Queer Representation in Honorio Bartolome De Dios' *Geyluv*

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The study focused on exploring the representation of queer identities and relationships using the main characters from Honorio Bartolome De Dios' *Geyluv*. The study also investigated if reading LGBT fiction, like *Geyluv*, may influence the perception of the readers towards queer identities and relationships. Thematic analysis was utilized to create supporting codes and themes from the responses of the participants to come up with bases of analyzing the story using qualitative textual analysis. It was revealed that fluidity in relationship is prone to internal and external conflicts such as unreciprocated feelings, issues related to masculinity, gender stereotypes and discrimination as it entails someone to experience conflicts such as societal stigma, pressure, doubt, fear of rejection and lack of support. Furthermore, reading LGBT fiction may significantly influence the perceptions of individuals about queer identities and relationships. The study recommends involving more characters in different Filipino LGBT stories to have a more comprehensive documentation of the representation of queer identities and relationships

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a representation of reality—from different happenings until different socio-cultural background of individuals. Fictional characters often represent real people or real identities. With our modern era, identities are not only confined with male or female, rather we are acknowledging LGBTQIAP+ as an identity. Queer identity and relationships in literature has been explored in different manners over time. Caribe et al. (2022) stated that literature started to explore queer identities and relationships leading to often challenge heteronormativity leading to explore *non-binary gender and fluid sexuality* (Moita & Ahlert, 2023). In this aspect, one may argue that gender representation is crucial in literature, especially when fleshing out a fictional character.

Through the proliferation of stories related to LGBTQIAP+ community, it resulted to the emergence of LGBTQ fiction or Queer Literature. With this genre, it created an opportunity for literature *to address stigma, acceptance and specific intervention needs for queer couples* (Tangolo & Massi, 2022), *to expand and restructure communities to be more inclusive and supportive* (Bateman, 2022) and *to serve as a resistance to heterosexual hegemony* (Mattia, 2020). Thus, Queer Literature may be perceived as a literary genre that collates experiences and struggles of queer characters.

Representation in media, especially in literature, plays a vital role in shaping the societal perceptions and promoting inclusivity. Media, that includes literature and film, serve as *powerful instruments for communication which may be used for broadening perspectives and social values* (Fareed, 2021). Hence, it can be argued that whatever someone is watching in a film or TV show or reading in books, it may influence their perspectives and social values. Therefore, representation in media entails careful portrayal of characters as well as the themes present in the plot since *media shapes social beliefs, values and understanding* (Aspler et al., 2022). In terms of representing queer identity and relationships in literature, it *shapes expectations and perceptions of real-life experiences* (Cummins, 2019). Through this, *authentic representation in media* (Mittal & Sharma, 2022) must be observed. Mittal & Sharma (2022) observed that one way to obtain authentic representation is through job opportunities for transgender individuals in the film industry. Applying the same observation, queer representation in literature may be achieved by providing opportunities for queer writers to be published.

Alongside the growing popularity of LGBTQ fiction, queer books started to be available worldwide through printed and digital formats. Harker et al. (2023) discovered that *queer literature used recurring tropes of angels, including literal and metaphorical ones* as seen in some works of John Rechy, Richard Bruce Nugent, Allan Ginsberg and Rabith Alameddine. At the same time, books related to queer identities and relationships often integrate discussions of themes related to *visibility, risk-taking, HIV/AIDS, dystopia and horror* (Mason et al., 2020). Hence, there is an observed array of themes and values that are often integrated in queer books just like in other mainstream books.

In the Philippines, there is a range of studies that explored the complexities of queer literature and culture. Pascual (2023) focused on the marginalization of queer literature whereas Sarce (2023) discussed queering the term "aura" in tropical performances. Cornelio & Dagale (2022) documented the experiences of queer Filipinos to be related to discrimination, abuse and coercion. In their study, they argued that such struggles happened due to conservative religious worldviews in the country which some Filipino queer writers dubbed as *spaces of unfreedom*. As such, Filipino queer writers often contest this through moral, theological and aspirational reasoning.

