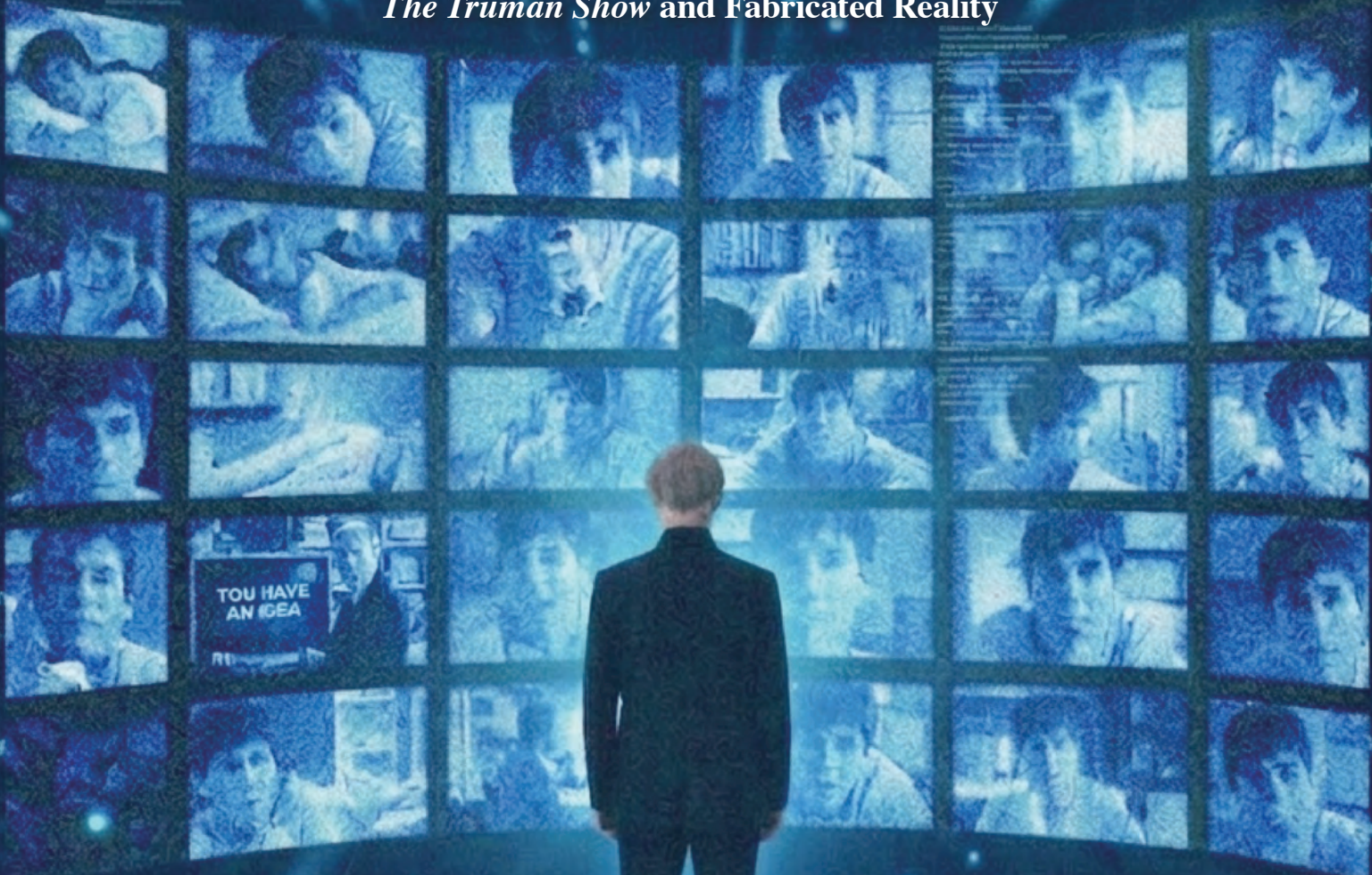


No. 557 APRIL 8, 2026

The Argus

Since 1954

The Truman Show and Fabricated Reality



**The Perception Trap:
When Seeing Feels Like Knowing**

**Audience Complicity
in Unethical Media**

**Algorithms
and the Manipulated
Information Structure**

**Media Literacy
as an Escape from
the Scripted Framework**



HANKUK UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES

The Argus

ESTABLISHED 1954

Published monthly except on school holidays by and for the students of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, The Argus, the campus English magazine, pursues the highest standard of campus journalism and academism.

- *President and Publisher* Prof. Kang Kee-Hoon
- *Executive Editor* Prof. Kwon Jieun
- *Copy Readers* Prof. Merrilee Brinegar
Prof. Joseph R. Vincent
Prof. Chris Kobylinski
- *Editor-in-Chief* Lee Seeun (M-3)
- *Staff Reporter* Choi A-won (PSD-4)
- *Editorial Consultants* Kim Yi-eun (E-4)
Park Se-eun (R-3)
- *Illustrator* Marian Chu

107, Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea
(Postal Code 02450)

Tel: (02) 2173-2508 Fax: 2173-2509

81, Oedae-ro, Mohyeon-eup, Cheoin-gu, Yongin,
Gyeonggi Province, Korea (Postal Code 17035)

Tel: (031) 330-4113

Printed by HONG DESIGN | Tel: 464-5167 Fax: 464-5168


Editorial

Beneath What Appears

Traces of events and experiences quietly accumulate within society. Yet what appears on the surface often tells only part of the story. Beneath familiar landscapes, institutions, and information environments lie structures that shape how people perceive reality and make sense of the world around them. Recognizing these underlying layers allows a deeper understanding of the present and encourages reflection on how truth, justice, and memory are formed.

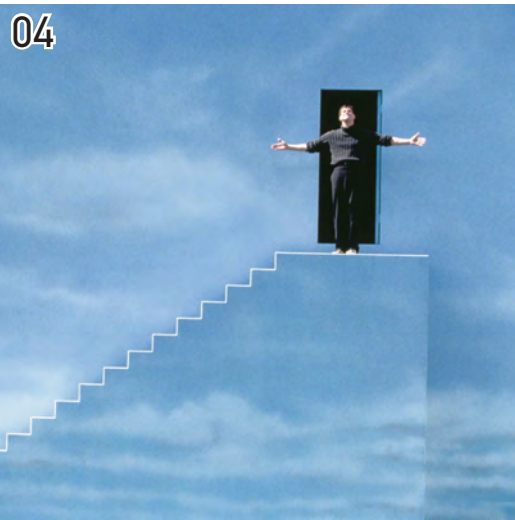
This April issue explores how reality can appear straightforward on the surface while deeper structures quietly shape what is seen, remembered, and understood. In today's digital environment, information is continuously filtered and circulated through platform systems and algorithms. As individuals repeatedly encounter information filtered through these structures, the boundary between what is presented and what is actually occurring can become increasingly difficult to discern. In such an environment, the ability to question information and reflect on how it is structured becomes increasingly important.

Similar patterns can be observed in other areas of society. Violence within intimate relationships often carries characteristics that are not immediately visible, which can lead institutional systems to fail to fully recognize or respond to the danger involved. Meanwhile, places that now appear calm and peaceful sometimes hold memories of difficult or tragic moments in history beneath their quiet landscapes. These examples suggest that both social institutions and historical environments may conceal deeper realities that are not immediately apparent.

Ultimately, understanding society requires looking beyond what first appears visible. Media environments shape perception, institutions sometimes struggle to respond to complex social realities, and history often remains quietly embedded within the landscapes of the present. Recognizing these hidden layers encourages a more thoughtful engagement with the structures that influence everyday life and reminds readers of the importance of questioning what lies beneath the surface. 

By Lee Seeun
Editor-in-Chief

이 세 은



CONTENTS



Cover Story

>> In a media environment saturated with misinformation, distinguishing truth from manipulation has become increasingly difficult. Peter Weir's film, *The Truman Show* (1998), shows how media structures, algorithms, and audience behavior shape the realities in which people believe. As information is repeatedly circulated and consumed within platform systems, the line between fact and fabrication becomes blurred. Ultimately, media literacy and the ability to question information are essential for maintaining independent judgment in the digital age. Furthermore, the structural nature of today's media environment demands a higher level of accountability and collective action from both governments and digital platforms. It is time to question the reality presented on our screens and take responsibility for seeking the truth beyond it.

02 · News Desk

Culture Section

04 · Cover Story

Are People Still Living in *The Truman Show*?

Social Section

11 · Social Insight

Dating Violence Caught in the Legal Blind Spot

Theory & Critique Section

18 · Footsteps

A Journey Through the Traces of King Danjong


25 · Epilogue

Deciding for Myself

Registration for 2026 FLEX First Regular Test to Open

Registration for the first regular test of the Foreign Language Examination (FLEX) in 2026 will begin on April 30, according to the FLEX Center at HUFs. The application period will run from April 30 to May 6, and the test will be held on May 31. Applications will open at 9 a.m. on the first day of registration and will close at 5 p.m. on the final day.

