Research Article

Beyond the Binary: Queer Media Engagement's Role in Shaping LGB Youth Identity Formation

Rochelle Margaux I. Espina[1], Kimberly B. Cai[1], Sam Wei Quan P. Ke[1], Daiseree A. Marco[1], Myla M. Arcinas[2*]

[1]Humanities and Social Sciences Department Senior High School Division, De La Salle University Manila
[2]Department of Sociology and Behavioral Sciences, De La Salle University Manila, 1004, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study examined the associations between queer media engagement, demographic factors, and social identity formation among Filipino lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) undergraduate students (N = 52, aged 18-24) using correlational analysis. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) revealed a significant positive association between monthly family income and queer media engagement (ρ= 0.28, $p < .05$), suggesting socioeconomic factors influence access to identity-affirming media resources. Weekly hours of media consumption demonstrated the strongest relationship with overall engagement level ($\rho = 0.43$, $p < .01$), validating the multidimensional nature of queer media engagement. Contrary to prevalent assumptions, findings showed a non-significant negative correlation between queer media engagement and identity formation ($\rho = -0.16$, $p > .05$), suggesting a more complex relationship than previously theorized. Analysis of identity formation components revealed stronger development in cognitive aspects (median = 4.0) than behavioral components (median = 2.0-2.5), aligning with established models of LGBTQIA+ identity development where internal affirmation typically precedes external expression. These findings challenge simplistic assumptions about media influence and suggest a nuanced dynamic where socioeconomic factors, developmental stages, and cultural context significantly shape how Filipino LGB youth engage with queer media and integrate these experiences into their identity formation processes. This underscores the importance of addressing potential digital access disparities and developing critical media literacy alongside increased representation.

Introduction

Media plays a pivotal role in contemporary society, serving as a powerful mechanism for shaping public perceptions, facilitating cultural exchange, and catalyzing social change. This influence is particularly significant in the representation of marginalized communities, where media portrayals can either challenge existing prejudices or reinforce harmful stereotypes. The representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals in media constitutes a critical domain for examining these dynamics, especially as it relates to identity formation among young adults who are navigating their own sexual orientation and gender identity.

Over the past two decades, LGBTQIA+ representation has evolved across global media platforms. The early 2000s oversaw a significant increase in the quantity and quality of LGBTQIA+ characters in visual media, particularly regarding bisexual and transgender representation (Townsend et al., 2022). Between 2016 and 2017, substantial improvements occurred in the characterization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in television, moving beyond tokenistic representations toward more nuanced portrayals. Sapphic characters have become more predominant on broadcast television in 2021-2022, accompanied by modest increases in bisexual visibility. Major streaming platforms, including Amazon, HBO Max, Netflix, and Hulu have significantly expanded their LGBTQIA+ content, featuring 245 regular queer characters across original scripted series—representing a 150% increase from previous years (Townsend et al., 2022).

In the Philippine context, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns catalyzed a distinctive surge in LGBTQIA+ media consumption, particularly through the popularization of Boys' Love (BL) content (Dela Cruz, 2022; Javier & Jubay, 2021). The widespread engagement with Thai BL series during this period created opportunities for local content production, leading to the development of the first Pinoy BL series by an independent studio (Dela Cruz, 2022). This genre has continued to gain popularity across the Philippines and internationally, representing a significant expansion of queer media accessible to Filipino audiences (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017).

The relationship between media consumption and identity formation is particularly salient for young adults, who utilize social media extensively for connection and knowledge acquisition. As Berger et al. (2022) note, youths and adolescents demonstrate heightened susceptibility to social media engagement, making them the demographic with the most prevalent exposure to queer media content. Both LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ young people employ social media to establish peer connections, which subsequently influences identity development, social support networks, and overall mental health and well-being.

This study is theoretically grounded in Queer Theory, which provides a critical framework for examining how heteronormative structures influence social identity formation and how media representations can either challenge or reinforce these structures (Rumens, 2016). Queer Theory posits that identities are not fixed but fluid, socially constructed, and continuously negotiated through various social interactions and cultural representations (Riggs & Trehane, 2017). Through this theoretical lens, we examine how Filipino LGB youth interact with and interpret queer media content, and how these interactions contribute to their understanding of their own identities within the context of Filipino society.