In the teaching of English to some educational institutions, Tarrayo & Salonga (2022) found out that teachers *have positive views about queering the English language teaching*. Hence, incorporating queer perspectives in English language teaching is deemed necessary for fostering inclusivity and critical thinking. However, concerns about this arises ranging from lack of models, limited knowledge of queer concepts and potential resistance from the stakeholders. Therefore, maybe curating queer-themed literary texts to be used as reading materials may alleviate these concerns since previously mentioned studies capitalized on the influential power of queer fiction to be used in refining perspectives and values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With this, the researcher aimed to analyzed the representation of queer identities and relationships through the main characters in a Filipino queer short story titled Geyluv by Honorio Bartolome De Dios. This short story is one of the well-loved and earliest stories that utilized queer characters—Benjie and Mike. The story focused on the relationship between these two characters as well as subtle implications of the reality faced by the Filipinos during its publication in 1994. To expound, the study focused on the portrayal of the complexity of queer identity, examination of ways how queer relationships may challenge gender stereotypes and determination how may the story itself impacts the perception of Filipino readers about queer identities and relationships. The findings of this study may be used as a basis to incorporate Queer Literature in English classes to create a more inclusive and supportive classroom.

METHODS

Sing a Qualitative Textual Analysis (QTA), the researcher analyzed *Geyluv* by focusing on the portrayal of queer identities and relationships as well as how such representation may result the story to shape social beliefs, values and understanding of the LGBTQIAP+ community. The QTA approach focused on the textual interpretation of queer identities and relationships in the short story *Geyluv* through the lens of Queer Theory. Caulfield (2023) stated that QTA is pivotal in literary studies as it involves *in-depth analysis of texts*.

Queer Theory examines and critiques the definitions of gender and sexuality in terms of being social constructs. Its primary objective is to reveal the fundamental role of social and power dynamics in our daily lives. Using this theory, it serves as a lens in analyzing subjects that are beyond the traditional notions of gender and sexuality which assumes that heterosexuality and cisgender are "the norm" (*LibGuides: Queer Studies: Researching With Queer Theory*, 2024). Thus, Queer Theory is a critical theory arguing that our gender and sexual identities are not biologically determined rather they are products of socio-cultural influences.

Acadia (2021) stated that queer theory is a critical approach that emerged from activism and looks towards a hopeful future. It provides tools for analyzing literature beyond just identifying queer characters and desires, allowing for unconventional readings that challenge normative assumptions. Rooted in the Stonewall Riots of 1969, queer theory explores a wide range of issues including gender, sexuality, race, class, and violence. It also engages with topics such as temporality, ecology, and diaspora in various forms of media. Queer theory questions traditional knowledge and embraces diverse influences and methodologies. It can be applied to deconstruct societal norms and power structures in a variety of areas. Overall, queer theory offers new perspectives on both literature and life.

To use Queer Theory in qualitative research, it must be acknowledged that it has the tendency to analyze numerous narratives concerning LGBTQIAP+ community members. This theory is aligned to qualitative research because it offers a *practically and institutionally queered set of voices, perspectives and understandings* (Wozolek, 2019) through the analysis of gender and sexual representation in different forms of media such as film, music and literature.

The study utilized Queer Theory in exploring the queer identities and relationships in the Filipino short story titled *Geyluv* by Honorio Bartolome De Dios (1994). In the book titled Beginning theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory by Peter Barry (2017), it stated that queer theory is focused towards the perception of socio-political identity and interests of gay men; thus, analyzing which of the two, gender or sexuality, is more pivotal in shaping a personal identity. With this, the researchers analyzed queer identities and relationships using the two protagonists in the story, namely, Benjie and Mike.