FLEX is a professional foreign language proficiency test developed by HUFs, designed to evaluate overall foreign language proficiency. The exam evaluates proficiency in seven languages: English, Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. Applicants may take only one language at a time. Registration is available through the FLEX Center website after applicants sign up as members, and applications are accepted only during the registration period. The listening and reading test fee is 45,000 won (US\$30.30), while the writing and speaking tests cost 75,000 won (US\$50.50) each. The score report for listening and reading will be released on June 12, while writing and speaking results will be announced on July 3.

An official from the FLEX Center said, "FLEX scores are widely used by government agencies, public institutions, companies, and universities for recruitment, personnel evaluation, overseas assignments, graduation requirements, and academic credit recognition." Students who need FLEX scores for graduation requirements or other purposes are encouraged to apply early and check the official schedule in advance. More information about the test and registration can be found on the FLEX Center website. 

Round	Registration Period	Test Date	Score Report	
			Listening / Reading	Writing / Speaking
1st	04.30(Fri)-05.06(Sun)	05.31(Fri)	06.12(Fri)	07.03(Fri)
2nd	05.08(Fri)-05.14(Sun)	05.31(Fri)	11.20(Fri)	12.18(Fri)


▲ The schedule and application details for the 2026 FLEX regular test are announced.

By Lee Seun
yisuws@hufs.ac.kr

Applications Open for 35th Mirae Asset Overseas Exchange Scholarship

Applications for the 35th Mirae Asset Overseas Exchange Scholarship Program, designed for students planning to study abroad in the fall semester of 2026, will open from April 15 to April 21 at 3 p.m., according to the Mirae Asset Park Hyeon Joo Foundation. Students must complete the online application and submit all required documents through the designated application website during this period.

The scholarship program aims to support South Korean (hereafter Korea) university students who are selected for overseas exchange programs. Up to 250 students will be selected nationwide. The program allocates 60 percent of slots to science and engineering students, 30 percent to business and economics, and 10 percent to humanities and social sciences. Scholarship amounts vary depending on the destination region. Students studying in the Americas, Europe, or other regions can receive up to 8.5 million won (US\$5,722.79), while those studying in Asian countries may receive up to 6.5 million won (US\$4,376.25).

Students who wish to apply must be enrolled in a four-year university in Korea and must have been selected or be expected to be selected for their university's exchange student program for the fall semester of 2026. A staff member from the Scholarship Team advised, "Applicants should review the obligations outlined in the official announcement in advance, as failure to meet them may lead to cancellation or repayment." 




▲ The announcement outlines application guidelines for the 35th Mirae Asset Overseas Exchange Scholarship Program for the fall semester of 2026.

By Lee Seun
yisuws@hufs.ac.kr

Korean Interpreting and Translating Course Opens Applications

HUFS Center for Korean Language and Culture has begun accepting applications for the summer Korean Interpreting and Translating Course, a program designed for foreign residents in South Korea (hereafter Korea) and overseas Koreans, with applications closing on April 17.

The Center for Korean Language and Culture aims to enhance foreign students' Korean communication skills and promote understanding of Korean culture through its language education programs. To apply for the course, applicants must have completed Level 5 or above in Korean language education institutions of universities in Korea or hold a valid TOPIK Level 6 score.

In the curriculum, students refine high-level writing and expression skills from a translation perspective, while media materials such as news, advertisements are used to broaden their understanding of contemporary Korean society. The summer session runs for 10 weeks from June 4 to Aug. 12. Lee Jun Hi, staff of Korean Language and Culture emphasized the program's distinctiveness, stating, "This is a unique interpreting and translating course offered exclusively by the Center for Korean Language and Culture, unlike programs at other university language institutes." He added, "HUFS undergraduate and graduate students are eligible for a 30 percent tuition discount." 



▲ Website banner presents the Interpretation and Translation Course.

©HUFS Center for Korean Language and Culture


By Choi A-won

samgs123456@hufs.ac.kr

Japan's J.F. Oberlin University Offers Summer 2026 Session

HUFS's partner university, Jean-Frederic Oberlin University (J.F. Oberlin University) in Japan, is approaching the application deadlines for Session 4 and Session 5 of the short-term summer program, "J. F. Oberlin Summer 2026 Session."

Among the five sessions offered, Session 4 applications close on April 17 and Session 5 on May 1. Session 4 runs from June 27 to July 11, and Session 5 from July 11 to July 25. The program fee is 640,000 yen (US\$4,076.43) for Session 4 and 780,000 yen (US\$4,968.15) for Session 5. Accommodation costs are 460,000 yen (US\$2,929.94) for Session 4 and 575,000 yen (US\$3,662.42) for Session 5. HUFSans can receive a 20,000 yen (US\$127.39) discount per session, which is deducted from the fees listed above and is not included in the stated amounts.

The program consists of five consecutive two-week sessions, and students may enroll in multiple sessions for a total duration of up to 10 weeks. Each course is designed to provide participants with first-hand experience beyond theoretical studies to include field trips and guest lectures by professionals in the field. While the program had previously been conducted mainly at the Shinjuku campus, starting in 2026 the Machida campus will be added for Session 4, allowing participants to experience both campuses. It offers opportunities to gain diverse academic and cultural experience related to Japan. Park Sujin, a senior majoring in the Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, said, "Experiencing a language in its local context is invaluable, and studying Japan at a Japanese university makes this program especially appealing. I would love to participate." 



▲ Program participants take part in a Kimono Wearing activity.

©J.F. Oberlin University

By Choi A-won

samgs123456@hufs.ac.kr

Are People Still Living in *The Truman Show*?

By Park Se-eun

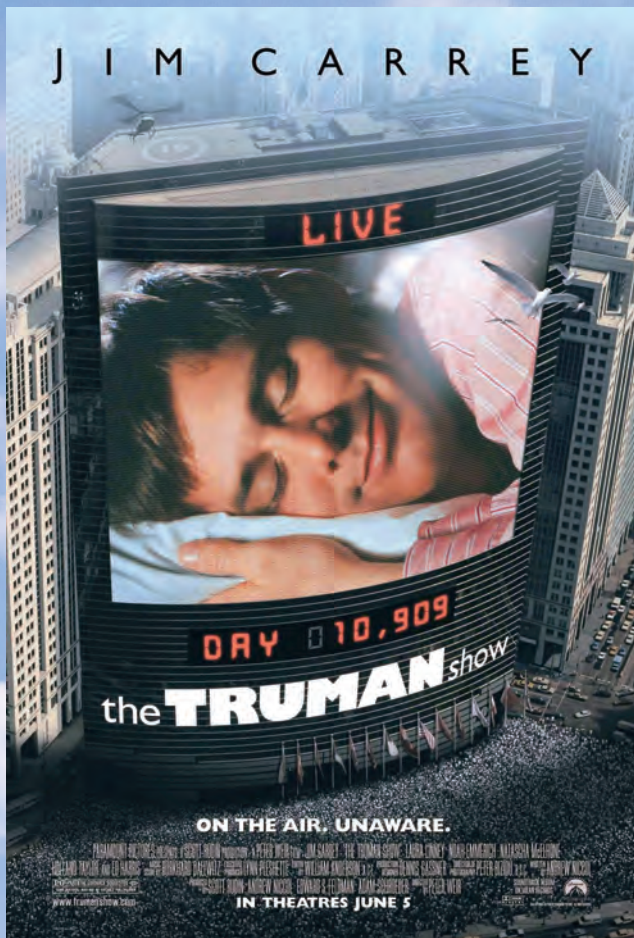
Editorial Consultant



Everyone has probably wondered at least once, “What if the reality I believe in is actually a lie?” As fake news and misinformation spreads rapidly these days, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish what is fact from what is manipulated. People make sense of the world through a daily stream of news, videos, images, and messages, yet they rarely question deeply how that information is produced or delivered. In this sense, our lives mirror that of Truman Burbank, the protagonist of Peter Weir’s film *The Truman Show* (1998), who lives his life accepting a manipulated reality without knowing his entire existence is a television broadcast. While his daily life appears safe and stable, his choices and freedom are already scripted within a media structure.

Although most of us may not question our realities on a daily basis, April Fools’ Day is a time when people find themselves double checking the words of friends and family and even scrutinizing broadcasts, news, and the situations unfolding around them. The question “Could it be?” flows naturally, and every lie carries the assumption that the truth will soon be revealed, offering a chance to realize that one has been deceived. The Argus aims to critically examine the current media environment where the opportunity to doubt falsehoods is disappearing through the lens of *The Truman Show* to help readers understand the media structures of modern society and reconsider the importance of independent judgment and critical thinking when consuming media.

1 Summary of the Film *The Truman Show*



▲ *The Truman Show* (1998)

Truman is an ordinary insurance salesman living in a peaceful small town. His village and neighbors appear to embody mundanity of daily life in a small American city. However, a massive secret lies beneath the surface. Truman's entire world is actually a giant soundstage for a television program called *The Truman Show*. Truman's life has been broadcast live to the entire world 24 hours a day since the moment of his birth completely without his awareness. His wife, friends, and neighbors are all actors performing according to a scripted narrative for the production. The cracks in his world begin to appear when a studio light suddenly falls from the sky and he overhears a radio transmission describing his exact movements. As he witnesses repeated coincidences and the increasingly awkward behavior of those around him, Truman's suspicions grow. In particular, the cryptic warnings and the

sudden disappearance of Sylvia, a woman he once loved, leave a lasting impression on his memory. Realizing that even his phobia of the ocean was artificially instilled to keep him trapped, Truman resolves to leave the city. Although the director unleashes an orchestrated storm to block his path, Truman eventually reaches the boundary of the set. In the end, he chooses to leave the world created by the director, rejecting the audience's gaze and the system's control as he opens the door toward a new, authentic life.