Additionally, this research integrates the Cultivation Theory (Vinney, 2024a) and Uses

and Gratifications Theory (Vinney, 2024b) to comprehend the relationship between media consumption and identity formation. Cultivation Theory explains how consistent exposure to specific media representations shapes individuals' perceptions of reality. In contrast, Uses and Gratifications Theory explores how individuals actively seek out particular media content to fulfill specific needs, including identity reinforcement and social connection.

Despite the growing body of research on LGBTQIA+ media representation globally, there remains a significant gap in understanding how this content specifically influences identity formation among Filipino lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth. The unique cultural context of the Philippines, with its blend of traditional Catholic values and increasingly globalized media consumption, creates a distinctive environment for examining these relationships. Furthermore, the potential impact of socioeconomic factors on access to queer media content represents an understudied dimension that may significantly influence identity development opportunities.

This research aims to address these gaps by investigating the correlation between LGB youth's (18-24 years old) queer media engagement and social identity formation. By examining the relationships between demographic factors (age and income), weekly hours spent on media consumption, and identity development, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how Filipino LGB youth navigate their identities in an increasingly media-saturated environment. The findings can contribute valuable insights for media creators, educators, and community organizations seeking to support healthy identity development among LGBTQIA+ youth in the Philippines and similar cultural contexts.

Research Objectives

This study examines the complex relationships between queer media engagement, demographic factors, and identity

formation among Filipino lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) undergraduate students. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Examine the demographic profile of Filipino LGB undergraduate students aged 18-24 years, with particular attention to age distribution, family income, and weekly hours spent to queer media consumptions;
2. Assess their level of queer media engagement;
3. Assess their level of identity formation;
4. Determine the correlation between level of engagement with queer media content and their demographic factors (age and family income) and weekly hours spent with queer media content;
5. Determine association between participants' level of engagement with queer media content and their social identity formation processes.

Methodology
Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between queer media consumption and social identity formation among Filipino lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) young adults. The researchers selected a correlational research design to assess (1) the relationship between demographic factors (age and family income) and weekly hours spent to queer media consumption and their level of queer social engagement, and (2) the connection between their level engagement to queer social media consumption and identity formation. This design was appropriate for investigating the existence and strength of relationships between variables without manipulating them, allowing for examining naturally occurring patterns in the target population.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of Filipino LGB educated youth aged 18-24 years old. Using purposive sampling, 52 participants were

recruited based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) self-identification as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, (2) age between 18-24 years, (3) consuming queer media content, and (4) officially enrolled as an undergraduate student in a university based in the Philippines. Recruitment of participants occurred through various social media platforms and physical advertising.

Instrumentation

Data collection was conducted using a self-administered survey created on Google Forms. The survey consisted of 27 questions organized into four sections: pre-qualifier screening, demographic factors, queer media consumption, and impact on identity formation.

The measurement of queer media consumption and identity formation was operationalized using an adapted version of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS). The instrument employed a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) to assess the frequency of consumption, level of engagement, and perceived impact of queer media on identity formation.

The queer media consumption section evaluated 15 distinct consumption behaviors, including passive consumption (e.g., watching LGBTQIA+-themed videos) and active engagement (e.g., participating in online LGBTQIA+ communities). The identity formation section measured 20 individual components across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

The instrument demonstrated strong psychometric properties in the current study, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83 for the queer media consumption scale and 0.87 for the identity formation scale, indicating good internal consistency. These reliability values aligned with previous LGBIS research, which reported alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.91 across subscales (Kemer et al., 2016).

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, all respondents were required to complete an informed consent form before accessing the survey, detailing the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw, data confidentiality measures, and potential psychological risks.

The survey was distributed online between January and February 2025, with data collection occurring over six weeks. To reach diverse segments of the target population, online recruitment (through LGBTQIA+ organizations' social media channels and general student networks) and in-person promotion at university campuses were employed. Participants completed the survey independently through the Google Forms platform, with an average completion time of 5 minutes.

To ensure data quality, the researchers implemented response validation within the survey design to identify inconsistent or incomplete responses. All data were securely stored in a password-protected database with personally identifiable information separated from response data to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27.0, with a significance level set at $p < .05$ for all tests. Data were screened for outliers, normality, and missing values. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, medians, and ranges) were calculated to characterize the sample demographics, queer media consumption patterns, and identity formation levels. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was used to examine the relationships between demographic factors (age and income) and queer media consumption, as well as between queer media consumption and identity formation. This non-parametric measure was selected due to the ordinal nature of the data and non-normal distribution patterns. Median values were calculated for individual items and

composite scores on the queer media consumption and identity formation scales to identify central tendencies while accommodating the non-normal distribution of responses.