In the book of Charles Bressler (2011) entitled Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice, he mentioned that Queer Theory assumed that our human nature is not predefined by a finite list of characteristics making our identities subjective and unstable. Our identity is subjective because there is *no stable concept of the self* (Bressler, 2011) resulting in perceiving that the meaning of these identities resides in how language is utilized or constructed. *Our identity is unstable since it is constantly subjected to change as stated* by Bressler (2011) and any form of binary opposition is simply a social construct that also must undergo change. Thus, in this study, queer characterization from the analysis of the story's protagonists only focuses on how Benjie, being a Filipino gay, and Mike, being a Filipino heterosexual, are portrayed in the story. The portrayal of their queer

relationship was analyzed. This will be made possible using textual analysis and the interpretations from the target participants.

By using Queer Theory in this study, the researcher aimed to explore the queer identities and relationships evident in the short story *Geyluv* and how the plot may impact the perception of the readers about the variables involved.

Using a purposive sampling technique, the participants of this study are 10 out of 54 third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education, majoring in English students at Gordon College, Olongapo City. Nikolopoulou (2022) stated that purposive sampling is appropriate in selecting participants who meet specific criteria that is aligned with the research objectives.

The study aimed to explore the queer identities and queer relationship in Geyluv; therefore, to achieve this, the researchers created criteria before finding their participants to gain in-depth responses to answer the research questions. The criteria are as follows: a) third-year BSEd-English students at Gordon College enrolled in the Academic Year 2023-2024; b) read Geyluv by Honorio Bartolome De Dios; and c) identify themselves as queer.

The responses from the participants underwent thematic analysis to come up with bases to answer the research problems. Thematic analysis *closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly* (Caufield, 2023). Through an inductive thematic analysis method, the researcher explored the views, opinions and knowledge of the participants in relation to the representation of queer identities and relationships as well as how *Geyluv* influences their perception towards queer identities and relationships which came through by their responses in a researcher-made questionnaire that was floated online, using Google Form, due to ease of accessibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The responses of the target participants to the researcher-made questionnaire that was floated online through Google Form were processed for initial coding and thematic analysis using ChatGPT. This AI tool is utilized since ChatGPT *can assist researchers in analyzing large amounts of text data* (Lund & Wang, 2022). Moreover, in a video tutorial of Dr. Jarek Kriukow, an expert of qualitative data analysis using AI tools, it had step-by-step guidelines on how to process qualitative data using ChatGPT which the researcher followed. To validate the generated coding and thematic analysis of ChatGPT, the researcher requested technical assistance from specified experts of the field.

There are three themes created based on the responses of the participants and each theme is aligned to the objectives of the study wherein the themes discussed representation of queer identities and relationships, and the influence of the plot towards perception of queer identities and relationships. Each theme is supported by codes and quotes from the participants to strengthen its meaning at the same time available studies are also integrated to fully support its argument.

Table 1. Analysis of How Geyluv Represent the Relationship of Benjie and Mike

Supporting Codes	Theme
Evolving relationship from friendship to romance	**Representation of Benjie and Mike's Relationship as a Journey of Defying Norms and Embracing Authenticity**
Challenging traditional views on gender and sexuality	
Societal barriers and discrimination	
Promoting acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ love	
Overcoming internal and external challenges	
Inspiring authenticity and self-discovery	

In *Geyluv*, the relationship of its two main characters; namely, Benjie and Mike, is portrayed as a transformative journey wherein they defy societal norms as they embrace their true selves. Through their evolving bond—from friendship to romantic relationship—it is seen that their queer relationship challenges traditional gender roles, confront societal barriers and inspire others to understand and accept queer love. This theme captures the complexity, courage and authenticity inherent in their relationship.

The first supporting code, ***Evolving relationship from friendship to romance***, centers on how the relationship of Benjie and Mike was perceived by the participants to be a platonic friendship at first then it led to a romantic bond; hence, challenging societal expectations and stereotypes.

Participant 1: "Benjie and Mike's relationship evolves from friendship to a romantic bond."

Participant 6: "Benjie and Mike's relationship in 'GeyLuv' is a deep friendship that grows into something more."

