

Queer Literature and Gender Sensitivity of Senior High School Students

De Jesus, A.¹, Dorado, J.², Biag, E.³, Durante, J.V.⁴ Joshua Eriberto Miguel Llamas

Laguna State Polytechnic University
Graduate Studies and Applied Research

*aira.dejesus@lspu.edu.ph*¹, *jaya.dorado@lspu.edu.ph*², *eula.biag@lspu.edu.ph*³,
*jerlievill.durante@lspu.edu.ph*⁴

Abstract – The paper explores the possibilities of implementing queer literature as a reading material of senior high school students in promoting gender sensitivity. Descriptive-correlational method was used. Three academic strands were selected as the participants of the study namely, ABM, HUMSS and STEM. There were sixty (60) respondents who answered the survey questionnaire through Google Form. Also, the Pearson Correlation data analysis was considered. To sum it up, the analysis shows that students are moderately exposed to queer literature and they are highly gender sensitive. And, the profile of the respondents has no significant relationship with the level of exposure to queer literature and the level of gender sensitivity of the students except the profile in terms of strand. Additionally, it can be inferred from this study that there is no significant relationship between the grade level and the level of exposure to queer literature as well as between the gender and the level of gender sensitivity. However, the relationship between the exposure to queer literature and the level of gender sensitivity is strong which implies that the exposure to queer literature plays a big role in promoting gender sensitivity among the students. Thus, the study concludes that further exposure to queer literature makes the students gender sensitive. Moreover, the exposure of queer literature to the students may be encouraged to promote gender sensitivity. On top of that, researchers strongly recommend that curriculum implementers embrace queer literature as a reading material of the students in the senior high school.

Keywords – Queer Literature, Gender Sensitivity, LGBTQIA+ Community

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of civilization, people have been arguing about literatures focusing on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters and themes which are available to young generation in schools. Recognizing that most schools do not yet support these opportunities, some institutions initiated a senior high school reading group with LGBTQIA+ and allied youth and their teachers to make this literature accessible to young people and to

understand how such discussions might happen and what they might afford readers.

According to Blackburn & Clark (2011)[1], participating in and analysing the talk that occurred in this book discussion group allowed us to identify and distinguish between LGBT-inclusive and queer discourses and to understand potentially oppressive and liberatory dimensions of LGBT-inclusive discourses often reinforce heteronormativity and binary constructions of sex and gender: that is, the social understanding that there are two distinct

genders, women and men, that are synonymous with two distinct sexes, female and male, and that the expectation of being a woman (female) is to desire men (males), both emotionally and sexually, and vice versa. Because of this, LGBT-inclusive discourses may provide only a “sentimental education”.

Moreover, in the study of Stephens (1992) [1], ideologies are inevitably communicated through texts, both explicitly and implicitly. Therefore, for example, literature in the QC category allows readers to view LGBTQIA+ people in worlds where their identities matter, but rather than these people being isolated, they are connected with others who share these important identities. We recognize these ideological distinctions both within and among texts as significant in coming to understand ways of selecting, reading, and discussing queer texts, which include QC texts. Therefore, next we needed to understand what might ideologically distinguish queer texts. For this, we turned to queer theory.

As the 21st century comes, television stands as the most popular media platform in the country. Since the interception of television in the Philippines in 1953, it has become the most accessible and most influential platform to the society. It started to join the mainstream of Filipino Culture by broadcasting information, education, and entertainment. Aside from that, another role that the television delivers to the Filipino viewers is to influence. One must not underestimate the fact that what the audience sees on television will affect them, either in a positive or negative way. This powerful tool will definitely play a vital role in their daily activities, habits, perceptions, and behaviours. In fact, many teleserye now portray LGBTQIA+ characters in their movies or *serye* such as “My Husband’s Lover”, “Beki Boxer”, “The Rich-man’s Daughter”, “Destiny Rose”, and among others. As a youth, specifically senior high school watching this melodrama, it can act as an educational tool for: (1) representing complex real world events; (2) providing concrete examples to illustrate abstract

ideas or principles, and; encouraging people to make their own interpretations, and apply new situations to what they have learned in an abstract way. In spite of that, television programs have the capacity to stimulate deep thought, imagination or fantasy, raise awareness, and provide new information that could change the values or attitudes of the viewer. As stated by Leistyna, Woodrum, & Bangayan-Manera, Vecaldo & Saquing (2020), foundational to understanding sexual and gender identities in complicated ways is the belief that these identities are not essential or even developmental but instead are *poststructural*. Essentialism “ascribes a fundamental nature or a biological determinism to humans.” As a youth, specifically the senior high school students watching and reading queer literature will affect them, either negative and positive way specifically, the level of gender sensitivity towards the other gender.

