

Gender Construction: An Analysis of Queerness in a Philippine Boys' Love Web Series

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ABSTRACT

Films either reflect or challenge social norms while reconstructing or deconstructing reality. These films are dense, metaphorical, and highly contentious. Additionally, several scholars concur that media unwittingly reinforces chauvinist social standards, particularly in the way it constructs gender through the characters, plot, and setting. The emergence of coming-out and queer films in recent years has inspired the Filipino film industry to create queer web series, such as the Boys Love (BL) series, that speak to both queer and straight Filipino audiences at a time when the world is dealing with a pandemic. Thus, a critical discourse analysis of the Filipino BL web series *Gaya Sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies), written by Juan Miguel Severo and directed by Jaime Habac Jr., was conducted to analyze how gender is constructed in the characters, conflict, and themes. According to the findings, a homosexual person's character development is centered around three main issues: concealment, disclosure, and acceptance of queerness. The web series made it clear that coming out as gay is the only acceptable way to embrace queerness and that those who remain discreet are unhappy and disturbed. Furthermore, the web series constructs homosexuality as a dramatic and significant plot twist in the life of a queer character, thereby excluding other homosexual hardships. This study concludes that the emerging BL genre constructs homonormativity among younger audiences. The media, through the BL genre, transformed how queer characters are presented in films, giving them major roles. This study further recommends research on how toxic masculinity is presented in Philippine BL web series and how the coming-out phase is portrayed both foreign and local BL web series.

1. Introduction

Socially constructed gender stereotypes commonly define a person's identity. Many people's formative understanding of their gender identities is founded on what was instilled in them, and they believe that medical intervention is the only way to alter one's physical characteristics. Gender roles are also strictly predetermined, and society strictly categorizes everyone as either a man or a woman.

Many scholars also believe that the media enables a limited and constructed spectrum of gender stereotypes. The media, such as films, inadvertently motivate extremely limiting gender expectations. Films may mirror reality, but the process by which gender roles are constructed is incredibly complicated and discriminatory. Several gender scholars agree that the media, particularly in how it (re)constructs gender, unwittingly reinforces chauvinist social norms.

Furthermore, the construction of gender in film generates a number of social issues. The presentation of masculine, feminine, and homosexual roles is a performance, a simulation that is continually evolving and constructing rather than fixed. Films are either reconstructions or deconstructions of reality, with actors reflecting or challenging social norms and realities. These films are dense,

metaphorical, and contentious. Popular films, for instance, encourage people to identify and recognize themselves in predetermined gender roles and character archetypes. They enable viewers to connect with them and to look beyond the plot or character development to examine how realities are reconstructed or deconstructed. It is also interesting to understand how gender stereotypes are constructed in the characters, plot, and setting of Philippine films.

Although there has been a slow but sustained increase in the presence of queer characters in mainstream media over the past few years, the film industry's focus has shifted from raising the number of queer individuals on screen to boosting diversity among homosexual characters. The mainstream media regards queer characters as vital to the plot, partly due to their rich character development and the fact that their identities are centered on their queerness. Hence, the absence of queer characters would have a substantial impact on the movie's entertainment value.

Additionally, some gender critics remarked that "acceptance of queerness" is a quality frequently presented in queer films. This can manifest as a character who identifies as queer and feels comfortable with his sexuality. People who construct their identities based on how gay characters are constructed in films may view coming out as a critical step in embracing their own queerness. However, is it imperative to come out to everyone? Coming out is regarded as significant because it is the only socially acceptable way to accept homosexuality. Since more queer characters are being shown in mainstream films, coming out as queer is frequently presented as the only feature of queer life. Because coming out and embracing one's queerness is a deep and highly emotional event in queer films that straight audiences desire to see.