Participant 5: "Love is not always about romantic love it could be about a love you had for friendship that can grow deeper and into something more."

The next supporting code, ***Challenging traditional views on gender and sexuality***, expressed how the characters, especially their evolving relationship, defy conventional ideas about gender roles and sexuality; thus, showing that love is not confined to societal norms.

Participant 1: "Challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes."

Participant 1: "Benjie's openness to his feelings for Mike defies rigid definitions of sexuality and masculinity."

Participant 1: "Showing that love can be fluid and not confined to societal norms."

Participant 5: "Mike and Benjie's relationship challenged the stereotype that a man should only fall for a woman."

The third supporting code, ***Societal barriers and discrimination***, highlights the evident conflicts found by the participants in the queer relationship of Benjie and Mike (i.e., societal barriers and discrimination) that prevent them to fully express their love and live freely.

Participant 4: "Benjie and Mike felt like they were trapped in a cage."

Participant 4: "Constrained by the stereotypes and discrimination against gay people in relationships."

Participant 4: "Their love faced societal barriers that prevented them from fully expressing themselves and living freely."

Participant 4: "Outside the confines of unfair treatment."

The next supporting code, ***Promoting acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ love***, advocates for acceptance and understanding of queer relationships in conservative societies like the Philippines.

Participant 1: "Their relationship promotes acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ love in a conservative society."

Participant 3: "It's very challenging of course specifically to members of LGBTQ+."

The fifth theme, ***Overcoming internal and external challenges***, illustrates the conflicts each character face, including unreciprocated feelings and issues to masculinity.

Participant 3: "In love to someone you know that impossible to reciprocate the feelings that you give."

Participant 3: "Men think that being a gay is a kinda weak for their ego."

Participant 8: "Mike being the 'straight' guy who is afraid of criticism and Benjie who is contemplating if the other has real feelings for him or just want the 'adventure.'"

Participant 8: "Both of them wants to have a special relationship with each other."

Participant 8: "They never really had the relationship they really want."

Participant 9: "The relationship of Benjie and Mike at first is one sided, since Benjie has liked Mike first."

The final supporting code, ***Inspiring authenticity and self-discovery***, relates as to how the story encourages its readers to embrace their true sexuality and gender yielding to love authentically and highlighting self-discovery and personal growth.

Participant 6: "Through their story, they inspire others to embrace their true selves and love authentically."

Participant 10: "I believe it's a friendship that allows them to be real with each other."

Participant 10: "It challenges the stereotype that male friendship can't turn into something more."

Participant 10: "They're able to learn more about themselves as they interact with each other and probably gain feelings along the way."

Overall, the first theme found out that *Geyluv* showed how a platonic friendship between two biologically male characters may turn into a romantic bond or a queer relationship. However, along the way, internal (such as unreciprocated feelings and issues related to masculinity) and external (gender stereotypes and discrimination) conflicts arise making the queer relationship of the said characters more complex. Alibudbud et al. (2022) discovered that *Filipino*

LGBTIAP+ experience higher rates of depression, anxiety and stress compared to heterosexual cisgender individuals as they usually encounter *homophobia, heteronormativity and discrimination* (Montano et al., 2022). Despite this, Montano et al. (2022) concluded that *mutual love remains a strong driving force* for same-sex Filipino couples. Since Philippines is a conservative and religious country, *LGBT relationships face struggles due to religious beliefs and discriminatory treatment from society* (Djaja & Nisa, 2023). This is mostly seen when *conservative Christian entities in the Philippines use religious freedom to defend majoritarian values surrounding sexuality, limiting equal rights for LGBT individuals* (Cornelio et al., 2019). As a result, many Filipino queers face *persistent homophobic attitudes* (Dario et al., 2020) as well as *discrimination, limited resources and inability to involve spouses in lifestyle decisions* (Chan et al., 2021).

Therefore, this theme explored how *Geyluv* portray the experiences and struggles of a Filipino with queer identity and relationship and enumerated dilemmas related to it as perceived by the participants and shown in several studies. Despite the advocacy for inclusivity, there are still many Filipino queers who suffer internal and external complexities due to their gender preference and dynamic of relationship.

