

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF BOYS' LOVE FILMS ON GENERATION Z'S PERSPECTIVE REGARDING LGBT (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER)

Iis Juniati

Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya
iisjuniati12345@gmail.com

Dinda Citra Dewi

Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya
dewidindac@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Boys' Love (BL) films serve as an effective medium for increasing tolerance and understanding towards the LGBT community. The current easy access through various digital media platforms is a supporting factor. The proliferation of BL content films has now "influenced" Generation Z, changing their perspective on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) individuals. In Indonesia, given the socio-cultural context, many fans of BL films view them merely as a form of entertainment with no intention of openly supporting the LGBT community's existence. Interestingly, continuous consumption of BL content can lead to a shift in one's viewpoint. Generation Z's pro and contra perspectives pose a dilemma in society. While LGBT is still considered contrary to norms by most of the global community, tolerance for LGBT individuals is now emerging from Generation Z. The background for Generation Z's acceptance of LGBT stems from technological advancements and the effects of dissemination through social media. The authors will examine this phenomenon using critical discourse analysis and conduct interviews with Generation Z fans of Boys' Love films.

Keywords: *LGBT, Generation Z, Perspective, Pro, Contra*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) is a very common and sensitive topic in society today. Some argue that LGBT is a human right that must be respected, while others view it as a social deviation that contradicts norms, ethics, religion, and culture (Wahyuni, 2022). The LGBT issue continues to be a polemic due to significant pro and contra views. The Indonesian government's policies also tend to regulate LGBT strictly, creating tension between traditional views and individual rights. The presence of LGBT individuals has become a widely discussed issue in Indonesian society with the rampant promotion or advertisements of LGBT on social media. They strive for universal acceptance from the global community. Some countries also conduct LGBT rights campaigns framed as part of the internationally recognized human rights struggle (Putri, 2022).

Technology plays a significant role in the current development of LGBT issues. Many shows subtly reference LGBT elements without viewers' awareness, and even when viewers

realize they are consuming LGBT-related content, they find it difficult to stop. One of the researchers' references for this study is the emergence of popular Boys' Love films that are widely consumed by young people today. Many young people have begun to tolerate and view LGBT as a human right for all.

In a world where entertainment and technology have the power to shape and change perspectives and challenge societal norms, the popularity of Boys' Love films has skyrocketed daily. Some young people, especially Generation Z, hold diverse perspectives on Boys' Love (BL), ranging from acceptance to rejection. However, most Generation Z individuals are more open and accepting of any content containing LGBT themes. They view BL as entertainment, allowing them to explore romantic relationships different from social norms, and generally, fans of Boys' Love films are women. With the development of Boys' Love films, society sees BL not just as entertainment but as a platform for conversation about LGBT issues by portraying the emotional and romantic journeys of its characters, which in turn fosters public empathy to understand and accept LGBT as a human right. Boys' Love films challenge stereotypes, break boundaries, and spark discussions about LGBT relationships and experiences, and even today, many young people openly acknowledge their sexual identity to the public (Chan, 2023).

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

1. What is Generation Z's perception of LGBT representation in Boys' Love films?
2. How do Boys' Love films influence Generation Z's attitudes and understanding of LGBT issues?

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

The aim of this article is to understand Generation Z's views on topics perceived as conflicting with societal norms. The focus on LGBT issues was chosen by the researchers due to the proliferation of entertainment content, particularly Boys' Love films, in current media. Therefore, the following are the specific aims and objectives of this research:

- a. To assess the extent of Generation Z's interest in LGBT content, especially within Indonesia.
- b. To investigate the underlying reasons for Generation Z's current acceptance of LGBT phenomena.
- c. To analyze the role of technology and social media in the dissemination of Boys' Love films and their impact on Generation Z's engagement with this content.
- d. To ascertain the perspectives of Generation Z Boys' Love film enthusiasts regarding shifts in their views and the emergence of their tolerance towards LGBT individuals.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative method and a case study approach. The research subjects were 5 Generation Z respondents (aged 17-26) who actively watch Boys' Love films. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation. The analyzed

data was compiled using critical discourse analysis techniques to identify the perceptions and influence of Boys' Love content on views regarding LGBT.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Boys' Love Films

Boys' Love (BL) films are films or series that depict romantic stories between two men and have become a popular phenomenon among the public and young people today, especially in Indonesia. Moreover, access to watch them is very easy; BL films are readily accessible, allowing Generation Z to watch them openly, thus contributing to a more inclusive shift in attitudes towards LGBT issues. This film genre not only offers entertainment but also serves as a learning medium that broadens understanding of the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. Through various digital platforms, BL films gain public attention.

Furthermore, in general public opinion, the BL genre also has its pros and cons for most people. The presence of these films brings forth various pro-views, especially in Indonesia. Boys' Love films act as an effective educational and entertainment medium in broadening audience understanding. BL films also help reduce stereotypes and discrimination by portraying same-sex love stories full of empathy and social realities, such as the challenges of social acceptance and stigma faced by the LGBT community. However, from a contra perspective, BL films also receive criticism and challenges. Many people view films of this genre as conflicting with prevailing religious values and social norms in Indonesia. There are concerns that BL films are fictional and sometimes difficult to separate from reality, potentially causing confusion or misunderstanding about same-sex relationships (Beno et al., 2022). In the real world, Boys' Love films highlight the tension between artistic appreciation and social pressure.