The researchers conducted this research to measure the level of exposure of the senior high school students to queer literature. Likewise, the level of gender sensitivity of students. Moreover, the researchers seek to know if there is a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the level of exposure to queer literature as well as the level of sensitivity of senior high school students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to determine whether there is an existing association between queer literature and gender sensitivity. Furthermore, it seeks to intensify the utilization of queer literature as part of the curriculum of the educational system as the researchers already assume that it will be beneficial in promoting gender sensitivity among the students. Lastly, researchers also hope to strengthen gender sensitivity among the students through literature.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This part discusses the research design as well as the people who participated in the study. It also provides the standard procedure that the researchers underwent from the validation of the instrument up until its distribution and data analysis.

Research Design

This study used descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive research uses quantitative methods to describe what is, describing, recording, analysing and interpreting conditions that exist. It involves some type of comparison or contrast and attempts to discover relationships between existing non-manipulated variables [2].

In this case, the study focuses on determining whether the two variables-level of exposure to queer literature and level of gender sensitivity-are correlated.

Participants/Respondents

The research respondents are the senior high school students from Accountancy and Business Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strands of Laguna Polytechnic University-Siniloan Campus and Colegio de Sta. Isabel Laguna Inc. The researchers utilized the stratified sampling technique to ensure a balanced representation from all the subgroups. Each strand has 20 total number of respondents. The overall number of participants is 60.

Instrumentation

The research instrument in the form of a survey questionnaire was conceptualized with all the researchers contributing their ideas through an online platform. They divided the questionnaire into three parts: Part I consists of the profile of the respondents; Part II is the level of exposure to queer literature, and; Part III emphasizes the level of gender sensitivity. Both of the two latter parts can

be answered using the scale (5) Always, (4) Often, (3) Sometimes, (2) Seldom, (1) Never.

Afterwards, the instrument was submitted to the respective research adviser who validated the instrument ready for distribution.

Furthermore, to modify the process of data collection, the researchers opted to encode the questionnaire to Google Form which is an online software for a faster survey administration.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher conducted a survey questionnaire as an instrument by distributing online structured questionnaires to the target senior high school students. Several social media platforms were used to gather data. Online survey approach is far more significant than the use of interviews or focus groups because it is faster and economical. As a result, the researchers had more adequate time to gather data for the research. Moreover, an online survey is preferred by most of the students nowadays since numerous studies have proven that they are more into different social media platforms than the conventional way of data gathering. Therefore, the preferred method of data collection also ensured that there was an equal representation of the target population, specifically from ABM, HUMSS and STEM strand of the senior high students.

Ethical Consideration

With respect to the privacy and anonymity of the participants, they are given an informed consent with detailed statements assuring that the data that will be gathered will be treated with confidentiality, as stipulated in Republic Act. No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Aside from that, their participation in the study was voluntary.

Furthermore, the study strictly adheres to the Republic Act No. 8293, also known as the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines. It has become evident in the proper citation of the sources

in avoidance of committing plagiarism and in the acknowledgment of other researches.

Data Analysis

The data was reviewed, coded, and inputted in Excel functions. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to obtain the results. In support of this, the profile of the respondents was measured and analysed by finding its frequency, percentage, and rank of the data. On the other hand, in identifying the level of exposure to queer literature and gender sensitivity of the participants, weighted mean and verbal interpretation were calculated. Their value was interpreted as follows: 1.00-1.80 general weighted mean means very low level of exposure or gender sensitivity; 1.81-2.60 means low level; 2.61-3.40 means moderate level; 3.41-4.20 means high level, and; 4.21-5.00 means very high level of exposure and gender sensitivity.

In addition to this, to ascertain the relationship between the primary variables: exposure to queer literature and gender sensitivity, Pearson's *r* was employed as the statistical tool. Also, to detect correlations between dependent and independent variables, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were used. *P* value < 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Shown in this section are the interpretation, implication, and discussion of the study variable by variable to have a comprehensive glimpse of the results.

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents along with its sub-variables namely age, grade level, and strand. With regards to age, 53.33% of the total sample is aged 18 which makes it the highest and most frequent among the other indicators. Meanwhile, the lowest number of samples comes from aged 20 garnering 1.67% of the total sample. When it comes to the grade level, 75% is Grade 11 while 25% is Grade 12. Moreover, since the strata is the strand which is composed of three subgroups,

its distribution is equal.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Age			
16	7	11.67%	3
17	15	25.00%	2
18	32	53.33%	1
19	5	8.33%	4
20	1	1.67%	5
Total	60	100%	
Grade Level			
11	15	25.00%	2
12	45	75.00%	1
Total	60	100%	
Strand			
HUMSS	20	33.33%	2
ABM	20	33.33%	2
STEM	20	33.33%	2
Total	60	100%	

Level of Exposure to Queer Literature

Evident in Table 2 is the level of exposure to queer literature, with statement 5 leading the ranking. According to the result, the respondents often saw tweets and posts about same-sex relationships in different social media platforms. Moreover, the respondents never have a family member who reads queer literature with them. Overall, with a weighted mean of 2.62, the senior high school students are moderately exposed to queer literature.

