



K-pop star Karina apologises after relationship goes public

Description

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[Banzai Japan](#)
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A K-pop star has issued a grovelling apology after incensed fans accused her of “betrayal” – because she has a boyfriend.

The fans reportedly drove a truck to pop star Karina’s agency after finding out she was dating actor Lee Jae-wook.

“Is the love given to you by your fans not enough?” an electronic billboard on the vehicle demanded.

In a letter shared on Instagram, the aespa frontwoman vowed “to heal the wounds” she had inflicted.

[“I apologise for surprising you greatly,” the 23-year-old wrote](#), promising to show a “more mature and hardworking side” in future. The singer, real name Yu Ji-min, has led the four-woman aespa since their debut in 2020, with the single Black Mamba. Last year, their record-breaking album My World sold 2.1m copies in South Korea.

This is not an isolated incident, however. Pop stars in South Korea and Japan work in a notoriously pressurising industries, where such personal revelations can be tricky to navigate.

Just a decade ago, it was common practice for K-pop agencies to ban new stars from dating or even having a personal mobile phone, and even now admissions of romantic relationships were often considered scandalous to fans.

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Last August, BBC reported on how Blackpink's lead vocalist Jisoo's relationship with actor Ahn Bo-hyun rocked the K-pop world. Some experts told the BBC then that pop stars' agencies seek to sell them as "romantically obtainable" idols.

In Japan, many pop stars are bound by "no dating" clauses in their contracts, and getting married requires permission.

The news of Karina's relationship first broke on 27 February, with Karina and Lee, 25, later confirming the two had met last year. Lee's agency C-JeS Studio asked for "warm respect... as this involves his private life".

But some of Karina's fans drove to the headquarters of SM Entertainment, the company which formed and manages aespa. These trucks have become a common practice used by K-pop fans to show support or discontent in recent days.

- [Blackpink's Jisoo is dating. The K-pop world is stunned](#)

"Is the love given to you by Karina fans not enough? Why did you choose to betray the fans? Please apologise directly. Otherwise, you will see a decrease in album sales and empty concert seats," one of those messages read.

However, not everyone was unhappy about the relationship with Lee, who debuted in the drama Memories Of The Alhambra in 2018 and gained prominence after starring in the hit fantasy period drama Alchemy of Souls.

"You don't need to apologise for feeling. I will always root for your happiness. You deserve all the love, support, all the good things," wrote one of them.

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