Due to this, the "Boys Love" (BL) genre emerged as a popular genre that has spurred Filipino film producers to create queer series that speak directly to queer and straight Filipino audiences at a time when the world is facing a global pandemic. These BL series attempt to depict issues and raise awareness about same-sex relationships in the Philippines, which is generally a conservative country. Many Filipino producers and artists claim that the BL genre serves as an eye-opener for coming out, self-acceptance, and embracing one's gender in the face of prejudice (Abanes, 2020).

This study is therefore one of the few that investigates how gender is constructed in the most quintessential Boys Love (BL) web series in the Philippines, *Gaya sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies), which is written by Juan Miguel Severo and directed by Jaime Habac Jr. It specifically examines the characterization, conflict, and gender construction themes through the character conversations. Furthermore, the queer theory of Eve Sedgwick and the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner all lend credence to these assumptions.

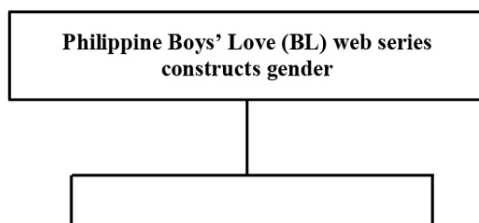


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Web Series and Boys' Love*

Many young people are increasingly interested in web series and online streaming content. Web series are increasingly replacing television, and many countries have seen an increase in online streaming and web series production. Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hulu, HBO Max, and Disney Plus are just a few of the famous streaming services that have made substantial investments in regional entertainment. Web series have grown in popularity in recent years due to their ability to transport viewers to places that television cannot. Web series and online streaming allow viewers to watch shows whenever and wherever they want (Dhiman & Malik, 2021).

Web series, also called "webisodes," are a new way to tell stories that bridges the gap between traditional TV and Internet video. Web series are shorter than most TV episodes and are shown on websites like YouTube. They use and break away from the ways that TV shows usually tell stories (Edgerton, 2013).

A web series is a series of scripted or unscripted videos that are posted on the Internet in episodic form. Web series began in the late 1990s and became popular in the early 2000s. A single web series episode, also known as a "webisode," is

increasingly popular. Web series are usually viewed on desktop computers, laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones (Maheshkumar, 2020).

The increased popularity of boys' love web series has led to a multitude of academic studies. "Boys' love," or BL, refers to Japan-specific media, particularly anime and manga, that depict romantic love between two men, sometimes in a sexually explicit way. This is usually seen in web series, movies, video games, fan art, and manga. Boys' love comes from the 1970s shojo manga, which highlighted romantic encounters between heterosexual couples. These stories began to depict male homosexuality, drawing female fans, which later led to the independence of this emerging genre and its two subgenres: (1) focusing on the emotional aspects of male romantic love; and (2) presenting male homoeroticism that is sexually explicit (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017).

2.2. Queerness in Philippine Media

Homosexual characters and actors have previously been given minor roles. It is as if their only purpose is to offer comic relief for the heterosexual viewers who are in fits of laughter at their antics and dialogue. But there has been considerable criticism of this trope because homosexuality is constructed negatively by using it as humor in films (Gines, 2020).

However, the Philippine media have recently paid more attention to the boys' love craze. It allowed homosexual characters greater freedom to be themselves, while still maintaining the usual conflict that heterosexual characters experience. It does not exaggerate homosexual problems but rather exposes them as they truly are. Because homosexual themes in the media influence how people behave and understand specific people or situations, the film industry must portray homosexuals accurately (Gines, 2020).

Despite the increasing number of Filipinos who identify as homosexual, there is still a dearth of homosexual actors playing major homosexual characters in Filipino films. Regardless of a person's gender, "understanding sexuality" can be hampered when there is insufficient representation and misrepresentation in film. Viewers, particularly those who are unaware of critical discourses, frequently interpret the representation of gender fluidity in films as being authentic. Hence, film producers must evaluate how queer characters are presented and their circumstances in addition to such portrayals. Films and TV shows that depict coming out are often people's first encounters with non-heteronormative relationships and homosexual identification. These films portray young homosexuals going through a difficult adolescence. Bullying and bashing of homosexuals (especially teenagers) are common themes in popular films.