2 Is What People See and Believe Really the Truth?

How What is Seen Becomes the Truth



▲ Truman looks bewildered as a studio light labeled "SIRIUS" falls from the sky.

One morning, while Truman is driving to work as usual, a massive studio light falls from a clear, cloudless sky without warning. The round light, lying in the middle of the road, is clearly labeled with the star name "SIRIUS." The fact that a piece of lighting equipment fell from the sky serves as the first crack in the facade, suggesting that Truman's world is somehow flawed. Immediately, a radio broadcast explains it away as a part falling from an airplane. That is not the only strange occurrence. Even during conversations, his wife and friend sometimes suddenly hold up a product with its label facing forward, awkwardly smiling as they promote it in the exaggerated tone of a commercial. Also, Truman hears a voice on the radio narrating his exact location and movements, and he catches a glimpse of actors and staff busy behind the scenes of a set through an open elevator door. Even in his wedding

Cover Story

photo, his wife has her fingers crossed, a subtle signal that the marriage itself was never sincere. Truman feels a strange sense of dissonance at every such moment. The world Truman sees, hears, and experiences is a thoroughly orchestrated and fabricated reality. Nevertheless, the feeling that something is wrong grows, yet Truman cannot imagine that his entire world is a massive production. This illustrates that while the public believes they freely choose what to see, feel, and judge through media, they may not truly be free within that structure. In an environment where the media controls daily life and constructs reality, the “reality” the public believes in can be manipulated with alarming ease.



▲ While talking to Truman, his wife Meryl Burbank breaks character to advertise a vegetable cutter.

The belief that seeing is sufficient proof of truth finds its most fertile ground in today's media environment. The logic that “if you show it, they will believe it” operates even more powerfully in our era of visual-centric media. According to the paper “Media Literacy in an Era Where Truth is Obscured” (2018) by Kim Sun-ho, a senior researcher at the Korea Press Foundation, information distributed through photos, videos, and algorithms is becoming increasingly sophisticated. Users come to trust information simply because they have “seen” it, often without knowing how it was produced. As computer graphics and special effects sometimes seem more real than reality itself, distinguishing whether an image is real or an illusion is becoming harder, and the very criteria by which what is true is determined are being undermined. Furthermore, while fake news used to consist mainly of sensational stories, it has become so realistic that it now permeates everyday life. Just as lies were woven into Truman's daily routine, the public has reached a point where they have little choice but to believe misinformation. Like Truman, who did not doubt his world until he literally bumped into the wall of the set, people are

bound to remain within that constructed world unless they question where reality ends and manipulation begins.

The Public Believing in an Orchestrated Reality in the Age of Algorithms



▲ Posters about plane crashes are placed around Truman to subconsciously instill a fear of travel.

The director thoroughly engineered even Truman's fears and memories to ensure he would never leave the set. The trauma of losing his father at sea during his childhood was no accidental tragedy. The scene of his father being swept away by a violent storm while out on a sailboat was deeply etched into Truman's memory, turning the ocean into an insurmountable object of terror. This was a meticulous orchestration by the director to prevent him from ever venturing beyond the world since the only way to reach the exit was by crossing the sea. Similar devices were repeated in his daily life. Flyers and newspapers constantly reported on diseases and accidents in faraway destinations, while magazines and news broadcasts emphasized the dangers of unfamiliar places. Before Truman could consciously realize it, his perception that travel was dangerous and the outside world was unstable took root in his mind. When Truman finally declares his intention to leave for the island of Fiji due to a series of unexplained coincidences, the director's control becomes even more blatant. Sudden announcements at the airport claim all flights are canceled, buses break down for no reason, and every mode of transportation is blocked. To make matters worse, the father he believed was dead suddenly reappears on the street to stop him, and his best friend stays by his side, persuading him not to leave by insisting, “This is the safest place to be.”

The way Truman experiences control mirrors the public in today's media environment. Even when individuals believe

they are choosing information for themselves, invisible structures and mechanisms can influence their perceptions and judgments. According to the paper “How Fake News Become ‘Real’ News on Youtube: A Case Study of Political Propagandization and Reaction Among Political Actors Related to the <Gosung Wildfire>” (2020) by Kim Chunsik, a professor in the Division of Media & Communication at Hufs, and Hong Juhyun, an associate professor in the School of Media & Advertising at Kookmin University, information is consumed and gains credibility as if it were actual news within platforms like Youtube, regardless of its factual accuracy. Regarding the Goseong forest fire in 2019, several private Youtube channels raised allegations concerning the government’s response, using sensational titles including phrases such as “Exposure,” “Shocking,” and “The Hidden Truth.” Provocative titles, thumbnails, assertive tones, and narratives promising to “uncover the truth” led audiences to perceive the stories as needing verification, but as established facts. Although the Blue House and public institutions later clarified the facts, their explanations were repackaged into new Youtube content, turning even the refutations into fuel for further controversy. Some media outlets propagated this, reporting on the fake news as a controversy rather than verifying it, thereby moving fake news into the mainstream news agenda. Furthermore, as recommendation algorithms and platform structures have merged in recent social media, users are repeatedly exposed to content similar to what they already prefer or have watched. This creates a structure where users encounter similar information rather than diverse opinions. While users may feel they are consuming a wide range of information, they are actually stuck in a cycle with a narrow view of information. In the film, Truman never even considers leaving the city because his memories and emotions have been engineered for him to fear the sea. Similarly, modern media users consume information within a closed loop, accepting a reality constructed for them through the repetitive exposure provided by algorithms and emotionally charged narratives.

3

The Unethical Nature of Broadcasting and Audience Complicity



▲ Viewers watch Truman growing up from the moment of his birth to adulthood.

The viewers watching Truman’s life follow his journey as if it were their own, laughing, crying, and empathizing with him. From the moment he spoke his first words as a baby to the time he fell and got back up while learning to ride a bike, to the moment of fluttering excitement on his face when he met his first love, his entire growth process is etched into the collective memory of a global audience. Viewers smile alongside the beaming groom during his wedding scene and weep as young Truman watches his father being swept away by the waves. However, this empathy remains strictly confined to the emotions on the screen. The ethical issue of Truman’s entire life being manipulated within a massive set and his choices and relationships all being scripted increasingly fades into the background. When Truman finally leaves the set and the show concludes, the viewers staring at their television sets sit in a brief silence before nonchalantly asking, “What else is on television?” The emotions they felt while watching another person’s life in real-time vanish instantly, relegating Truman’s existence as nothing more than another bit of content.



▲ Even dedicated fans holding Truman-themed cushions immediately change the channel as soon as the show ends.

This mirrors today's media consumption patterns, where people constantly swipe through short, sensational content in pursuit of momentary pleasure. The problem is that the responsibility for this structure does not end with the producers. Viewers who consume the lives of others on screen are not free from this system. They bear responsibility like the consumers in *The Truman Show*. According to the paper "The Deceptive Manipulation of Media and Subversive Melancholy in *The Truman Show*: The Problem of Free Will and Salvation" (2022) by Kim Sunghyun, a professor of the Department of English Language and Literature at Seoul National University of Science and Technology, the scene where viewers shift their attention to another program immediately after *The Truman Show* ends symbolizes the insensitivity and moral blunting of modern media consumers. This consumptive attitude is a form of bystander complicity in how an individual's life is manipulated and justified within a media structure. It suggests that the viewer is not merely a victim, but an active accomplice who sustains the media framework. Even after it is revealed that Truman's life is being thoroughly manipulated and controlled, the broadcast does not stop, and ratings hold steady. Viewers appreciate his pain and confusion under the guise of "reality" without seriously considering the ethical implications. When media violently consumes an individual's life, the viewer's apathy becomes the core condition that makes such violence possible. In this way, media makes viewers appear as subjects who make active choices, yet it allows them to remain in a position where they neither intervene nor take responsibility. As a result, viewers become accustomed to demanding the next piece of content rather than questioning the structure in which personal lives are exhibited and consumed. Ultimately, while the lack of ethics in media stems from the power of producers, it persists because of the viewers' uncritical acceptance and rapid disregard.



©Google

4 Beyond the World of *The Truman Show*

The Role of the Government and Platforms Toward a Positive Media Structure



©IMDb

▲ The main director of *The Truman Show* collaborates with writers and producers to manipulate Truman's environment and direct the show.