Table 2. Analysis of How Geyluv Represent the Evident Conflicts Related to Being Queer Through Benjie and Mike

Supporting Codes	Theme
Societal Stigma and External Pressure	
Internal Conflicts and Self-Acceptance	
Pressure to Conform to Gender Norms and Expectations	**Conflicts Related to Being Queer Evident in Benjie and Mike's Story in *Geyluv***
Fear of Rejection and Lack of Support	
Defense Behavior and Coping Mechanisms	
Exploration of Sexual Identity and Doubt	

In terms of determining the conflicts related to being queer by focusing on the main characters—Benjie and Mike—of *Geyluv*, there are six supporting codes to come up with the second theme. This second theme underscore the challenges of navigating queer identities in a society marked by stigma, pressure to conform and internal struggles. It highlights the complexities and emotional turmoil experienced by queer individuals who must reconcile their true selves with societal expectations and personal doubts.

The first supporting code, *Societal Stigma and External Pressure*, relates on how the main characters, Benjie and Mike, face societal stigma, discrimination and external pressure due to their queer identities and relationship resulting to a fear of rejection and the need to hide their true relationship.

Participant 1: "Benjie and Mike face conflicts common to queer identities and relationships, such as societal stigma, internalized homophobia, and fear of rejection."

Participant 2: "Societal Judgement, Fear of Rejection and Struggle for Acceptance."

Participant 3: "Social misconception of the society that if a straight man fell in love to a gay one, he is also a gay."

Participant 5: "It is expected in our society because we are socially conditioned to bully or whatever people who show that they are different."

Participant 6: "They struggle with the pressure to abide by traditional gender roles and norms."

Participant 10: "Queer relationship tends to be hidden to public as the public ostracize those who they deem to have a different orientation."

The second supporting code, **Internal Conflicts and Self-Acceptance**, enumerates internal struggles that the participants observed from the story. It summarized the ideas shared by the participants to mean that the characters grapple with internalized homophobia, self-doubt and a struggle for self-acceptance regarding their queer identities and feelings for each other.

Participant 1: "Mike deals with discrimination and struggles to accept himself."

Participant 1: "Benjie questions his own sexual identity as he develops feelings for Mike."

Participant 4: "Benjie and Mike struggle with self-acceptance."

Participant 6: "They also have an internal struggle regarding their self-acceptance."

Participant 8: "Mike being the 'straight' guy who is afraid of criticism and Benjie who is contemplating if the other has real feelings for him or just want the 'adventure.'"

Participant 9: "Mike is unsure if he has feelings for Benjie while Benjie is unsure whether to pursue his feelings/love."

The third supporting code, **Pressure to Conform to Gender Norms and Expectations**, observed that the characters feel pressured to conform to traditional gender roles and norms, which conflicts with their authentic selves and their relationship.

Participant 3: "Social misconception of the society that if a straight man fell in love to a gay one, he is also a gay."

Participant 6: "They struggle with the pressure to abide by traditional gender roles and norms."

Participant 8: "Societal norms - it is seen when Mike wants Benjie to 'use' him."

The fourth supporting code, **Fear of Rejection and Lack of Support,** captures how the Benjie and Mike fear rejection from their friends and family. They also experienced lack of support, forcing them to hide their relationship and feelings to each other.

Participant 4: "They fear rejection and lack support, forcing them to hide their relationship."

Participant 6: "Societal judgment and the fear of rejection from friends and family."

Participant 10: "Mike's problem as he was scared of being seen differently by his 'straight' friends due to his orientation."

The fifth supporting code, ***Defensive Behavior and Coping Mechanisms***, revealed that the characters demonstrated defensive behavior and coping mechanisms to protect themselves from societal judgment and emotional pain.

Participant 7: "Benjie had been through rough breakups in his past relationship, that's why he is portrayed with a bitchy attitude towards people in general and an allergic reaction to men when he feels that they are being sweet and close to him."