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender)

LGBT is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, used to describe a group of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Bisexual individuals are those attracted to more than one gender, and transgender individuals are those whose identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. In a socio-cultural context, the existence of LGBT remains a controversial issue, especially in countries with conservative social and religious norms like Indonesia. Some view LGBT as a social deviation that contradicts ethical and religious values, while others see it as part of human rights that must be respected and protected.

Government policies tend to regulate LGBT strictly, creating tension between individual rights and prevailing social norms. On the other hand, the development of technology and digital media provides a space for the LGBT community to express themselves and advocate for their rights, as well as foster awareness and acceptance among the younger generation through various educational and entertainment content, such as Boys' Love films, which are increasingly popular among young people today, especially among

Generation Z. BL storylines often focus on themes that are relatable and emotionally resonant for teenagers. These stories frequently depict strong emotional bonds between male characters, and the exploration of their relationships can be appealing to teenagers navigating their own relationships during their formative years.

Generation Z's Perspective on Boys' Love (BL) Films

Boys' Love films also serve as an effective means to enhance understanding and tolerance for the LGBT community. Through digital media platforms with easier access, BL films can be watched openly by anyone. This provides an opportunity for the public, especially the younger generation, to get to know and understand issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity more broadly (Wahyuni, 2022). The history of LGBT-themed films in Indonesia itself dates back a long time. The first film to raise this theme was *Beauty Palace*, released in 1988, starring Nurul Arifin, Mathias Muchus, and Joyce Erna. Then in 2003, Nia Dinata made a breakthrough by releasing the film *Arisan!*, which openly explored homosexual narratives and even used the word "gay" in its dialogue. This film became a significant milestone in Indonesian cinema due to its courage in addressing previously taboo issues.

However, the socio-cultural context of Indonesia, which remains highly heteronormative and where the majority of the population adheres to religions that reject the existence of LGBT, leads many Boys' Love fans to not openly support the existence of LGBT. They tend to view LGBT as something incompatible with Indonesia's social and religious conditions, even though they can still enjoy the BL genre as mere entertainment. Despite Boys' Love films featuring same-sex relationships, many fans in Indonesia enjoy this genre without directly supporting the existence of LGBT individuals openly. Interestingly, the continuous consumption of BL films can change perceptions and increase tolerance towards the LGBT community or homosexuality, especially among fans, the majority of whom are Generation Z. However, this positive perception is not without the fact that some fans face strong social stigma and choose not to be open about their interest in BL films.

Disparity Between Boys' Love Content Consumption and Real Support

There's a clear disparity between what is consumed and what is vocalized. Often, fans of Boys' Love films only intend to view the content as entertainment without any intention of supporting the LGBT community. The phenomenon of "enjoying without supporting" frequently occurs among Generation Z fans of Boys' Love films. This disparity arises due to Indonesia's still heteronormative and conservative views. There's a reluctance for individuals to openly express their support due to the fear of being judged and ostracized, leading Generation Z individuals to generally enjoy Boys' Love content privately because of internal conflicts that arise. The potential for a shift in attitude is highly likely; empathy and tolerance will grow due to continuous exposure. Real support will materialize as understanding of Boys' Love content and LGBT deepens.

Beyond entertainment, Boys' Love films function as a safe space to recognize and validate feelings that might not yet be understood. In the context of a predominantly heteronormative society like Indonesia, where discussions about homosexuality are often avoided, Boys' Love content provides a representation that might be the only source of validation they find. Generation Z fans of Boys' Love content can, anonymously or within online communities, explore their feelings without fear of being judged and ostracized. Continuous exposure to positive and diverse portrayals in Boys' Love content can strengthen the sense of self-acceptance for individuals who are grappling with their identity. When they see characters in Boys' Love content find love, support, and happiness, it can foster hope and alleviate feelings of loneliness. Boys' Love content does not directly alter a person's sexual orientation; rather, it facilitates the process of self-discovery. Thus, although consumed for entertainment, Boys' Love content indirectly acts as a catalyst for the process of sexual identity formation and acceptance for Generation Z who are in the process of exploration.

Accessibility of LGBT Content on Digital Platforms

The easy access to Boys' Love films on digital platforms has dramatically transformed how information about LGBT issues and communities is disseminated and understood by Generation Z. Films in the Boys' Love genre and other similar content were previously difficult to find. Currently, the production of content and films is widely available and easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection. This removes geographical barriers and filters of a country's values and norms, allowing viewers from various parts of the world, including Indonesia with its conservative context, to still access them. This accessibility facilitates the dissemination of information and influences understanding. Through the storylines, characters, and dynamics of same-sex relationships presented in BL, viewers are indirectly exposed to the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity. These Boys' Love films often highlight the emotional, social, or even discriminatory challenges faced by the LGBT community, opening viewers' eyes to realities they may not have encountered before and evoking empathy.