Also, in the late 1980s, homosexual people were constructed in film and media as "confused youngsters" who could not fit into the gender dichotomy. This includes men and women portrayed as not masculine enough or gay. Peers, teachers, and family bullied these characters verbally and physically, which further reinforces in the cognitive devices of the viewers how a homosexual should be treated. This content shows a lack of acceptance, affection, and understanding from intimate friends and family, which could undermine the individual's identity and wellbeing. Media affects adolescents' choices and role models, and sexuality-related trauma can have enduring effects if these constructs are not redefined in mainstream media.

2.3. Queer Theory of Eve Sedgwick

In the mid-1980s, gay and lesbian studies expanded feminist gender issues. Feminists and gender critics reframe and stress the man-woman dichotomy. Gay and lesbian studies stress heterosexual and homosexual differences. Gay and lesbian studies examine how social institutions characterize homosexuals and lesbians as deviant or abnormal and why heterosexuality is viewed positively. Like feminist studies, gay and lesbian studies unearth silenced, veiled, or deleted writers from the literary canon and history.

Furthermore, in the 1990s, gay and lesbian studies led to queer theory. Contrary to gay and lesbian studies, queer theory stresses sexual distinctions. Queer studies by Eve Sedgwick analyze, discuss, and debate odd, deviant, or strange sexual topics. Like feminists, queer theorists claim that identities and sexuality are unstable. Human nature and sexuality aren't predetermined. Queer theory claims it's meaningless to analyze gender because sexual identities are socially created. Queer philosophy contradicts lifestyle-based classification. No group can be incomplete, whole, or deviant. Many factors, such as social customs, individual acts, power systems, and others, shape our identities, including our sexuality.

2.4. Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner

This theory states that society is made up of main groups where conflict is bound to happen in every group because some people cannot live up to all the rules and expectations of the main or dominant group. Hence, this conflict forces the groups to experience social change and mobility. These conflicts create a subclass or subcategory of the subjective intergroup dichotomization that is typical of that extreme of the belief continuum.

Thus, social categorization, a cognitive tool that sequences, categorizes, and commands the social environment, allowing the individual to take many kinds of action, was seen as significant. This further leads to differentiation, which achieves superiority on some dimensions over an outgroup. This also means that the dominant group tells the other people in society what to do. So, the new sub-group, or the minority, can't take over the dominant group because they still have power over the "minority" group (Bautista & Villaverde, 2019).

3. Methodology

The method of qualitative research known as critical discourse analysis was utilized in this research. The process of describing everything that takes place during a specific activity or circumstance is part of a qualitative research methodology. Not only does discourse encompass spoken and written languages, but it also incorporates visual images (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). It is possible to apply it by taking into consideration the unique qualities of visual semiotics as well as the connection that exists between language and image. The movie, which is one of the visual images, can be seen as a product of human culture that represents the values and views of certain groups of people, including their spirit and ideologies. This is because the movie serves as one of the visual images. According to Trianton (2013), a movie is a mass communication medium that carries messages containing significant ideas that are presented to the public in the form of a spectacle. A movie can be viewed as both a cultural artwork and a cinematic work of art, and it can be shown with or without sound. The movie can be understood as a depiction of real life that includes narratives. In addition, McLuhan (1997) contends that a movie is a form of experience that is non-verbal, like photography, and that it includes a form of statement that does not contain syntax. The movie, in its capacity as a form of media, unmistakably reflects the viewpoints that are held by a specific group, including the ideology and ideas that are brought by the group. Because the ideology is communicated in a covert manner and there is an element of coercion in the film, this becomes extremely important. Thus, this research specifically uses CDA to describe, interpret, analyze, and criticize how queerness is constructed in the most watched Philippine Boys Love web series, titled *Gaya sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies).