Participant 7: "He is just protecting his feelings and this attitude serves as his defense mechanism that's why he had a hard time confessing his feelings and wants to distance himself."

The last supporting code, ***Exploration of Sexual Identity and Doubt***, explored how the characters realized their sexual identities and how they experienced doubt and confusion about their feelings; thus, impacting their relationship.

Participant 7: "Mike knew he is straight but at the end doubts his gender identity as he explores his feelings towards Benjie."

Participant 8: "Mike being the 'straight' guy who is afraid of criticism and Benjie who is contemplating if the other has real feelings for him or just want the 'adventure'".

Participant 9: "Mike is unsure if he has feelings for Benjie while Benjie is unsure whether to pursue his feelings/love."

In summary, the second theme documented the evident conflicts found by the participants from *Geyluv* through its main characters. It is revealed that majority of the conflicts related to being queer or having queer relationship relate to societal stigma, pressure, doubt, fear of rejection and lack of support. The perceived conflicts from the participants are supported by the study of Hall et al. (2021) wherein they found out that the common conflicts related to being queer include *attraction, questioning sexual orientation, self-identification, coming out, sexual activity and initiating a romantic relationship*. These conflicts may arise when queer partners *do not adhere to similar levels of religiosity or spirituality* (Killian et al., 2019). In terms of family dynamics, it may impact the mental health of queer youths through conflicts related to *autonomous queer selves, maintaining family belonging and maintaining a secure environment* (McDermott et al., 2019). Wilson & Cariola (2019) reported that *increased stigma, discrimination and victimization lead to challenges for LGBTQI+ youth, including isolation, rejection, phobia, depression, self-harm and suicidality*. Alarmingly, Cooper et al. (2023) revealed that the pressure to conform to masculine norms is *associated with increased odds of depression, anxiety and poor or fair mental health*.

Therefore, identifying yourself as queer or even engaging with queer relationship is prone to having either internal or external conflicts as seen through the main characters from *Geyluv*. Hence, mechanisms to consistently and efficiently advocate for deeper understanding, acknowledging and accepting of the LGBTQIAP+ community must be exercised in order to alleviate the drastic effects of the aforementioned conflicts.

Table 3. Analysis of How Geyluv May Influence the Perception of Readers
About Queer Identities and Relationships

Supporting Codes	Theme
Complexity and Challenges of Queer Identities and Relationships	**Impact of LGBT Fiction on Perception of Queer Identities and Relationships**
Impact on Personal Perspective and Understanding of Queer Identities	
Challenges in Self-Identity and Societal Acceptance	

The final theme revealed that reading LGBT fiction, like *Geyluv*, may significantly shapes perceptions of the reading through exposing them to the complexities of queer identities and relationships. It influences personal perspectives, raises awareness of societal challenges and promotes empathy and acceptance.

The first supporting code, ***Complexity and Challenges of Queer Identities and Relationships***, acknowledged the multifaceted challenges faced by queer individuals in their identities and relationships.

Participant 1: "Reading Geyluv by Honorio Bartolome De Dios changed my view of queer identities and relationships by showing their complexity and the challenges they face."

Participant 4: "After reading Geyluv by Honorario Bartolome De Dios, I am reminded of the intense struggles queer individuals face, from self-acceptance to societal discrimination."

Participant 6: "After reading 'Geyluv,' I feel more validated in my understanding that queer identities and relationships are as valid and meaningful as any other."

The second supporting code, ***Impact on Personal Perspective and Understanding of Queer Identities***, described how reading LGBT fiction such as *Geyluv* may influenced the personal perspectives of its readers resulting to deepened understanding of queer identities.

Participant 3: "After reading the story, I felt hopeless, that gender matters over love and sincerity."

Participant 5: "It affects my view that I should not disregard and I should not be ignorant about people who identified themselves aside from being male or female."

Participant 9: "The story affects my views positively in a way how oneself can be queer and how it revolves in queer relationships."