Methodological Limitations

The study employed a purposive sampling approach, limiting the extent of generalizability. Participants were selected strictly based on specific characteristics, which may not fully represent a broader population of Filipino LGB youth. Demographic homogeneity was also exhibited in the sample, particularly in the age and monthly family income factors, further reducing the diversity and variation in the study's findings.

RESULTS
Profile of the Respondents

The demographic analysis of the respondents (N = 52) reveals important insights about the sample population of LGB individuals in this study (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 52)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Range
Ages (years)			19.92	20.00	18-24
18-19	24	46.2%			
20-21	19	36.5%			
22-24	9	17.3%			
Family Monthly Income (PHP)			184,942.31	80,000.00	3,000-2,000,000
Below 50,000	10	19.2%			
50,000-100,000	24	46.2%			
100,001-200,000	5	9.6%			
200,001-500,000	11	21.2%			
Above 500,00	2	3.8%			
Weekly Queer Media Consumption (hours)			3.23	4.00	1-6
Less than 5	43	82.7%			
5-10	9	17.3%			

Note: Data were collected through purposive sampling of LGB individuals. Age was measured in years. Income represents the reported monthly family income in Philippine Pesos (PHP). Weekly queer media consumption was self-reported by respondents.

The monthly family income data showcase considerable economic diversity among participants. The distribution is characterized by a wide range (PHP 3,000-2,000,000) and a notable difference between the mean (PHP 184,942.31) and median (PHP 80,000.00) values. The positive skew indicates that while most respondents come from middle-income backgrounds, a few participants with substantially higher incomes have pulled the mean upward. A significant portion of respondents (46.2%) report monthly family incomes between PHP 50,000-100,000, representing middle-income households in the Filipino context. The remaining respondents are distributed across lower income brackets (19.2% below PHP 50,000) and higher income brackets (34.6% above PHP 100,000), representing different socio-economic segments of the Filipino LGB community.

Regarding weekly hours spent on queer media consumption, respondents showed a moderate level of engagement, with an average of 3.23 hours per week (Mdn = 4.00) devoted to consuming queer media content. Most of the respondents (82.7%) consume less than 5 hours of queer media weekly, while a smaller segment (17.3%) engages with such content for 5-10 hours per week. Notably, no respondents reported consuming more than 10 hours of queer media weekly, suggesting that while queer content represents a consistent component of participants' media diet, it does not dominate their overall media consumption.

This demographic profile provides essential context for interpreting the relationship between personal characteristics, media consumption patterns, and identity formation, which are explored in the subsequent research questions. The predominantly young, college-aged sample with varying socioeconomic backgrounds offers insights into how queer identity development intersects with media engagement during a formative life stage. The moderate number of hours of queer media consumption indicates that such content plays a consistent but not overwhelming role in participants' lives, which may reflect the limited availability of relevant content, competing demands on time, or selective consumption patterns among Filipino LGB youth.

Engagement with Queer Media Content

Table 2 presents a detailed statistical analysis of their level of engagement with queer media content among LGB respondents (N = 52), measured across 15 distinct consumption behaviors using a 6-point Likert scale.

Several content consumption behaviors demonstrated consistent moderate engagement (Mdn = 3.0), including following

LGBTQIA+ content creators, watching queer media (e.g., videos, shows, movies), seeking queer news, following related hashtags, engaging with educational content about LGBTQIA+ history, searching for representation of specific identities, and consuming content about LGBTQIA+ experiences in the Philippines.

In contrast, interactive and participatory behaviors exhibited notably lower median scores. Participating in online LGBTQIA+ communities, sharing queer content on personal social media, commenting on LGBTQIA+ content online, and listening to audio content by LGBTQIA+ creators all received a median score of 2.0, indicating these behaviors occur less frequently among respondents.

Intermediate engagement levels (Mdn = 2.5) were observed for reading LGBTQIA+-themed written content (e.g., articles, blogs, stories), using social media to connect with other LGBTQIA+ individuals, and following LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations.

The statistical distribution of scores demonstrates a clear pattern of passive consumption behaviors that predominates over active engagement or content creation. The range values (1-6 for most items) While some respondents report high engagement across all behaviors, the central tendency reflects a more moderate engagement pattern for the sample.