In *The Truman Show*, Truman's world is not maintained by a massive set alone. Because there is a production team behind the scenes installing cameras, directing scenes, and deciding what to show, that world functions as a complete reality. Just as the reality Truman sees and believes was not formed by individual choice alone but was a result of someone's design and control, the information encountered today is distributed and selected within a specific media structure. In the past, the flow of information was shaped primarily by the editorial power of news organizations. Today, however, platform recommendation algorithms and exposure structures determine what is shown and what is hidden. Amidst this shift, critics argue that platforms have evolved beyond mere tech companies to function as new media actors and editorial entities. How to regulate misinformation within this environment has become an issue of significant policy debate. In South Korea, the National Assembly passed amendments to the Information and Communications Network Act in December 2025, often referred to as the Act on the Eradication of False and Manipulated Information, in an effort to address the spread of misinformation in online spaces. However, criticisms have been raised because the bill is designed to allow the blocking of content containing false information even when it is unclear whether the information is explicitly illegal. Regarding this, Hong Juhyun, an associate professor in the School of Media & Advertising at Kookmin University, explains, "It is necessary to stop the spread of misinformation,

but determining what qualifies as such is no simple matter. While clear cases of manipulation are not an issue, if the scope of misinformation extends to political opinions or interpretations, it risks restricting the freedom of the press and the public's right to know."

In an environment where digital platforms and algorithms shape the structure of information distribution, the entire burden of critical judgment cannot be placed on the individual. Therefore, to solve the problem of misinformation, the government's institutional response must be paired with the technical and structural responses of platform operators. Only when such a collective response structure is established can the credibility of the information environment be enhanced. The European Union (EU)'s approach differs in this regard. Through the Digital Services Act, Europe mandates swift responses from platforms regarding explicitly illegal information, such as hate speech or incitement to terrorism. However, for misinformation, the EU focuses on strengthening structural responsibilities such as algorithm management and participation in systems to prevent viral spread rather than punishing individual content creators. Professor Hong further notes, "In Europe, attempts are being made to detect the spread of misinformation in advance through the use of AI technology. This involves analyzing specific word combinations or information patterns to first identify content with a high probability of being false, then blocking its spread after a verification process. At the same time, global platform operators like YouTube and Google are being encouraged to participate in anti-misinformation policies and sign agreements or voluntarily follow regulatory frameworks." Since it is difficult for a state to directly regulate foreign operators, the policy focus is shifted toward building a cooperative structure where platforms engage in these policies of their own accord.



▲ While sailing across the sea, Truman finally realizes that the edge of his world is actually a massive studio set.

Empowering Individuals Through Media Literacy

In the final scene of *The Truman Show*, Truman finally reaches the edge of the set and confronts the wall of an artificially constructed sky. As he prepares to step off his boat and walk toward the exit, Christof, the show's executive producer, speaks directly to Truman for the first and last time. He confesses that Truman's life has been a directed reality but argues that the world outside the set will be no different. Christof tries to persuade him to stay, claiming that "Seahaven," the world he created, is a utopian space free from violence and uncertainty, making it a much safer place to remain. Truman hesitates for a moment but eventually bows toward the direction of Christof's voice, offering his signature daily greeting, "In case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening, and good night." With that, he leaves the set. This moment marks the first time Truman escapes the design and control of others to choose his own life. His choice is not merely a physical relocation. It is a decisive act of doubting a manipulated world and reclaiming his free will.



▲ Reaching the end of the set, Truman climbs the stairs toward the exit to the real world.


This scene is analogous to the reality of the public living in today's media environment. While modern media consumers believe they choose content for themselves, they easily develop an uncritical attitude, becoming accustomed to information they are repeatedly exposed to through algorithms and platform structures. Since legal regulations are limited in controlling misinformation, what ultimately matters is increasing media literacy among the public, giving citizens the capacity to question and verify information themselves. Media literacy is the ability to critically interpret information and judge its source, context, and intent. As such, "fact-checking" is crucial today. Professor Hong explained, "Rather than judging based on a single piece of information, a process

Cover Story

of ‘triangulation,’ is needed, verifying the source, cross-referencing through other searches, and examining how experts or different media outlets explain the same issue.” Professor Hong added, “The most important criterion for judging the reliability of information is the source. Identifying which medium or individual produced the information, and what expertise, background, or political leaning that source has, is the starting point for understanding the context and intent of the message.” Ultimately, to escape the manipulated realities within the media environment, the efforts of platforms and institutions must be accompanied by an individual

commitment to questioning and verifying information as a daily practice.

The reason Truman was able to leave the set was not that a better world was guaranteed, but because he recognized that his reality was created by someone. Similarly, what modern media consumers need is not an environment with perfect information, but a perspective that questions and judges how the screens they see are constructed. Recognizing media not merely as an object of consumption but as a subject of constant skepticism and interpretation is the true starting point for enabling free choice in modern society.

In the final scene of *The Truman Show*, Truman chooses to leave the moment he recognizes that his reality was a world manipulated by someone else, even though a better world is not guaranteed. Similarly, in today’s media environment, the public believes they are freely choosing from a vast array of content. However, they often form beliefs simply because they have “seen” something, driven by repetitive exposure, algorithms, and a superficial sense of trust. Perhaps the real issue lies not in the fact that media creates falsehoods, but in the tendency to settle into consumption without questioning the underlying structure. Just as Truman opened the door and stepped out, what modern media consumers need is not perfect truth, but the courage to pause and evaluate before accepting content as truth. It requires the resolve of individuals to ask whether they are truly observing the world freely and whether the reality they see and believe in is a world they have genuinely chosen for themselves. 

tasilver@hufs.ac.kr

In case I don’t see ya, good afternoon, good evening, and good night!



Dating Violence Caught in the Legal Blind Spot



By Choi A-won

Staff Reporter of Social Section

“From now on, you’re getting beaten with a fist. Even if you die, they say it’s not my fault.” These were the words that the perpetrator of the Geoje dating violence case said to the victim, while continuing to assault her, even after the police responded and treated the case as “mutual assault.” The victim, who had been continuously assaulted during their two-year relationship, ultimately died after suffering brain damage from the perpetrator’s brutal assault on April 1, 2024. Despite the victim reporting to the police 11 times and pleading for rescue, the police failed to separate the perpetrator from the victim, citing visible wounds on the perpetrator — caused by the victim’s desperate resistance against an overwhelming power imbalance — as evidence of mutual assault. This case brought to the forefront the social issue that dating violence, a distinct type of crime, is not being adequately addressed under the current legal system. A national petition for legal reform, signed by 50,000 people, was submitted to the National Assembly, but two years later, the bill remains pending.

According to the Women’s Safety Planning Division of the Korea National Police Agency’s Life Safety Traffic Bureau, reports of dating violence received through 911, increased from 57,305 in 2021 to 77,150 in 2023, and in 2025 approached nearly 100,000. Yet institutional measures to prevent and address it remain insufficient. The Argus seeks to analyze the phenomena and causes behind the repeated occurrence of dating violence within the current vulnerable legal and response system, and to explore practical directions for improving law and institutions in the future.

[Before Reading] Dating Violence

Dating violence refers to physical, emotional, sexual violence or economic abuse within an intimate relationship. It often includes coercive control such as isolation, monitoring and threats. Accordingly, it is highly likely to be repeated or prolonged in an environment where the victim is coercively controlled, and after a breakup it carries the risk of retaliation and may lead to serious crimes such as murder.



1 The Structural Dilemma of Dating Violence: The Weight of Responsibility Shifted to the Victim

Phenomenon

The Paradox of Self-Reported and Self-Closed Cases

On April 10, 2024, a 19-year-old woman living in Geoje, South Gyeongsang Province, died after ten days of hospital treatment following an assault by her ex-boyfriend. At 8 a.m. on April 1, the perpetrator forcibly entered the victim’s residence and repeatedly struck her head and face after she refused to meet with him. Prior to her death, the victim had reported dating violence 11 times, but all of the cases were terminated because of her stated unwillingness to pursue punishment. Three of these were terminated at the scene, and the remaining eight were terminated during the investigation at the police station after filing, due to her decision not to pursue punishment.



▲ The victim of the fatal Geoje dating violence case is seen hospitalized with injuries shortly before her death.

Another case of dating violence, featured on SBS’s investigative program *Unanswered Questions*, involved a victim who told a friend she was waiting for the police and expected to receive help through the police report. However, shortly after the police left the scene, the victim reportedly called her friend in tears and said that the police told her they could not do anything unless she formally filed a complaint

against the perpetrator. According to Choi Yong-sung, Research Professor at the Scientific Investigation Research Institute of Chungnam National University, in “Problems and Improvement Measures of the Response System to Dating and Domestic Violence Through the Analysis of Violence and Homicide Cases in Intimate Relationships” (2025), the victim appeared to feel a significant burden about the prospect that she would have to directly testify against the perpetrator, and participate in the investigation and trial process. Although a report had been made, the heavy burden led her to withdraw her intent to pursue punishment.

As illustrated in these cases, a recurring paradox has emerged in which victims report the abuse but later withdraw their complaints. Police data show that reports of dating violence more than doubled from 36,267 in 2017 to 77,150 in 2023. However, on-site termination accounts for an average of 55 percent of reported cases, and the detention rate for perpetrators stands at only 2.2 percent. These figures indicate that the course of investigation and prosecution remains structurally dependent on the victim’s willingness to pursue charges at multiple stages of the process.

Cause

Structural Gap Between Offence Unpunishable over Objection and the Dynamics of Dating Violence

Why does this structural dependency on the victim’s intent persist? The cause lies in an institutional gap: offenses unpunishable over objection is applied without fully accounting for the relational and coercive nature of dating violence. Although dating violence is socially recognized as a distinct form of abuse, the legal system does not define it as an independent crime. Instead, cases are processed under existing offenses such as assault, injury, intimidation or sexual violence — subject to offenses unpunishable over objection — accounting for the majority. This unpunishable over objection framework is premised on the assumption that the victim’s intent is freely formed. However, dating violence

is characterized by control and ongoing access to the victim. Perpetrators often retain intimate knowledge of the victim’s residence and routines, creating a persistent risk of retaliation even after separation or reporting. Under such conditions, a withdrawal of punishment cannot be presumed to reflect a free and autonomous decision.