Beyond streaming platforms, social media plays a vital role in discussions and the dissemination of views on Boys' Love and LGBT. Active Boys' Love fan communities on Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and other online forums serve as platforms where fans can share reviews, theories, fan art, and even personal experiences. These discussions often extend beyond mere plot lines to deeper topics concerning self-acceptance, tolerance, and LGBT rights. Social media also enables the spread of short videos, memes, and quotes that go viral from Boys' Love films. Interactions on social media can reinforce understanding, challenge prejudices, and inspire some individuals to more vocally support the LGBT community, even if initially within the online sphere through social media platforms.

Social media algorithms also play a role in shaping Generation Z's online experience, especially concerning their consumption of Boys' Love (BL) content. The mechanism of

personalized recommendations and the creation of "echo chambers" or bubbles, where individuals primarily see and interact with those who share similar interests, significantly contribute to this. Personalizing recommendations is a core aspect of algorithmic influence. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram continuously analyze and interpret user behavior, including videos watched, accounts followed, comments liked, and viewing duration. When a Gen Z individual begins to show interest in a few Boys' Love videos, the algorithm will continually serve up more similar content. This creates a content loop: the more Boys' Love content they watch, the more they are recommended, making it difficult for them to switch to other types of content, as if the platform is "forcing" them to keep watching.

The "echo chamber" phenomenon further intensifies this engagement. Algorithms tend to connect users with individuals or communities who share similar interests. For Boys' Love content enthusiasts, this means they will consistently be exposed to similar continuous content, sharing enthusiasm, engaging in discussions, idolizing characters, and exchanging fan theories. This environment fosters social validation and a sense of belonging, where their interest is not only accepted but also celebrated. Within these echo chambers, alternative views or critiques of Boys' Love content may be less visible, thereby reinforcing positive perceptions and encouraging deeper, more frequent consumption without much interference from different perspectives. Consequently, Generation Z can find themselves "trapped" in a cycle of Boys' Love content consumption. The ease of access, spurred by algorithmic recommendations, coupled with community reinforcement within echo chambers, makes Boys' Love content a crucial part of their digital routine or screen time. This can become quite intense, where time spent on Boys' Love content might displace other more positive activities, potentially raising concerns about digital "addiction" and the balance in media consumption.

CONCLUSION

The LGBT issue remains a sensitive and controversial topic in Indonesian society, where there is tension between traditional views that consider LGBT a social deviation and modern perspectives that see it as part of human rights. Strict government policies and conservative social norms reinforce resistance to widespread LGBT acceptance. However, the development of technology and digital media, particularly through Boys' Love films popular among the younger generation, has opened new avenues for discussion and more inclusive understanding. BL films not only serve as entertainment but also as a medium that portrays the emotional and romantic journeys of LGBT characters, thereby fostering empathy and tolerance towards the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. Generation Z, as the group that consumes Boys' Love films the most, shows a more open and accepting attitude towards LGBT issues than previous generations. They view BL as a means to explore romantic relationships that differ from conventional social norms and as a forum for discussion that challenges stereotypes and social boundaries. This phenomenon also triggers a shift in attitudes among young people, where more

individuals are daring to openly acknowledge their sexual identity. Thus, Boys' Love films play a crucial role in changing social paradigms and strengthening the fight for LGBT rights in Indonesia, although the challenges of conservative norms and policies still persist.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beno, J., Silen, A. ., & Yanti, M. (2022). No 主観的健康感を中心とした在宅高齢者における健康関連指標に関する共分散構造分析Title. *Braz Dent J.*, 33(1), 1–12.
- Chan, J. (2023). Apa Pendorong Melonjaknya Popularitas Drama BL: Pergeseran Budaya atau Tren yang Berlalu? Observatory. [https://observatory-sg.translate.google/what-drives-the-soaring-popularity-of-bl-dramas-a-cultural-shift-or-a-passing-trend/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=id&_x_tr_hl=id&_x_tr_pto=sge#:~:text=Menavigasi Stereotip: Lanskap Kompleks Drama BL&text=Generasi muda%2C khus](https://observatory-sg.translate.google/what-drives-the-soaring-popularity-of-bl-dramas-a-cultural-shift-or-a-passing-trend/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=id&_x_tr_hl=id&_x_tr_pto=sge#:~:text=Menavigasi%20Stereotip%20Lanskap%20Kompleks%20Drama%20BL&text=Generasi%20muda%20C%20khusus%20tentang%20LGBT%20di%20Indonesia)
- Putri, D. W. D. (2022). LGBT dalam Kajian Hak Asasi Manusia di Indonesia. *Ikatan Penulis Mahasiswa Hukum Indonesia Law Journal*, 2(1), 88–100. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ipmhi.v2i1.53739>
- Wahyuni, W. (2022). Aturan Hukum LGBT di Indonesia, Bisa Dipidana? Hukumonline.Com. <https://www.hukumonline.com/berita/a/aturan-hukum-lgbt-di-indonesia--bisa-dipidana-lt627b5coe71ba7/>