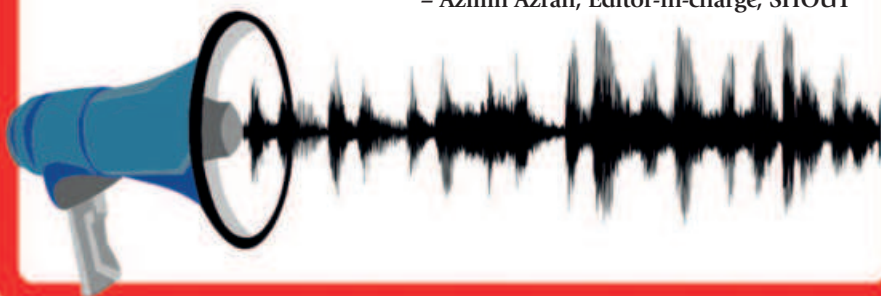
# EDITORIAL

When we did an article on the low percentage of female students in STEM a couple of years ago, a line from the article left its mark on me. The writer cited research that said female students often lag behind in mathematics and physics because of a lack of spatial awareness, which roots from their lack of involvement in physical and sporting activities in childhood.

Society often doesn't approve, schools balk at providing the same opportunities for their female students as they do for their male ones. What becomes infuriating is when sports administration bodies, whose entire existence is tied to furthering the spread of their respective games, don't do enough. Tournaments don't take place at a desired frequency, facilities are often not up to par for female athletes, and most importantly, a huge pay gap exists between genders when it comes to sports.

Many point to a lack of commercial involvement in women's sports as a reason behind this pay gap, but they forget that ensuring commercial involvement is why sporting administration bodies exist. Passing off their failure in this regard as a vague case of financial natural selection is not fooling anybody.

– Azmin Azran, Editor-in-charge, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### WEBCOMIC



# Exploring the world of fantasy shoujo manhwas

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

The popularity of manhwas is on the rise, as is evident from all the recent anime and TV show adaptation announcements.

*Tower of God*, *Solo Leveling*, and *Lookism* are familiar names to admirers of the genre. Shoujo web novel turned webtoon *The Reason Why Raeliana Ended up at the Duke's Mansion* has been confirmed to be getting an anime adaptation. Several others are being adapted into K-dramas. This shows how popular the fantasy shoujo genre has been getting, despite being fairly niche until recently.

I've had a phase where I binge-read any manhwa or webtoon I could get my hands on, regardless of the genre, and I have a lot to say about it.

Firstly, I have a bone to pick with whoever is naming these stories. We all know about isekai stories and their penchant for giving away the entire plot in the title. These manhwas are no different.

I've come across ones with entire paragraphs for titles, which turn many viewers off. Imagine telling someone that the manhwa you're currently reading is called, "*I am a Martial Art Villainess but I'm the Strongest!*" Yes, that is the name of an actual manhwa. Yes, I still went ahead and read it. No, I wouldn't particularly recommend that one.

There's a huge number of these manhwas around, and most are isekai, reincarnation, or time travel-related. Typical of isekai, most of these stories have identical plots with little originality to offer, albeit there are exceptions.

A weakness of this genre is that several manhwas end up being self-inserts, with an overpowered or universally beloved protagonist who can do no wrong. Some actively try to subvert the Mary

Sue trope by giving the protagonist a morally grey character but end up right where they started in a roundabout way.

Despite all these, these manhwas have their merits. They're great for mindless reads, and their colourised, dazzling art keeps you engaged even if the plotline doesn't.

When done well, the protagonists are a breath of fresh air from the usual damsel-in-distress female characters. Some are quite original and have great plotlines as well as great humour. *Beware of the Villainess!*, *Setting Sun*, *Dazzled Eyes*, *Concentration of Malice*, and *How to Protect the Heroine's Older Brother* are good examples.

Another common element in many of these stories is their exploration of female friendship. The female characters are rarely pitted against each other and often end up working towards a common goal. *Your Throne* is one such manhwa, where two opposing female characters find common ground and a shared enemy, helping them realise that the grass isn't always greener on the other side in their journey of survival and revenge.

These manhwas heavily cater towards the female gaze and fantasy, which can be a good or a bad thing depending on whether they're done right or not. Many would fail the reverse Bechdel test, and the male characters sometimes feel like an accessory rather than a necessary addition.

All things considered, the shoujo genre has some amazing, worthwhile works as well as a few subpar ones. Once you look past the wordy titles and find the right pick, it's a world full of pretty artwork and good stories.

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### TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE



**A**

C'est La Vie

Khaled

Play The Game

Queen

Blank Space

Taylor Swift

Quit Playing Games

(With My Heart)

Backstreet Boys

**B**

Love Me Again

John Newman

Deadcrush

alt-J

Kids

MGMT

Games

The Strokes

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