This institutional contradiction becomes most visible at the dispatch scene. When the police respond to a report, they must determine the applicable charge and confirm whether the victim intends to pursue punishment. In practice, assault is most frequently applied — accounting for an average of 68.3 percent of dating violence arrests from 2022 to 2024, according to the National Police Agency. Because assault is subject to offenses unpunishable over objection the investigation cannot proceed without the victim’s expressed intent to punish. As a result, the confirmation of intent often becomes both the starting point and the endpoint of the case: once the victim declines punishment, the case is terminated on-site. Even if a case moves beyond the initial scene, the structure does not fundamentally change. Since assault falls under a complaint-based system, the victim may withdraw the intent to punish at any time before the first-instance judgment is finalized. In this way, a system designed to respect the victim’s will paradoxically reinforces the structural power imbalance inherent in dating violence.

Over the past decade, 28 bills related to dating violence have been proposed in the National Assembly, yet most have either been discarded or remain pending. This pattern reflects not a lack of legislative attempts, but the absence of structural consensus on how dating violence should be legally defined and addressed. To date, proposed bills have generally taken the form of expanding the scope of the Domestic Violence Act or the Stalking Punishment Act rather than establishing an independent framework.

Several contentious issues arise in proposals to amend the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Domestic Violence Crimes to explicitly include dating violence. There is a conflict concerning legislative purpose. Article 1 of the current Domestic Violence Punishment Act states that its objective is to correct perpetrators and restore peace and stability within damaged families. The Act is therefore structured on the premise of preserving and rehabilitating the family unit, granting procedural special measures with that goal in mind. Dating relationships, however, do not constitute legally recognized family ties, and thus cannot easily be placed on the same normative footing as the restoration or maintenance of a household. Critics argue that dating violence requires proactive state intervention and the active exercise of punitive authority, rather than a framework centered on family preservation. In this respect, incorporating dating violence into the existing Act risks conflicting with its original legislative intent.

Moreover, there are differing views regarding the complete abolition of offenses unpunishable over objection. Kim Sung-ryung, Full-time researcher at Regional Innovation Strategy and Education Research Center of Kyungpook National University, stated, “It is true that the burden of deciding whether to pursue punishment is excessively placed on the victim. However, it is difficult to conclude that completely abolishing the complaint-based system is necessarily the best solution. If filing a complaint is perceived as automatically triggering compulsory criminal proceedings, it may instead discourage victims from reporting at an early stage.” She further emphasized “The key issue is not a binary choice between abolition and

Prospect

Legislative Tasks for Differentiated Response

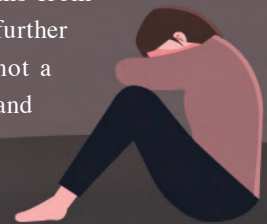
©yoonhapnewsTV.23

국회 폐기된 교제폭력 관련 법안 목록

회기	발의시점	의안명	대표발의자
19대	2016년	데이트폭력범죄의 처벌 등에 관한 특례법안	박남춘
20대	2017년	데이트폭력 등 관계친화 폭력행위와 방지 및 피해자보호에 관한 법률안	표창원
20대	2017년	데이트폭력방지 및 피해자보호에 관한 법률안	신보라
20대	2017년	데이트폭력범죄의 처벌 등에 관한 특례법안	신보라
20대	2017년	데이트폭력범죄의 처벌 등에 관한 특례법안	박남춘
20대	2017년	데이트폭력범죄의 처벌 등에 관한 특례법안	함진규
21대	2020년	데이트폭력 방지 및 피해자보호 등에 관한 법률안	윤영석
21대	2022년	데이트폭력범죄의 처벌 및 피해자보호 등에 관한 법률안	김미애

출처: 국회 의안정보시스템

▲ The list shows dating violence-related bills that are discarded at the National Assembly.





retention, but rather how the system can be supplemented. For high-risk or repeated offenses, exceptions allowing independent state intervention may be necessary, along with institutional safeguards before a victim withdraws their intent to punish.”

2 Are You Safe If There Are No Wounds? The Risk of Coercive Control Hidden by Physical Violence

Phenomenon The Tragedy Caused by Overlooked Danger Signals and Formalistic Handling

Would clear intent to pursue punishment and evidence of assault be enough to prevent such tragedies? On January 7, 2024, at 2 a.m., a woman in studio apartment in Busanjin Ward fell to her death after a dispute with her ex-boyfriend. The bereaved family argued that this case was not a simple suicide, but the result of ongoing assault, intimidation, stalking, suicide threats. When the perpetrator received a breakup notice from the victim, he visited her house and harassed her by ringing the doorbell for 13 hours, and whenever the victim expressed her intent to end the relationship, he continuously drove the victim into fear, such as dragging her to the rooftop and threatening her. When she reported him to the police for suicide threats, she was not warned of the potential danger or provided with safety guidance, and she eventually died without

being provided with guidance on safety measures. It was only after the victim died and received media attention that the perpetrator became a full-scale subject of investigation for stalking charges. Even though clear danger signs suggesting dating violence existed even if it was not an immediate assault situation, responding officers failed to recognize them.

Such cases raise fundamental questions about how to interpret and respond to danger signals in dating violence. In particular, even though there is an overwhelming power imbalance between the perpetrator and victim in dating violence, the scene frequently handles it as “mutual assault,” erasing the context of violence. Similar patterns have been observed in other cases. In a 2023 homicide in Nonhyeon-dong, Incheon, the victim had previously reported ongoing assault and suicide threats by the perpetrator, yet the case was treated as mutual assault because injuries were found on both sides. According to Heo Min-sook, a legislative investigator of the National Assembly Research Service, in “Legislative and Policy Tasks for Introducing Death Review to Prevent Intimate Relationship Homicide” (2025), in many dating violence incidents, victims who resist during an attack are reclassified as suspects, obscuring the context of coercive control and power imbalance. Such formalistic interpretations at the initial response stage can allow escalating violence to go unaddressed.

Cause Limitations of a Response System Biased Toward Physical Violence

Why are clear warning signs such as intimidation, stalking and suicide threats not properly addressed at the scene? The core problem lies in interpreting dating violence narrowly as “physical assault.” Although acts like prolonged harassment or suicide threats constitute coercive control and are known risk factors for intimate partner homicide, on-site responses continue to prioritize immediately observable physical injuries. According to Heo Min-sook, a legislative investigator of the National Assembly Research Service, in “Refusal Homicide,



▲ A damaged television screen reflects the extent of violence beyond the victim.

Reasons for Failure to Regulate Intimate Relationship Violence: Importance and Tasks of Coercive Control Legislation” (2024), the core essence of dating violence lies in control. Coercive control involves restricting a partner’s daily life, limiting their freedom of action, and isolating them from family and social networks. However, because on-site assessments prioritize the presence of physical violence over patterns of control rather than these control circumstances at the scene, it results in the delay of practical victim rescue.

Police are authorized to separate the victim from the alleged offender at the scene and may apply for emergency protective orders based on a risk assessment tool introduced in 2025. It includes indicators of both physical violence and coercive control. However, in practice, rapid decision-making under urgent circumstances tends to favor visible injuries or explicit threats over relational patterns of control. Officers must secure immediate safety and apply legal procedures quickly, which places significant reliance on individual judgment. In the absence of clear operational guidelines, responses may vary depending on who is dispatched, leaving coercive control insufficiently addressed at the critical initial stage.

Ultimately, the current system relies on individual police officers’ judgment, and the direction of case handling and victim protection is bound to change depending on who is dispatched to the scene. Consequently, if on-site response is judged centered on physical violence, warning signs of coercive control are likely to be overlooked without being detected.

Prospect

Coercive Control as the Core Criterion for Response

To resolve these blind spots in enforcement, a fundamental shift is needed — from focusing solely on physical violence to recognizing coercive control as the central criterion for intervention. Researcher Kim, said that “Concrete response manuals that can accurately grasp the characteristics and risks of dating violence, perception improvement education, and systematic risk assessment must be established together.” Lee EJ, activist of Women’s human rights counseling center, said “Because police officers responding at the scene are often the first point of contact for victims, specialized training should be provided so that frontline officers can understand

victims’ situations and recognize coercive control, the core of dating violence.” Also, researcher Kim emphasized, “Rather than asking for responsibility only from specific institutions or persons in charge, continuously refining on-site judgment systems and support linkages to encompass complex violence patterns is the task for resolution.”

Already abroad, legislative changes beyond physical violence are being made. Scotland’s Domestic Abuse Act 2018, for instance, criminalizes patterns of coercive control, including isolation and monitoring, reframing violence as a relational structure of domination rather than a single act of harm. The Act also enables the state to intervene centered on structural risk rather than closing cases based only on whether the victim withdraws statements. Ultimately, the task of dating violence response is closer to a problem of how to define the essence of violence rather than simply a problem of raising the level of punishment.