Furthermore, this study consists of three (3) phases: characterization, conflict, and gender construction. Furthermore, the character conversations are based on Benedict O. Mendoza's English subtitle translation. Moreover, this qualitative research critically analyzes the Philippine Boys' Love (BL) web series titled *Gaya sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies), which is written by Juan Miguel Severo and directed by Jaime Habac Jr. Thus, it does not include and does not physically or psychologically harm human participants or animal subjects. This study further ensures that the data will not embarrass or harm anyone.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the data to answer the subproblems raised in the study generated through the theories used.

4.1. Characterization

This phase reveals the characters in *Gaya Sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies). It specifically investigates the characters through looking into the character conversations /lines in the web series. Below is Table 1 that presents the characterization.

Table 1. Characterization

Name of the Character	Characterization
Karl Frederick Almasen	confused
Vladimir	confident
Karl's Father	controlling
Judit	ally
Uncle Santi	gay
Anna	confidant

Karl is characterized as being confused, Vladimir as being self-assured, Judit as being a self-declared ally, Uncle Santi as being the gay uncle, and Anna as being the confidant.

Karl Frederick Almasen is further characterized as a 19-year-old architecture student who enjoys writing about films. He is confused of what he wants for himself and regularly lives up to his family's expectations. These are apparent in his lines, "A family tradition: the boys try to live on their own when they reach this age too," "As my father would always say "become the man you're destined to be," and "I know I'm not doing anything bad. But why am I still afraid? I'm gay. I can't tell Papa yet. I love Vlad. But I am not as brave as him,"

Additionally, Vladimir is a film major who openly recognizes his homosexuality. He is confident about himself and does not want others to decide things for him. This is evidenced by what he said, "I refuse to be a plot device that triggers somebody else's identity crisis...only to be left alone in the end, you know? Not again", "...Because I am not ashamed. Don't you feel the same? Are you ashamed? Of me?, and "You're what? Say it. Karl, just—Remember what I said, okay? Don't be scared of the word. Just say it. Gay, Karl. Are you gay? Karl, you kissed me."

Also, in the lines of Karl's father, "How's our little man's first day?", "When your Uncle Santi first lived on his own, he had a hard time finding a job. But when it comes to men-", "I'm so excited for the man you'll become after this", and "Don't forget to pay the rent tomorrow! A man never misses what is due,", he is characterized as a father who imposes massive pressure on Karl. Constantly, he stresses to Karl how a "man" must accomplish his responsibilities. He also regards homosexuality as a disadvantage.

Judit, on the other hand, is Vladimir's affluent multilingual sister who claims to be an ally of the LGBT community. She strongly supports Karl and Vladimir's romantic relationship. This is apparent in her lines, "...sex is for every consenting adult. It's a gift from God...", "...We're in a safe space. I am an ally of your community, OK?", "I'm a cool sister. You know? Love is Love,", and "But it would be uncool of me to deprive you of this, right?And besides I'm an ally and a socialist."

Furthermore, Uncle Santi played a significant role in the life of Karl. His lines, "I had trouble finding a place to stay. You know how the world treats gay people. If you're unlucky, you might even get hit!", "I've been out here longer. It might not be as hard for you guys now. Maybe it's not as difficult, but it's still not our decision to say when it's safe to come out for those

who can't yet,” “I was really fragile that time. Someone showed me a bit of kindness, and I thought they loved me,” “It doesn't matter if I am the only gay engineer they know, or—Or if I was able to buy my own condo while they're still renting. As long as I'm gay and I cried over a man, that's it, end of story”, and “I just got my heart broken again. I'm not always hurting because I'm gay, but because I always choose to love. But look, all my achievements are still mine”, reflects the fact that Uncle Santi is Karl's homosexual uncle. He was the only member of their family who understood Karl's situation. Since he had difficulty coming out as gay, he made sure he was there to support Karl when he did so.