The overall level of engagement to queer social media consumption score (Mdn = 2.90) positions the typical respondent between "Rarely" and "Sometimes" on the frequency scale, with the wide range (2.00-12.30), suggesting substantial individual variation in engagement patterns. This statistical evidence supports the conclusion that respondents engage with queer media content selectively and moderately, with a stronger preference for consumption over participation.

Table 2. Queer Social Media Engagement Items and Scores

Social Media Engagement	Median
I consume content that portrays LGBTQIA+ relationships	3.5
I follow LGBTQIA+ content creators on social media	3.0
I watch LGBTQIA+-themed videos, shows, or movies online	3.0
I seek out LGBTQIA+ news and current events	3.0
I follow hashtags related to LGBTQIA+ topics	3.0
I engage with educational content about LGBTQIA+ history and rights	3.0
I search for a representation of my specific LGBTQIA+ identity online	3.0
I consume content about LGBTQIA+ experiences in the Philippines	3.0
I read articles, blogs, or stories with LGBTQIA+ themes	2.5
I use social media to connect with other LGBTQIA+ individuals	2.5
I follow LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations on social media	2.5
I participate in online LGBTQIA+ communities or forums	2.0
I share LGBTQIA+ content on my social media accounts	2.0
I comment on or discuss LGBTQIA+ content online	2.0
I listen to podcasts or music by LGBTQIA+ creators	2.0
Overall Median Score	**2.90**

Note: Social media consumption items were measured on a 6-point scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often, 6 = Always). The overall consumption score represents the median of all items combined. Higher scores indicate greater frequency and engagement with queer media content.

Social Identity Formation among LGB Respondents

Table 3 comprehensively analyzes the social identity formation among LGB respondents (N = 52), evaluated across 20 individual items with a 6-point Likert scale. The results highlighted trends in identity development, yielding a moderate median score of 3.38 and a range between 1.69 and 5.15.

The statistical analysis shows variability in different aspects of identity development. Cognitive and self-perception elements, like the clarity of LGB identity, pride in community membership, and understanding of societal challenges, show the most growth, with a median score of 4.0. In contrast, behavioral and community engagement aspects have lower median scores. For instance, participation in LGBTQIA+ events received the lowest median score (Mdn = 2.0), followed by having LGBTQIA+ role models or mentors (Mdn = 2.5). This suggests a gap between internal identity affirmation and external expression or community involvement.

Table 3. Social Identity Formation Items and Scores (N = 52)

Social Identity Formation Item	Median
I have a clear sense of my LGB identity.	4.0
I am proud to be a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.	4.0
I can identify with the experiences of other LGBTQIA+ people.	4.0
I am aware of the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in society.	4.0
I understand how my LGB identity intersects with my cultural background.	4.0
I feel positive about my future as an LGB individual.	4.0
I feel comfortable with my sexual orientation and/or gender identity.	3.5
I understand the historical struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community.	3.5
I consider my LGB identity an important part of who I am.	3.5
I have developed coping mechanisms for dealing with discrimination.	3.5

Social Identity Formation Item	Median
I have disclosed my identity to people who are important to me.	3.0
I seek connections with other LGBTQIA+ individuals.	3.0
I feel a sense of belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community.	3.0
I can express my authentic self in most social situations.	3.0
I actively challenge negative stereotypes about LGBTQIA+ people.	3.0
I have integrated my LGB identity with other aspects of my life.	3.0
I feel comfortable discussing LGBTQIA+ issues with others.	3.0
I advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and recognition.	3.0
I have role models or mentors who share my LGB identity.	2.5
I participate in LGBTQIA+ events or activities.	2.0
Overall Median Score	**3.38**

Note: Social identity formation items were measured on a 6-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat Disagree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly Agree). The overall identity formation score is based on the median of all items combined, where higher scores signify stronger LGB identity development and integration.

Comfort and self-disclosure scores show moderate development, with median scores ranging from 3.0 to 3.5. Comfort with one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Mdn = 3.5), disclosing identity to important others (Mdn = 3.0), and expressing an authentic self in social situations (Mdn = 3.0) indicate that individuals are still working through these aspects in their interactions.

The wide range of scores (1.69-5.15) suggests that individual experiences of identity development vary significantly, likely influenced by personal and social contexts. The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate moderate identity formation (Mdn = 3.38), with stronger cognitive awareness and self-acceptance growth than in behavioral expression and community involvement. This is consistent with models of LGBTQIA+ identity development, which suggests that internal identity components typically develop first, followed by integrating external behaviors and community connections.