3 Blind Spots of Saftey Measures: Systems Exist, but Nowhere to Go

Phenomenon

Victims Choosing Not to Use Protection Measures



▲ Contrast between a brief dating violence support system video and a much longer 40 minute video on a dating violence homicide.

If you search for dating violence help videos on YouTube, hopeful videos explaining methods for victims to respond through public systems and support institutions are uploaded steadily. However, unlike these optimistic guidance videos, it is difficult to find cases where victims actually received effective help. Why are victims not using the protection system? This should





be understood as a question of how much the system touches the reality of the victim's situation rather than making the victim's choice a problem. In reality, cases where victims themselves refuse or cannot accept protection measures continue to occur at the scene.

This gap became starkly visible in a case that occurred in Dongtan, Hwaseong, on May 12, 2025. The victim had reported her boyfriend to the police three times prior to the incident. The most critical report came on March 3, 2025. Police officers recognized the severity of the situation and implemented emergency measures. They recommended that she relocate to a state-supported protection shelter and provided a smart watch for emergency reporting. However, the victim declined relocation, stating that she would stay at an acquaintance's residence unknown to the perpetrator. Approximately two months later, the perpetrator attacked her.

Despite the procedural measures taken in accordance with existing guidelines, the tragedy was not prevented. This case reveals the gap between victims' lived realities and institutional protection measures. The police recommended and implemented safety measures according to relevant manuals, but the circumstances that made it difficult for the victim to accept the measures were not sufficiently considered. This suggests a practical task at the scene regarding how much the dating violence response system reflects the victim's survival environment and concrete life context.

Cause

Gap Between System Expansion and Effective Protection

Why do victims refuse protection measures, even though guidance and systems exist? The problem lies not in the absence of protective measures, but in a system that does not sufficiently reflect the characteristics of dating violence or the realities of victims' lives. Police provide victims with access to safety measures such as smartwatches, emergency shelters, customized patrols, personal protection and CCTV installation

when dating violence occurs. However, activist Lee said, "The fact that support systems exist and whether victims can actually accept those options is a separate matter." This is because the current protection system is centered on victim-centered evacuation, inducing victims to hide on their own rather than isolating perpetrators. Although it has the advantage of guaranteeing anonymity for the victim's personal protection, such a structure causes victims to bear excessive risks in choosing the protection system. Because perpetrators deeply infiltrate the victim's daily life, for victims to avoid perpetrators and enter shelters, they must abandon the foundation of their everyday lives, such as taking a leave of absence from school or quitting their jobs. This makes it difficult for victims to choose protection systems solely for the sake of safety.

In addition, the poor conditions of shelters are a problem. According to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport's minimum housing standards, it is stipulated to secure a minimum housing area of 14 square meters or more for single-person households. However, the shelter environment, which is less than half of the minimum housing standard required, and the burden of living communally with strangers become factors where victims choose to return to the perpetrator's side rather than choosing shelters. Moreover, the support needed by victims is not sufficiently provided. The budget for the self-reliance support fund system that allows victims to escape the situation of coexisting with perpetrators is small, and if they do not move into protection facilities and only receive counseling support, they are not eligible for it. In other words, although the victim is in a situation where they must pay a huge sacrifice of turning their lives upside down, they are not guaranteed stable protection and daily life recovery corresponding to it.

Prospect

From Perpetrator Punishment to a Victim-Centered Protection System

Response measures that fail to reflect the characteristics of

dating violence are unlikely to lead to practical solutions. Therefore, a shift toward a customized protection and recovery system tailored to victims' individual situations is needed. Researcher Kim said "The essence of dating violence victim support has the following three axes. First, immediate separation and securing safety of the victim and perpetrator. Second, preparing realistic escape conditions such as emergency housing and economic support. Third, continuous recovery and legal support should help victims escape the perpetrator's psychological control. Ultimately, the most important thing is helping victims secure safety and recover their daily lives without losing the foundations of their everyday lives." Massive budget expansion must precede practical support. Gwangju Metropolitan Council member Jung Da-eun criticized at a policy forum on September 26, 2025,

that current support budgets stop at the level of supplementing the police's work and are too limited to discuss practical effectiveness. In reality, the number of victims receiving practical support among the nearly 3,000 dating violence victims per year is only a small fraction — approximately 10 to 20 cases.

Furthermore, strengthening community-level response beyond state policy is also essential. Lee Jeong-ki, a professor of Department of the Police Administration at Soosung University emphasized that "Restoring local trust networks can create an environment in which residents are more willing to report and intervene in dating violence cases." He also noted "Because many victims are young, cooperation with universities and community institutions should be strengthened to ensure earlier detection and support."

Dating violence is a serious matter of public concern that can no longer be dismissed as private conflict between individuals. The repeated response failures and dating homicide cases clearly show that dating violence requires a structural response. Unless dating violence is clearly defined and managed systematically, the perpetrator will exploit gaps in the system, and the victim will inevitably be alienated from proper protection and treatment. This is not only an individual's misfortune, but the responsibility of society as a whole. Therefore, now, dating violence must be completely converted from the private sphere to the sphere of public response. Capturing danger signs early to actively intervene, and building a solid social safety net that can practically protect even victims left in blind spots is the urgent task given to our society. 🇰🇷



▲ The victim's bereaved family holds a press conference on the day of the suspect's warrant review hearing in the Geoje dating violence case.

samgs123456@hufs.ac.kr



A Journey Through the Traces of King Danjong

By Lee Seeun
Editor-in-Chief

The film *The King's Warden* (2026), which portrays the tragic life of King Danjong, the sixth king of the Joseon Dynasty,* has surpassed 10 million viewers, renewing public interest in his story. Although he ascended the throne at a young age, King Danjong was later forced to abdicate by his uncle, King Sejo, and he ultimately met a tragic end. His life remains one of the most sorrowful stories in the history of the Joseon Dynasty. The Yeongwol County government holds the annual Danjong Cultural Festival to commemorate the spirit of King Danjong and the loyalty of his followers who sacrificed their lives for him. This year as well, the Danjong Cultural Festival will take place from April 24 to 26. This article visits historical sites closely connected to King Danjong's life including Cheongnyeongpo, Yeongwol-bu Government Office, Jangneung Royal Tomb and Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy, to explore the traces that remain there and reflect on their historical significance. Through this journey, *The Argus* seeks to follow the life of King Danjong and reconsider the course of his life from a contemporary perspective.

*Joseon Dynasty: It is a Korean dynasty that existed on the Korean Peninsula from 1392 to 1910, following the Goryeo Dynasty.





Cheongnyeongpo: The Young King Left in Exile

(1) King Danjong's Exile

Cheongnyeongpo in Yeongwol, Gangwon Province, is the place where King Danjong was exiled after losing the throne to his uncle, Grand Prince Suyang who became known as King Sejo, in 1457. In 1448, at the age of eight, Danjong was formally proclaimed the Crown Prince by Uijeongbu, the highest administrative body of the Joseon government that oversaw state affairs and the administration of officials. Danjong became the first figure in Joseon history to represent a perfect line of legitimate succession from his grandfather King Sejong to his father King Munjong. Although he grew up in the care and affection of King Sejong, he ascended the throne at the young age of 12 after King Munjong passed away in 1450. However, his mother, Queen Hyeondeok, had died shortly after giving birth to him, and his grandmother, Queen Soheon, had also already passed away. In other words, there was no senior figure in the royal family who could protect the young king. At the time, Joseon kings were required to receive formal approval from the emperor of the Ming Dynasty through a diplomatic envoy known as a gomyeongsa. When no official volunteered to undertake this mission during the early years of Danjong's reign, his uncle Grand Prince Suyang stepped forward and was dispatched as the envoy. Through this opportunity, Grand Prince Suyang was able to establish himself as a leading figure among the royal relatives and significantly expand his influence within the royal court.

In 1453, Grand Prince Suyang seized power through a coup, using the pretext of eliminating forces he claimed were threatening the young king. During this event, he eliminated the senior officials who had been entrusted by King Munjong with the responsibility of supporting and protecting King Danjong. One night, Grand Prince Suyang went to the house of Kim Jongseo, a powerful high-ranking official and military commander who served as a guardian to the young King Danjong, and killed him with a metal mace, marking the beginning of the uprising. He then forced his way into the residence of Princess Gyeonghye, the elder sister of King Danjong and daughter of King Munjong, where King Danjong was staying, and pressured the young king to summon the remaining officials, claiming that the remaining conspirators needed to be dealt with. Ultimately, in 1455, King Danjong handed over the royal seal to Grand

Prince Suyang and abdicated the throne, allowing Suyang to become King Sejo, the seventh king of the Joseon Dynasty. In June 1456, officials from Jiphyeonjeon,* who had cultivated scholarly pursuits under King Sejong's patronage, organized a movement to restore King Danjong to the throne. They sought an opportunity to assassinate King Sejo, but their plan collapsed just before its execution due to the betrayal and report of their colleague Kim Jil. In the aftermath of this event, King Danjong's six loyal officials, known as the Six Martyred Ministers, were subjected to severe torture. After this incident, King Sejo could no longer regard Danjong merely as a nephew, as the young king had become a direct threat to the legitimacy of his reign. A year later, in June 1457, a report was submitted claiming that Song Hyeonsu, the father-in-law of King Danjong was plotting treason. In response, King Sejo immediately ordered an investigation into the matter. On the very next day, he issued a royal decree demoting Danjong from the status of a former king to Prince Nosangun, effectively declaring that Danjong would no longer be treated as a senior member of the royal family. As a result, Danjong was expelled from the palace and sent into exile in Yeongwol.