Lastly, Anna is someone who Karl can confide in. She is the personification of the girl-next-door, and Karl and Vlad soon began to rely on her as a confidant. She also disclosed personal information to her close friends Karl and Vlad. Her lines make this abundantly clear, “No one taught me how to do tax, but people just expect me to raise a kid in this kind of economy? Duh! And—And what? Am I just going to be a mother now who will carry all the burdens? Really?”, “Damn it, I'm also an artist, okay? And a voter, a woman. With weaknesses and flaws, too”, “Imagine this: two years. It's been two years since I had sex! I'm a Scorpio! That's too big of a sacrifice for me just so I can be a mom,” and “I'm not telling you to come out, okay? Your truth is yours. What I'm trying to say is, learn to live outside. You still have time on your side, so make the most of it, please? People should see you.” These lines serve as a representation of the stereotype of being a woman who is also a single parent in a conventional Filipino society.

The conversation that takes place within the BL web series sheds light on the ways in which the characters have shaped the development of the plot as well as the lives of the other characters. The characters also showed what it's really like to come to terms with being homosexual and the problems that come with it. It also provides light on the other parts of homosexual life in the Philippines.

In addition, the web series exhibits a diverse variety of circumstances and reactions to the intimate relationship that exists between Karl and Vlad. Nevertheless, they do more than simply display reactions; rather, they highlight how different parts of the lives of LGBTQ people can be expressed in a variety of ways throughout the web series. The plot of the web series was described as being engaging, but it inexorably circled back to the same fundamental concern, which is the question of whether or not homosexuality should be kept concealed, disclosed, or embraced.

4.2. Conflict

This phase explains the main and sub-conflicts of the BL web series *Gaya Sa Pelikula*. The conflict evolves around the gender identity crisis of Karl, how the conflict constructs homosexuality. A table is included in this phase.

Table 2. Conflict

Fictional Conflict Components	Gender Conflict in the Web Series	Homosexual Construction
Main Conflict	1. Karl is confused about his gender identity	Heteronormative
Sub-Conflicts in the Main Conflict	a. Vlad struggles to understand Karl.	Disrespected/ Fooled
	b. Karl is anxious to come out as gay.	Defiant
		Closeted/ Suppressed

The main conflict of the story revolves around Karl's confusion about his gender identity. This also resulted in the sub-conflicts of Vlad's struggle to understand Karl and his fear of coming out as gay. These conflicts give rise to a variety of homosexual framings in the plot, including heteronormativity, being disrespected, defiant, and being closeted/suppressed.

The lines, “A family tradition: the boys try to live on their own when they reach this age too,” “As my father would always say “become the man they’re destined to be”, “I’m so excited for the man you’ll become after this”, “Don’t forget to pay the rent tomorrow! clearly explain how Karl's father instilled in him the idea that heterosexuality is the normal sexual and gender identity. As a result, Karl believes that being straight is the only normal or natural way for him to express his identity. As a result, Karl's confusion about his gender identity is exacerbated when he is unable to relate to these binaries.

Furthermore, in the lines, “When your grandfather did the same thing to us, I had trouble finding a place to stay. You know how the world treats gay people. If you’re unlucky, you might even get hit!”, “He made a fool out of me, nephew! He got back together with his ex with abs!”, “I’ve been out here longer. It might not be as hard for you guys now. Maybe it’s not as difficult, but it’s still not our decision to say when it's safe to come out for those who can’t yet”, “It doesn’t matter if I am the only gay engineer they know, or—Or if I was able to buy my own condo while they’re still renting. As long as I’m gay and I cried over a man, that’s it, end of story” perfectly illustrate how homosexuals are commonly framed by media. Gay people are constantly at a disadvantage. When a gay person comes out, some people believe that all his accomplishments are wasted. Because gay people are often displayed as emotionally weak, they are stereotyped as being easily swindled by their partners.