Correlation Between Level of Engagement with Queer Social Media Content and Respondents Age, Income and Weekly Hours of Queer Social Medical Consumption

Table 4 presents a statistical analysis of the relationships between demographic factors and queer media consumption patterns among LGBTQIA+ respondents (N = 52). Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was employed to assess these relationships, as this non-parametric measure is appropriate for ordinal data and does not assume normal distribution. The correlation analysis reveals varying strengths of association between demographic factors and queer media consumption patterns. No statistically significant correlation was found between age and h queer media consumption ($\rho = 0.17$, $p = .226$). This suggests that within this specific age range (18-24 years), age is not correlated or associated with queer media content engagement.

Table 4: Correlation Between Level of Engagement to Queer Social Media Consumption and Respondents Age, Income and Weekly Hours of Queer Social Medical Consumption (N = 52)

Demographic Factor	Correlation with Media Consumption (ρ)	p-value	Interpretation
Age	0.17	.226	Not Significant

Demographic Factor	Correlation with Media Consumption (ρ)	p-value	Interpretation
Monthly Family Income	0.28	.043*	Significant p < .05, Weak positive
Weekly consumption hours	0.43	.002**	Significant p < .01, Moderate positive

*p < .05, **p < .01

Note: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) ranges from -1 to +1, with values closer to ±1 indicating stronger relationships. Correlation strength interpretations: < 0.1 = negligible, 0.1-0.3 = weak, 0.3-0.5 = moderate, 0.5-0.7 = strong, > 0.7 = very strong. Media consumption was measured using a composite score based on frequency and engagement with queer content.

Monthly family income showed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation with queer media consumption (ρ = 0.28, p = .043), indicating that respondents from higher-income backgrounds demonstrate modestly higher levels of queer media consumption. Although the effect size is small, this relationship is statistically meaningful and suggests that socioeconomic factors influence access to and engagement with queer media content.

The strongest relationship identified was between self-reported weekly consumption hours and the overall media consumption score (ρ = 0.43, p = .002). This moderate positive correlation was highly significant with a medium effect size, providing validation for the measurement approach and demonstrating that time invested in queer media corresponds meaningfully with deeper engagement across multiple consumption behaviors.

These findings establish that socioeconomic factors, specifically income, play a more significant role than age in predicting queer media consumption patterns among Filipino LGB youth. The relationship between income and media consumption highlights potential digital divides that may limit access to identity-affirming content for lower-income youth, with possible consequences for identity development opportunities. This underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to queer media across socioeconomic boundaries, particularly in contexts with substantial income disparities like the Philippines.

Correlation Between Queer Media Consumption and Social Identity Formation

Table 5 presents a statistical analysis of the relationship between queer media consumption and social identity formation among LGBTQIA+ respondents (N = 52). Using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ), an appropriate non-parametric measure for ordinal data, the analysis revealed a weak negative correlation between these variables (ρ = -0.16, p > .05).

Table 5: Correlation Between Queer Media Consumption and Social Identity Formation (N= 52)

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	p-value	Strength of Relationship	Effect Size
Media Consumption and Identity Formation	-0.16	.257	Weak negative	Small

*p < .05, **p < .01

Note: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) ranges from -1 to +1, with values closer to ±1 indicating stronger relationships. Correlation strength interpretations: < 0.1 = negligible, 0.1-0.3 = weak, 0.3-0.5 = moderate, 0.5-0.7 = strong, > 0.7 = very strong. Effect size categorization: Small = 0.1-0.3, Medium = 0.3-0.5, Large = > 0.5.

.

The analysis revealed no statistically significant correlation between queer media consumption and social identity formation (ρ = -0.16, p = .257). This nuanced relationship highlights the importance of considering developmental context when examining media influence. It suggests that media consumption may serve different functions at different stages of identity development, potentially being more actively sought during exploration phases than during identity synthesis. Furthermore, the quality rather than quantity of media engagement may be more relevant to identity formation outcomes.

For practitioners and policy makers, these findings indicate that simply increasing exposure to queer media may not be sufficient to support identity development. Instead, approaches that foster critical media literacy and help youth meaningfully integrate media representations into their self-understanding may be more effective. Additionally, the small effect size suggests that other factors beyond media consumption likely play more substantial roles in identity formation among Filipino LGB youth.

Discussion

This discussion synthesizes four key themes emerging from our findings: (1) demographic influences on media consumption, (2) patterns of identity development, (3) the relationship between media consumption and identity formation, and (4) implications for understanding queer youth development in the Philippine context.