The last supporting code, ***Challenges in Self-Identity and Societal Acceptance***, explored how the internal struggles and societal norms from the story may impact the acceptance of queer identities and relationships of the readers.

Participant 7: "I have always seen queer people as great friends, but I have always hoped that they will find someone who can also accept and love them.

Participant 8: "It is hard to really freely identify as queer due to societal norms."

Participant 10: "Personally, I know a lot of queers that doesn't label themselves as one as they're scared of judgement."

Using the quotations from the participants to come up with the supporting codes leading to the creation of the third theme, it highlights a transformative

impact of literature in shaping perceptions or worldviews. It underscored how LGBT fiction like *Geyluv* may deepen the understanding of queer identities, challenge stereotypes and advocate for inclusivity. This theme emphasized the role of literature in fostering empathy and promoting social change towards greater acceptance and respect for LGBTQIAP+ individuals. Numerous studies suggest that reading literature can influence perceptions of queer identities and relationships *by allowing differentially sexed bodies to imaginatively inhabit each other's bodies* (Ng et al., 2023), *by affecting the relationship between naming and the performance of identity, challenging societal norms and violence* (Norris, 2022) and *by highlighting the close relationship between sexual experience and identity formation* (Mykhailiuk, 2023). In line with this, reading literature may serve as *a means for inscribing and reinscribing identity at the individual and collective level, influencing perceptions of queer identities and relationships* (Poletti, 2020).

   To summarize, the theme explored that by reading stories like LGBT fiction may significantly influence the perception of its readers towards queer identities and relationships. Therefore, by reading stories, like *Geyluv*, a reader may gauge themselves to the experiences and struggles of queer characters in terms of their identities and relationships that may be used to raise advocacy to challenge societal norms and expectations resulting to promote for a more supportive and inclusive dynamics for LGBTQIAP+ individuals.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

   Based on the findings, the researcher concluded the following:

1. In terms of the *Geyluv* representing queer relationship between its main characters, Benjie and Mike, it is found out that their relationship is transformed from platonic friendship to romantic bond. With this, fluidity in relationship is seen as well as internal (such as unreciprocated feelings and issues related to masculinity) and external (gender stereotypes and discrimination) conflicts arise making the queer relationship of the said characters more complex. Relating this to the Philippine setting, it is concluded that Filipino queers suffer from internal and external complexities due to their gender preference and dynamic of relationship.

2. Societal stigma, pressure, doubt, fear of rejection and lack of support are the common conflicts found from *Geyluv* related to being queer through Benjie and Mike. In the Philippine setting, identifying yourself as queer or having a queer relationship is prone to experiencing internal or external conflicts that are highly related to challenging societal norms.

3. Reading LGBT fiction or Queer Literature, such as Honorio Bartolome De Dios' *Geyluv*, significantly influence the perception of readers towards queer identities and relationships. In the Philippine setting, exposure of readers to this kind of genre may be beneficial to advocate a more supportive and inclusive environment for Filipino queers.

Based on the conclusions, the researcher recommended the following:

1. Exploring queer identities and relationships may also be done by analyzing more characters in different Filipino LGBT fiction stories to have a more comprehensive documentation of their representation in Filipino literature.
2. Writers may consider discussing more the Filipino queer experience in prose and poetry by emphasizing on the common conflicts relative to having queer identity or queer relationship. In this way, readers may have a deepened understanding of the experiences and conflicts of queer identities or queer relationships.
3. Teachers may use this study as a basis to curate LGBT fiction stories to be used in their classes in order to significantly influence the perception of their students towards queer identities and relationships. Through this, it may impact the creation of a gender-sensitive and inclusive classroom environment.

FURTHER STUDY

For the future researchers, they may consider utilizing the same methodology as to what the researcher used; however, they may involve heterosexual participants to share their responses. At the same time, qualitative content analysis may also be considered to be used alongside QTA to fully triangulate any arguments that this paper and the future studies may offer.

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