Also, the lines, “Karl, it was just a dance, okay? Doesn’t have to mean anything. You can stop making me feel like a regret now”, and “But I’m sorry, Karl. I don’t wanna be silent about my love. I’ve done that enough. I wanna be out there. I deserve it. Just like you...deserve to take your time, inside. Okay? You do” It reveals how embracing homosexuality takes awhile and is incredibly hard.

Additionally, the lines, “So, I’m obvious (gay)? Do all people think of me that way? Why would he bring that up?”, “You told him we have something? You told him that? Why would you tell him that? Oh my God, Vlad!”, and “I don’t know! I don’t even know if I’m [gay] like you. I don’t even know what I am!” explain how homosexuals must begin in the closet before coming out. These lines also demonstrate how oppressive it is to conceal and deny one’s gender to the public. In addition, these lines suggest that coming out is the only acceptable and natural way to embrace homosexuality and that those who are discreet are unhappy and disturbed. Coming out is seen as the only significant plot twist in a homosexual character's life. These scenarios in a homosexual's life exclude other struggles that they face in a heteronormative society.

4.3. Themes on Gender Construction

By analyzing the character conversations and lines, this phase demonstrates how *Gaya Sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies) constructs gender. The themes that reflect gender construction appears in Table 3.

Table 3. Themes Reflecting Gender Construction

Character Conversations	Themes
<i>... boys ...live on their own...</i>	masculinity is independency
<i>... man ...destined...</i>	manliness is destined
<i>... Vlad ... seduce ... Karl ... dream</i>	dreams express homosexuality
<i>... don't look gay.. not ...compliment."</i>	gay is effeminate
<i>...Come home, Vlad...without you.</i>	belongingness is gender-free
<i>...saw... (kissing) ... tells Papa...</i>	closeted gays are anxious
<i>... obvious (gay)? ...people think ...</i>	gays are criticized
<i>...don't know... what I am...</i>	homosexuals are brave
<i>... not ... bad. ...gay. ... not...brave ...</i>	

<i>...Gay... not... insult.</i>	homosexuality is vulgarity
<i>... gay... act ... crime...</i>	
<i>...chores ... Mom...nagging ...</i>	mother nags and does the chores
<i>... scared ... Gay ... kissed...</i>	difficult to embrace homosexuality
<i>... silent ... out there... time, inside...</i>	homosexuality takes time
<i>...gay engineer...cried over a man...</i>	gay rips value
<i>... expect ... kid ...mother...burdens...</i>	motherhood is a burden
<i>...come out...</i>	coming out is the only way

In the web series, there are various gender stereotypes constructed such as masculinity is independence, manliness is predestined, dreams express homosexuality, gay is effeminate, belongingness is gender-neutral, closeted gays are anxious, gays are criticized, homosexuals are courageous, homosexuality is vulgar, mother nags and does household duties, difficult to embrace homosexuality, homosexuality takes time, gay rips value, motherhood is a burden, and coming out is the only option.

The line, "...the boys try to live on their own when they reach this age too" presents that masculinity is measured on how a man must endure independency. Also, the line, "...become the man they're destined to be" implies that a man must work hard to earn what he is destined for him. Moreover, Karl woke up to a dream where Vlad was seducing him and saying, "I saw how you looked at me earlier. Oh, I think you know". This scene portrays that those dreams are for closeted gays who need to freely express themselves. Also, the conversation, "But, Vlad, in fairness, you don't look gay, said Karl. Then, Vlad replied, "Hey that's not a compliment" is a clear illustration of how a man is stereotyped as gay if he seems effeminate. Furthermore, when Karl said, "Come home, Vlad. I don't understand. I have no one to talk to. I don't have anyone. It's like I don't belong here without you," shows that the sense of belongingness doesn't know any gender.