*Jiphyeonjeon: It is an institution established during the early years of the Joseon Dynasty to nurture scholars and carry out academic research.

(2) Cheongnyeongpo, the Place of Danjong's Exile



▲ Ferries cross the river toward Cheongnyeongpo, the place of King Danjong's exile.

Footsteps



▲ The Royal Residence of King Danjong at Cheongnyeongpo serves as the place where King Danjong lives in exile.

Before one's eyes appears an island surrounded by river water on three sides and steep cliffs on the remaining side. This place, which feels overwhelming at first sight, is Cheongnyeongpo, where King Danjong was exiled. Accessible only by ferry, the geography itself vividly reflects the isolation Danjong must have experienced. Upon arriving at Cheongnyeongpo by boat,

a dense pine forest comes into view. Following the path to the left, the first structure that appears is a traditional tiled-roof house. This is the Royal Residence of King Danjong, where King Danjong lived during his exile. Inside the building, wax figures recreate scenes, including Danjong's private quarters and scholars paying their respects. After Danjong's death, his royal residence fell into neglect and was eventually lost. The structure seen today was reconstructed in 2000 by Yeongwol County in based on records found in the Diaries of the Royal Secretariat, known as Seungjeongwon Ilgi.



▲ Gwaneumsong pine tree stands at the center of Cheongnyeongpo as a pine tree linked to King Danjong's sorrow.

The Royal Residence of King Danjong is surrounded by dense pine trees, among which the tree located at the center stands out the most. This is the tree known as Gwaneumsong pine tree. This tree, estimated to be about 600 years old, is said to have been growing since the time of King Danjong's exile, and it is believed that Danjong once sat and rested

between the two branches that split near the lower part of the tree. Its name, Gwaneumsong, meaning "Pine That Sees and Hears," comes from the belief that it witnessed Danjong's years in exile and even heard his sorrowful cries of grief.

Behind Gwaneumsong pine tree, wooden stairs lead up a



▲ Manghyangtap (L) overlooks Cheongnyeongpo, symbolizing King Danjong's longing for Hanyang, and Nosandae (R) marks the spot where King Danjong is said to gaze toward the distant capital.



small hillside. Climbing these steps reveals Manghyangtap Tower, a stone tower said to have been built by Danjong as he longed for Hanyang, the historical name for Seoul and the capital of the Joseon Dynasty, and his queen, Jeongsun. On the opposite hill of Cheongnyeongpo stands a rock known as Nosandae. According to tradition, this was a place where Danjong would climb at sunset to ease his troubled mind. From Nosandae, looking west toward Hanyang, one can see a massive cliff blocking the view. The geography of Cheongnyeongpo, surrounded by river water on three sides and sealed off by steep cliffs, vividly illustrates its isolation from the outside world. Standing before such a landscape, Danjong may have felt an even deeper sense of solitude while longing for Hanyang.



Yeongwol-bu Government Office: Where King Danjong Met His Demise

(1) The Death of King Danjong

King Danjong did not remain in Cheongnyeongpo for very long. About two months after his exile, a major flood occurred, and his residence in Cheongnyeongpo was submerged. As a result, he was moved to Gwanpuncheon Magistrate's Office, the guesthouse of the Yeongwol-bu Government Office. Even after leaving Cheongnyeongpo, Danjong's circumstances did not improve significantly. He continued his lonely life in exile there and is said to have left behind the poem *Jagyu Si*, which expressed his deep sorrow. In the same year, another incident occurred that further endangered Danjong's fate. Grand Prince Geumseong, King

Sejong's sixth son and Danjong's uncle, was caught plotting to restore Danjong to the throne. Thereafter, petitions began to pour into the royal court arguing for the death of Danjong; however, King Sejo refused each one. Not long afterward, news arrived that Danjong had taken his own life.

Historical records present varying accounts of King Danjong's death. The *Annals of King Sejo* document that Danjong took his own life after hearing the news of the execution of Grand Prince Geumseong. Given the nature of the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty* as official royal documents, it has been suggested that Danjong's death may have been recorded as suicide in order to avoid criticism that King Sejo directly ordered his death. However, in the *Annals of King Seonjo*, which were compiled later, a record appears stating that death poison was sent to Yeongwol. The *Annals of King Sukjong* further describe how a royal inspector from the State Tribunal who had been dispatched to deliver the poison could not bring himself to present it to Danjong and instead remained lying face down in the courtyard. These records are often interpreted as suggesting that Danjong's death may not have been a simple suicide but rather a political execution. Meanwhile, a more dramatic account appears in the unofficial historical work *Yeollyeosil Gisul*, which purports that when execution by poison was delayed, a servant strangled Danjong using the string of a bow. The existence of these differing records is frequently interpreted as a reflection of the profound collective trauma that the fate of Danjong left on the people of his time. Later, when Danjong was restored to his royal status during the reign of King Sukjong, various suppressed records and traditions began to surface. As a result, the story of Danjong's death continues to be conveyed in multiple forms through different historical accounts even today.

(2) Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office: Where King Danjong Passed Away



▲ Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office stands as the place where King Danjong spends his final days.

Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office is located within the site of the Yeongwol-bu Government Office, making it relatively easy to find in the center of Yeongwol today. Despite its historical significance as the place where King Danjong spent his final moments, present-day Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office stands rather modestly among modern buildings. Approaching the structure, a doorway on one side allows visitors to look inside the building.



▲ Jagyuru pavilion is associated with the poems King Danjong composes in exile.

Near Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office is another site associated with King Danjong, a Jagyuru Pavilion. Today it appears to be an ordinary pavilion where maintenance workers occasionally rest to escape the heat of the sun, but it is also a place deeply connected to the tragic life of King Danjong. Jagyuru Pavilion is believed to have been first built in the tenth year of the reign of King Sejong. It is said that while staying at Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office, King Danjong climbed this pavilion and, while listening to the cries of the cuckoo bird, composed the poems *Jagyu Sa* and *Jagyu Si*, expressing his deep sorrow. The pavilion was named Jagyuru Pavilion because the sound of the cuckoo was believed to resemble a cry of grievance. The structure, once lost due to flooding, was rebuilt about 200 years later in the fifteenth year of the reign of King Jeongjo. Although the area around Gwanpungheon Magistrate's Office and Jagyuru Pavilion appears peaceful today, it is also the place where King Danjong, who had been driven from the throne at a young age, spent the final days of his exile. The end of King Danjong's life in Yeongwol remains one of the most tragic moments in the history of the Joseon Dynasty and continues to leave a lasting impression on those who visit the site today.



Jangneung Royal Tomb, the Tomb of King Danjong

(1) How He Came to Rest Here

In October 1457, after meeting his tragic end at Gwanpuncheon Magistrate's Office in the Yeongwol-bu Government Office, the body of King Danjong was abandoned on the riverside. At the time, King Sejo had issued a strict order declaring that anyone who collected Danjong's body would have their entire family executed. As a result, no one dared to retrieve the body. The final moments of a king who had been driven from the throne at a young age seemed destined to end in such loneliness. However, Eom Heung-do, who served as the *hojjang*, a local administrative official in Yeongwol, found himself unable to stand by in silence. In the middle of the night, he secretly retrieved Danjong's body and headed toward Donguljisan Mountain. As he fled through the mountains amid heavy snowfall, he witnessed a roe deer suddenly startled and run away. Noticing that the spot where the deer had been resting was free of snow, Eom Heung-do chose that place as the burial site. He buried Danjong's body there in secret and then fled with his family. Afterward, the authorities conducted a search to find the whereabouts of Eom Heung-do and his family, but they were never discovered. It is said that some villagers had an idea of where he might have been hiding, yet none of them reported it to the authorities. At that time, Danjong's grave had no burial mound, making it difficult to distinguish from ordinary graves. Nevertheless, the location of the tomb was quietly passed down among local residents, and it is even said that even children knew not to throw stones near the site.

After some time had passed, in 1541, during the thirty-sixth year of King Jungjong's reign, Park Chungwon, the magistrate of Yeongwol, was ordered by the king to locate Danjong's grave and restore the burial site. Later, during the reign of King Sukjong, efforts to restore Danjong's honor began in earnest. In 1681, the seventh year of King Sukjong's reign, Danjong was posthumously demoted to the rank of *Nosandaegun*. In 1698, the twenty-fourth year of King Sukjong's reign, Sukjong formally restored Danjong's royal status and designated his tomb Jangneung Royal Tomb. This finally took place 241 years after Danjong's death. The restoration of King Danjong was a key event in establishing legitimacy in the late Joseon Dynasty. There were

discussions about relocating the royal tomb to Hanyang, where most royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty were located. However, court-appointed geomancers determined that the site where Danjong had been buried was an auspicious location, so the plan to relocate it was abandoned. Instead, the tomb was reorganized in accordance with the formal conventions of royal Joseon burials. As a result, Jangneung Royal Tomb remains the only royal tomb of the Joseon Dynasty located far from Hanyang in Yeongwol. Meanwhile, the loyalty of Eom Heung-do, who had secretly retrieved Danjong's body and arranged his burial, was later recognized. His descendants were granted official posts, and Eom Heung-do himself was posthumously awarded the title of Minister of Public Works, a high-ranking government position responsible for state construction and infrastructure. Today, a memorial structure called Commemorative Pavilion of Eom Heung-do *Jeongnyeogak* stands within the grounds of Jangneung Royal Tomb in recognition of his loyalty. In 1733, King Yeongjo also ordered that a royal tomb stele be erected at Jangneung Royal Tomb. The front of the stele bears the inscription "Jangneung Royal Tomb of King Danjong of Joseon," while the back records his death in Yeongwol in 1457 at the age of seventeen.