Table 2. Students' Level of Exposure to Queer Literature

Variables	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Q1	2.85	Moderate

Q2	2.32	Low
Q3	2.67	Moderate
Q4	3.25	Moderate
Q5	3.67	High
Q6	2.82	Moderate
Q7	2.83	Moderate
Q8	2.53	Low
Q9	2.62	Moderate
Q10	2.17	Low
Q11	2.20	Low
Q12	2.50	Low
Q13	1.70	Very Low
Average	2.62	Moderate

Level of Gender Sensitivity

As shown in Table 3 that indicates the students' level of gender sensitivity, the respondents often believe that all should have equal rights and treatment regardless of the gender and sexual orientation. Hence, the respondents sometimes feel thrilled whenever seeing two people of the same sex holding hands or displaying affection. Overall, the senior high school students are highly gender sensitive with a weighted mean of 3.51.

Table 3. Students' Level of Gender Sensitivity

Variables	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Q1	3.58	High
Q2	3.62	High
Q3	2.72	Moderate
Q4	3.75	High
Q5	4.18	High
Q6	3.50	High
Q7	3.48	High
Q8	3.60	High
Q9	3.57	High
Q10	3.00	Moderate
Q11	3.58	High
Q12	3.72	High
Q13	3.33	Moderate
Average	3.51	High

Relationship between the Profile and the Level of Exposure to Queer Literature

The primary objective of this analysis stage is to determine the most significant variables with the greatest effect on the level of exposure of the senior high school students. Table 4 provides the correlation analysis outputs. The results are; there is a very low positive correlation in Strand with 0.09, slight negative correlation in Age with -0.22, and a very low negative correlation in Grade Level with -0.03. It can be interpreted that there is a significant negative relationship between age and the level of exposure to queer literature. Likewise, there is no significant relationship between the grade level and the level of exposure to queer literature. Also, based on the findings, it turns out that there is a weak significant relationship between the strand of the senior high school students and the level of exposure to queer literature. This implies that strand is a factor in the students' level of exposure to such literature. In other words, there is a specific strand that encourages the intensified utilization of the said literature. However, since one limitation of the study is the low sample size, it has become impossible to measure the difference. Therefore, the researchers were not able to determine which strand exposes the students to queer literature the most.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Results for the Level of Exposure of the Senior High School Students

	Age	Grade Level	Strand
Level of Exposure	-0.22	-0.03	0.09

Relationship between the Profile and the Level of Gender Sensitivity

In this part, the objective of this analysis stage is to determine the most significant variables with the greatest effect on the level of gender sensitivity of

the senior high school students. Table 5 provides the correlation analysis outputs. The results are; there is a very low positive correlation in Strand with 0.09, slight negative correlation in Age with -0.21, and very low negative correlation in Grade Level with -0.01. It can be interpreted that there is a significant relationship between the strand of the senior high school students and their level of gender sensitivity. This implies that strand is a factor that affects the gender sensitivity among the students. Also, there is a significant negative relationship between age and the level of gender sensitivity. Meanwhile, there is no significant relationship between the gender and the level of gender sensitivity.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Results for the Level of Gender Sensitivity of the Senior High School Students

	Age	Grade Level	Strand
Level of Gender Sensitivity	-0.21	-0.01	0.24

Relationship between the Level of Exposure to Queer Literature and the Level of Gender Sensitivity

This part discusses the correlation analysis outputs for the level of exposure to queer literature and the level of gender sensitivity which is the primary objective of this study. The result was 1.00 which means that there is a perfect correlation. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a strong significant relationship between the level of exposure to queer literature and level of gender sensitivity of the senior high school students. This implies that the exposure to queer literature plays a big role in the students' level of gender sensitivity. In other words, the more that the students become exposed to the said literature, the more that they become gender-sensitive.

These findings are somewhat agreed upon by a study which stated that exploring concepts and gender-related experiences will all be important in the development of gender sensitive care [3]. In support of this statement, a researcher mentioned in her study that the places where gender and sexual identities are developed are schools [4]. This is the reason why it becomes imperative for teachers and school administrators to challenge the unwritten curriculum of schools that normalize homophobic patterns, in support of a healthy development, and to address anti- gay biases that bring about elevated degrees of truancy, dropouts, and worst, suicide.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Results for the Level of Exposure to Queer Literature and the Level of Gender Sensitivity

	Level of Exposure
Level of Gender Sensitivity	1.00

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting gender sensitivity is indeed a challenge for the curriculum implementers that causes gender bias among the context used in general. The analysis inferred that the respondents' profile has no significant relationship to the gender sensitivity and the level of exposure to the queer literature except for the profile in terms of strand which resulted in a low positive correlation. Moreover, the researcher cannot find out which specific strand it was due to the sampling size that cannot be represented as a whole. On top of that, this study inferred that there is a strong significant relationship between the level of exposure to queer literature and the level of gender sensitivity of the senior high school students which implies that the exposure to queer literature plays a big role in promoting gender sensitivity among the students.

Therefore, the researchers recommend that: students read more queer literature to improve their



gender sensitivity; teachers gather queer stories together with its authors and have them as subject of readings, and; curriculum implementers include queer literatures to the required readings in literature subjects of the senior high school.

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