Demographic Influences on Queer Social Media Engagement

Our analysis revealed several patterns in how demographic factors shape queer media engagement. Age showed a weak, non-significant relationship with queer media consumption (p = 0.17, p > 0.5), suggesting it does not substantially predict engagement among youth aged 18-24. These outcomes contrast with broader research that often

position age as a significant predictor of media engagement patterns (Berger et al., 2022). The relative developmental homogeneity of our sample likely accounts for this result, as all participants were navigating similar life transitions during emerging adulthood.

In contrast, monthly family income demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive correlation with queer media consumption (ρ = 0.28, p < .01). This supports the idea that socioeconomic disparities shape access to identity-affirming media resources, reinforcing findings by Craig et al. (2021), regarding the role of digital access in LGBTQIA+ youth well-being. Given the substantial income inequality in the Philippines, these disparities in media access could affect identity development outcomes and widen representation gaps.

The strongest relationship observed was between weekly consumption hours and overall queer social media engagement (ρ = 0.43, p < .001). This validates our engagement metric and indicates that greater time investment corresponds with deeper involvement, beyond casual browsing. These findings echo Nerlich (2022), who emphasized the significance of depth over mere exposure in fostering identity-related outcomes like self-acceptance.

The correlation between media literacy to queer media engagement and identity formation was not statistically significant. While this result does not showcase a strong direct association among variables, it does highlight the complex identity development. It suggests that numerous other factors mediate the influence of media literacy. This finding contributes to a more nuanced understanding of media engagement and identity construction.

Patterns of Identity Development

The pattern observed in our sample offers insight into the identity trajectories of Filipino LGB youth. The overall moderate level of identity formation (Mdn = 3.38) is consistent

with developmental expectations for emerging adulthood and is marked by significant individual variability (range: 1-69-5.15). Notably, cognitive dimensions—such as identity clarity, community pride, and awareness of societal challenges—were more developed (Mdn = 4.0) than behavioral expressions like event participation (Mdn = 2.0) or the prescient of LGBTQIA+ role models (Mdn = 2.5).

This distinction between internal and external aspects aligns with classic models of identity development, including those proposed by Cass (1979) and Troiden (1989), which argues that internal affirmation often precedes external expression. In the Philippine context, the gap between cognitive and behavioral domains may reflect persistent sociocultural constraints, such as the influence of Catholic values and conservative norms, which limits opportunities for visible queer engagement. Despite the rise in queer media visibility—particularly through Boys' Love Content (Dela Cruz, 2022; Javier & Jubay, 2021)—real-world support structures and public spaces for expression remain limited (Uy, 2021).

There is no statistically significant correlation between identity saturation and internalized stigma in the context of individual identity formation because they engage with queer media. This suggests that a direct relationship between variables may not exist, highlighting identity development's intricacy.

Relationship Between Queer Media Engagement and Identity Formation

One of the most intriguing findings was the non-significant negative correlation between queer media engagement and identity formation (ρ = -0.16, p > .05). Although not statistically significant, this inverse relationship contradicts the assumption that increased media exposure inherently strengthens identity development and invites several interpretations.

First, per uses and gratifications theory (Vinney, 2024b), individuals actively exploring or questioning their identity may seek more media content to support their process, while those with more consolidated identities may engage less frequently. This interpretation aligns with research by Craig et al. (2015), who found that LGBTQIA+ youth often strategically use media during critical periods of identity exploration.

Second, the relationship may be bidirectional and moderated by developmental stage. Li et al. (2023) noted that media influence varies across different phases of identity development, with greater impact during early exploration than later integration stages. Our predominantly college-aged sample likely includes individuals at various developmental stages, which may obscure straightforward correlations.

Third, quality rather than quantity of media consumption may be more relevant to identity formation. Grouchka (2021) found that the type and personal relevance of queer representations, rather than frequency of exposure, predicted positive identity outcomes among lesbian and bisexual women. Our measurement focused primarily on quantity and frequency, potentially missing qualitative dimensions of media engagement.

Finally, the correlation may reflect the specific media landscape available to Filipino LGB youth. While representation has increased (Townsend et al., 2022), portrayals may not always be nuanced or culturally relevant. Realgo et al. (2023) noted that while the Pinoy Boys' Love series has increased visibility, it sometimes perpetuates stereotypes or presents idealized narratives that may not support authentic identity development. This interpretation highlights the importance of culturally specific research rather than assuming universal media effects.