Furthermore, when Karl said, "I don't want to think anymore. (Karl rushed and kissed Vlad on his lips) They kissed again. They saw us (kissing) My uncle saw us! How do I calm down? What if he tells Papa?" portrays how closeted gays are anxious and scared if someone discovers their homosexuality, thus, making it difficult for them to fully embrace themselves. Also, Karl anxiously exclaimed, "So, I'm obvious (gay)? Do all people think of me that way? Why would he bring that up?" illustrates how people often have negative impressions on gays or effeminate men. In addition, the lines, "I don't know! I don't even know if I'm [gay] like you. I don't even know what I am!", and "I know I'm not doing anything bad. But why am I still afraid? I'm gay. I can't tell Papa yet. I love Vlad. But I am not as brave as him" imply that a homosexual must be brave enough to embrace homosexuality.

Also, the lines, "Gay. Homo. Queer. Pink. Just say it. It needs no euphemism. It's not an insult", and "And you, are you gay?... So, why act like I just accused you of a crime?" metaphorizes crime to homosexuality, and further defines it as an insult. Furthermore, in the scene when Karl and Vlad are arguing about who gets the household chores done. Vlad said to Karl, "Oh my God, Mom! Can you stop nagging me? Please?" implies that a woman must be the one who gets to do all the household chores. Also, a mother is typically characterized as a nagger. Moreover, the line, "You're what? Say it. Karl, just—Remember what I said, okay? Don't be scared of the word. Just say it. Gay, Karl. Are you gay? Karl, you kissed me" portrays how difficult it is to embrace homosexuality among closeted gays. The line, "But I'm sorry, Karl. I don't wanna be silent about my love. I've done that enough. I wanna be out there. I deserve it. Just like you...deserve to take your time, inside. Okay? You do" emphasizes that embracing homosexuality takes time. It is neither a walk in the park nor a something to be forced in a person.

In Uncle Santi's lines, "It doesn't matter if I am the only gay engineer they know, or—Or if I was able to buy my own condo while they're still renting. As long as I'm gay and I cried over a man, that's it, end of story" present that being gay rips off one's value in the society regardless of one's accomplishments. Also, Anna said that "No one taught me how to do tax, but people just expect me to raise a kid in this kind of economy? Duh! And—And what? Am I just going to be a mother now who will carry all the burdens? Really?" implies that motherhood is perceived as a burden. Also, the line, "I'm not telling you to come out, okay? Your truth is yours. What I'm trying to say is, learn to live outside. You still have time on your side, so make the most of it, please? People should see you" portrays that coming out is seen as the only way for gay people to be true to themselves.

The web series presents the acceptance of homosexuality as a difficult process. Karl's anxiety is evident due to the inherent heteronormativity of the plot. Despite the fact that the web series is structured around positive interactions, there are still unresolved issues. Moreover, while homosexuality is presented in the web series, there is still minimal gender diversity presented.

5. Conclusion

In the past years, researchers have placed significant attention on the concept of "boys' love," which refers to the romantic love shared by two men. As a result, a plethora of relevant theoretical studies and qualitative and quantitative research have emerged. This study looked at the characters, the conflict, and the themes in the conversations of the characters in the web series *Gaya Sa Pelikula* (Like in the Movies), which was written by Juan Miguel Severo and directed by Jaime Habac Jr., to analyze how this emerging genre constructs gender.

Furthermore, the popularity of coming-out and queer films has encouraged the Filipino film industry to produce queer web series such as the Boys Love (BL) series. This new genre not only shows homosexuality, but it also shapes or creates homosexuality in a way that makes a heteronormative society accept and value homosexuality.

Through queer theory and social identity theory, this study concludes that the emerging boy's love genre effectively constructs and builds a schema on homonormativity among younger audiences. Before the "Boys' Love" genre came along, the media, as a dominant group or tool, has recently changed the way queer characters are presented in films, such as acquiring major roles. This study also says that more research should be done on how toxic masculinity is presented in the different Philippine Boys' Love web series and how the coming-out phase is portrayed in both international and local BL web series.

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