(2) Jangneung Royal Tomb



▲ Jangneung Royal Tomb lies quietly along a mountain ridge as the royal tomb of King Danjong.

Today, Jangneung Royal Tomb is located along a mountain ridge in Yeongwol. Unlike most royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty, which were built on relatively flat land, Jangneung Royal Tomb is situated in a place that can only be reached after walking up a mountain path for some time. Following the path toward the tomb, the burial site gradually appears from the dense forest. What strikes the visitor upon arriving at Jangneung Royal Tomb is, first and foremost, the stillness

of the place. Surrounded by high mountains and thick forests, the area carries an atmosphere that feels almost cut off from the outside world. When recalling the tragic life of King Danjong, the atmosphere of this place leaves an even deeper impression.

The tomb complex follows the typical structure of royal tombs of the Joseon Dynasty. In front of the tomb stands Jeongjagak, a T-shaped ritual hall where memorial rites are performed, and behind it lies the burial mound. Although the tomb of King Danjong is not large compared with other royal tombs, the historical meaning it has carried over the centuries makes the site particularly significant. Looking at Jangneung Royal Tomb naturally brings to mind the unfortunate course of Danjong's life. The young king who once ascended the throne ultimately died in exile, yet his grave was later restored as a royal tomb and remains to this day. Located quietly along a mountain ridge, Jangneung Royal Tomb is a symbolic place that reflects both the misfortune of Danjong's life and the posthumous restoration of his honor centuries later.



▲ Commemorative Pavilion of Eom Heung-do (L) commemorates the official who secretly buries King Danjong, and Commemorative Pavilion of Bak Chung-won (R) honors his efforts to restore the king's grave.

As one walks down the mountain path from the tomb, the first structure that comes into view is the commemorative pavilion dedicated to Eom Heung-do, built to honor his loyalty. This space recalls his act of retrieving King Danjong's body and arranging his burial, leaving visible traces of the loyal figures associated with the royal tomb. Continuing further along the path, visitors encounter the Commemorative Pavilion of Bak Chung-won. Bak Chung-won's efforts to repair Danjong's grave and perform memorial rites symbolically reflect the enduring remembrance and respect for the dethroned king even long after his death. Together, these sites demonstrate that Jangneung Royal Tomb is not merely a royal tomb, but a

historical space that conveys both the tragic life of King Danjong and the loyalty of those who remained devoted to him.



Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy Honoring Loyal Officials

(1) Officials Who Gave Their Lives for King Danjong

In 1455, when King Sejo seized power through the Gyeou Coup and took the throne from the young King Danjong, not all officials were willing to accept it. Guided by the Confucian ideal of loyalty, they believed that Danjong, the legitimate king, should be restored to the throne. The figures who planned the movement to restore Danjong based on this conviction later became known as the Six Martyred Ministers.

The Six Martyred Ministers refers to six officials: Seong Sammun, Park Paengnyeong, Ha Wi-ji, Yi Gae, Yu Seongwon, and Yu Eungbu. They believed that King Sejo's seizure of the throne from King Danjong could not be recognized as a legitimate succession. As a result, they planned to remove Sejo and restore Danjong to the throne. However, the plan was discovered just before it could be carried out. The officials were arrested and eventually executed after enduring severe torture. They refused to swear loyalty to King Sejo until the end and insisted that they were morally bound to remain loyal to Danjong. Seong Sammun and Park Paengnyeong continuously rejected the legitimacy of Sejo's seizure of power even under torture and remained loyal to Danjong. Their actions later came to be remembered in Joseon society as a symbol of loyal officials.

In addition to the Six Martyred Ministers, there were additional figures who remained loyal to Danjong. Kim Mun-gi, Jo Ryeo, Nam Hyo-on, Won Ho, Yi Maeng-jeon, and Seong Dam-su renounced their official positions and withdrew from public life after Danjong lost the throne, refusing to swear loyalty to Sejo. These individuals later became known as the Six Loyal Scholars and were remembered together with the Six Martyred Ministers as symbols of loyalty to King Danjong, reflecting the Confucian political order of Joseon, in which officials were expected to uphold their duty to a legitimate ruler. The place established to honor this spirit of fidelity is Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy, located in Yeongwol.



▲ Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy preserves the legacy of officials who remain loyal to King Danjong.




▲ Memorial tablets (L) inside Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy reflect Confucian ideals of loyalty and integrity, and a shrine (R) dedicated to Eom Heung-do stands in recognition of his devotion.

(2) Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy

Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy is established to honor the Six Martyred Ministers who gave their lives for King Danjong and other officials who remained devoted to him. During the Joseon Dynasty, Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy were private educational institutions that both honored Confucian scholars through memorial rites and served as places for study and instruction. In a society where Neo-Confucianism functioned as the state ideology,

Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy played an important role not only in commemorating scholarly achievements but also in honoring individuals who demonstrated moral integrity. Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy was also established within this Confucian tradition of Joseon. The name “Changjeol,” meaning “to reveal loyalty and integrity,” reflects the intention to honor the officials who remained loyal to King Danjong until the end. Inside the academy are memorial tablets dedicated to figures who maintained allegiance to Danjong, including the Six Martyred Ministers. A woman in her 50s living in Cheonan commented, “Seeing that even Eom Heung-do’s memorial tablet is enshrined here made me reflect once again on the true meaning of loyalty and fidelity. It also seems to be a place that helps visitors gain a deeper understanding of Yeongwol’s historical significance and emotional character.”

Today, visitors to Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy encounter traditional buildings in a quiet and orderly atmosphere. The architecture demonstrates restrained design, reflecting the characteristics of Confucian architecture during the Joseon Dynasty. Standing in the courtyard of the academy, the surrounding mountains and trees create a calm landscape that naturally evokes the historical stories of King Danjong and the loyal officials who followed him. From Cheongnyeongpo to the Yeongwol-bu Government Office, from Jangneung Royal Tomb to Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy, the story that runs through these places is about more than the tragedy of one young king. It also reveals the values of loyalty and righteousness that were deeply respected in Joseon society. Changjeolseowon Confucian Academy remains today as a symbolic place where the spirit of that loyalty continues to be remembered.

Tracing the life of King Danjong through these sites in Yeongwol is not simply an act of recalling the misfortune of one ruler. It is also a chance to reflect on a man broken by political power and on those who chose to stand by him until the end. Although the appearance of these places has changed over time, the traces of sorrow and loyalty that remain there still resonate with people today. Visiting Yeongwol offers an opportunity for more visitors to explore the historical sites and reconsider the life of King Danjong and the choices of those around him from a contemporary perspective. 



yisuws@hufs.ac.kr

Photos above are taken by Lee Seun

Deciding for Myself

Lee Seeun

Returning to The Argus and taking classes in a new field last year were choices I made simply because they were what I truly wanted to do. Making that decision on my own allowed me to enjoy the process more and approach my responsibilities with greater commitment. Through this experience, I realized that following my own judgment can make both the experience and the outcome more meaningful. From now on, I hope to make choices not only based on what seems necessary for the future, but also on what I genuinely want to pursue.



Choi A-won

Last year, I chose to participate in the North Korean Human Rights Academy, where I studied the realities of human rights in North Korea and UN human rights systems. Although some people around me viewed the topic negatively or made light of it, I focused on the value of “human rights” itself. I hesitated because of others’ prejudice, but I decided based on my belief that I want to stand with marginalized people. Through this experience, I gained a new dream and meaningful relationships. In the future, I want to make choices based on my inner values rather than external expectations.



Kim Yi-eun

Last semester, I went abroad as an exchange student and made every single choice entirely on my own - what courses to take, what activities to join, even where to travel. Thinking that if I did not do it now, I might never get the chance, I ended up doing things I normally would have hesitated over. If I am unsure what to do, I think choosing based on what I can do right now and what I can not do later in the future will help to live with a little less regret.



Park Se-eun

Taking a leave of absence from school was a decision I made entirely on my own. While serving as the editor-in-chief of The Argus, my schedule became overwhelming and I had little time to rest or reflect. I felt that I needed time to think about my future and what I truly wanted to do. At first, I was anxious about not being productive. However, I realized that my life should move at my own pace rather than be compared with others. From now on, I want to make choices based on what I genuinely want and pursue them with passion.



Special Thanks to... Prof. Hong Juhyun, Full-time Researcher Kim Sung Ryung, Women’s human rights counseling center Activist Lee EJ and Prof. Lee Jeong Ki

Thank you



The Argus
www.theargus.org