Implications for Understanding Queer Youth Development

These findings impact the understanding of how Filipino LGB youth navigate identity development in an increasingly media-rich but socially saturated environment. The moderate levels of identity formation, especially the gap between internal affirmation and external expression, suggest that media exposure alone is insufficient for full identity integration. This tension mirrors prior research (De Jesus et al., 2022) showing similar patterns among Filipino high school students engaging with queer literature.

The significant correlation between income and queer media engagement highlights potential digital divides that may exacerbate inequalities in access to affirming resources. This socioeconomic dimension of accessibility has received insufficient attention in previous research, and it also suggests that media literacy interventions should consider affordability and accessibility.

The complex, potentially negative relationship between queer media engagement and identity formation challenges the assumption that increased representation automatically strengthens identity. Instead, it suggests that understanding how young people critically engage with media content may be more important than tracking exposure. This aligns with Thomson's (2021) argument that media literacy skills are crucial for helping LGBTQIA+ youth navigate increasingly diverse but uneven representations.

Overall, Filipino LGB youth appear to negotiate their identities through strategic media use, shaped by both developmental stage and sociocultural context. Their engagement is not passive; it reflects an active balancing of self-understanding with external constraints. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of representation's role in identity development—one that goes beyond increasing visibility to also consider relevance, accessibility, and media literacy.

Practical Implications

For media creators and platform developers, these findings emphasize creating genuine content that resonates with LGBTQIA+ experiences rather than simply increasing the representation volume. The significant correlation between income and queer media engagement highlights the need to ensure that queer content remains accessible across socioeconomic boundaries in the Philippines. Digital platform developers could design applications where users can easily view queer content, learn queer history, and interact with the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, policymakers could introduce new laws or enhance existing ones to ensure that queer media can be produced without censorship. As Huang (2024) suggests, the specific portrayal of LGBTQIA+ relationships and experiences can significantly impact how audiences respond to and integrate these representations.

For educators and community organizations, these findings highlight the weak correlation between queer media engagement and identity formation, suggesting that how the youth engage and interpret media may be more important than mere exposure. LGBTQIA+ organizations can create programs to help youth critically analyze media representations and promote positive queer portrayals while mitigating the potential negative impacts of stereotypical characterization. Educators can create safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth, such as facilitating access to positive queer media representation, and emphasizing its importance. This aligns with Craig et al. (2015), who identified media literacy as a key component in fostering resilience among LGBTQIA+ youth.

The study also has implications for parents and caregivers of LGBTQIA+ youth. The finding that internal identity components develop earlier than behavioral expression suggests that the youth may be processing their identities privately even when not outwardly expressing them. Understanding this developmental pattern could help families

support youth more effectively without pressuring them toward premature outward expression. Schaefer (2023) notes that supportive environments that allow autonomous exploration of identity-related media can positively influence comfort with identity.

Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding the complex relationships between demographic factors, queer media engagement, and the social identity formation of Filipino LGB youth. The findings underscore the complexity of these relationships, challenging simplistic assumptions that increased queer media engagement straightforwardly enhances identity development.

Key results point to the importance of socioeconomic access, namely income significantly correlating with media engagement (p = 0.28, p < 0.1), highlighting disparities in access to identity-affirming resources. Additionally, the strongest predictor of media engagement was weekly time spent on queer content (p = 0.43, p < .001), suggesting that engagement depth matters more than demographic markers.

The non-significant negative correlation between queer media engagement and identity formation (ρ = -0.16, p > .05) is particularly noteworthy, as it offers a caution against overestimating the role of media in identity development. Instead, it suggests that identity formation is multifaceted, with stronger development observed in cognitive aspects of identity (internal) domains than in behavioral (external) expression. This confirms long-standing identity development models while situating them in a specific sociocultural context, where conservative norms and institutional barriers may inhibit outward identity expression.

Rather than advocating for more representation alone, the findings call for attention to media quality, cultural relevance,

and accessibility. Media can support self-understanding, but its impact depends on how it is engaged with, who it reaches, and whether it resonates with lived realities.

Through examining multiple aspects of queer media engagement, this study provides a foundation for more nuanced approaches to understanding how digital media shape identity in increasingly mediated social contexts. Future research should build upon these findings to explore the complex interplay of factors influencing media engagement patterns and identity development processes among LGB youth.

The critical relationship between queer media engagement and identity formation remains an important area for continued investigation, particularly as media landscapes evolve and diversify. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating environments that foster healthy identity development among LGB youth while addressing potential socioeconomic disparities.

References

Bates, A., Hobman, T., & Bell, B. (2020). "Let me do what I please with it... Do not decide my identity for me": LGBTQ+ youth experiences of social media in narrative identity development. Journal of Adolescent Research, 35(1), 51-83. https://doi.org/10.1177/074355841988 4700

Beltz, A. M., Loviska, A. M., & Weigard, A. (2021). Daily gender expression is associated with psychological adjustment for some people, mainly men. Scientific Reports, 11, Article 9493. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-88279-4

Berger, M. N., Taba, M., Marino, J. L., Lim, M. S. C., & Skinner, S. R. (2022). Social media use and health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth: Systematic review. Journal of

Medical Internet Research, 24(9), Article e38449. https://doi.org/10.2196/38449

Brooks, R. B. (2022, January 25). The importance of queer studies. Best Colleges. https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/what-is-queer-studies/

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. Journal of Homosexuality, 4(3), 219-235. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v04n03_01

Connelly, P. J., Azizi, Z., Alipour, P., Delles, C., Pilote, L., & Raparelli, V. (2021). The importance of gender in understanding sex differences in cardiovascular disease. Canadian Journal of Cardiology, 37(5), 699-710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjca.2021.02.005

Cook, C. (2018). A content analysis of LGBT representation on broadcast and streaming television [Honors thesis, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga]. UTC Scholar. https://scholar.utc.edu/honors-theses/133

Cook, C. C. H. (2020). The causes of human sexual orientation. Theology & Sexuality, 27(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13558358.2020.1818541

Craig, S. L., McInroy, L., McCready, L. T., & Alaggia, R. (2015). Media: A catalyst for resilience in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth. Journal of LGBT Youth, 12(3), 254–275. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1040193

Craig, S. L., Eaton, A. D., McInroy, L. B., Leung, V. W. Y., & Krishnan, S. (2021). Can social media participation enhance LGBTQ+ youth's well-being? Development of the social media benefits scale. Social Media + Society, 7(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211988931

De Jesus, A., Dorado, J., Biag, E., & Durante, J. V. (2022). Queer literature and gender sensitivity of senior high school students. International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education, 3(July Special Issue), 1-7. https://ijase.org/index.php/ijase/article/view/149

Dela Cruz, E. (2022). Raikantopinoy: Glocalization of the Boys' Love Genre in the Philippines. Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal, 4(1). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367499766_Raikantopinoy_Glocalization_of_the_Boys'_Love_Genre_in_the_Philippines

Griffin, E. (2019). Queer Television. In Oxford Bibliographies in Cinema and Media Studies. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199791286-0314

Grouchka, M. D. (2021). Does representation matter? Exploring the effects of positively perceived media representation on the identity and sense of self of LGBTQ women [Master's thesis, Webster University]. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5acf9e85ec4eb7b5e1665d4b/t/63dce82ddeed262d6124d1ac/1675421745316/Grouchka+Master+thesis+final+edited.pdf

Hayman, K. (2024). A discourse of hate: A content analysis of responses to queer representation in online social media. Canadian Journal of Family and Youth, 16(1), 109–116. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy30026

Holtz, B., Mitchell, K., Adams, R., Grier, C., & Wright, J. (2024). Enhancing comprehension of online informed consent: The impact of interactive elements and presentation formats. Ethics & Behavior, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2024.2318546

Huang, Q. (2024). Analyzing the impact of differences in the portrayal of homosexual

situations in LGBTQ movies on the social acceptance of homosexuality. In Addressing Global Challenges - Exploring Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Sustainable Solutions in a Changing World (Vol. 1, pp. 1–7). https://doi.org/10.1201/978103267604 3-111

Jamwal, U. S. & Pandey, S. P. (2024). The influence of queer representation in modern fiction. Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30(4), 6568–6570. https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i4.24 32

Javier, D., & Jubay, R. (2021). Gameboys the Series: The Rise of Pinoy Boys' Love Series in Times of Lockdown. David Publishing Company, 19(12), 377-379. https://www.davidpublisher.com/index. php/Home/Article/index?id=46586.html

Kemer, G., Demirtaş, E. T., Pope, A. L., & Ummak, E. (2016). Psychometric Properties of the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale– Turkish (LGBIS-TR). Journal of Homosexuality, 64(12), 1632-1649. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.201 6.1249741

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30(3), 607–610. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003 000308

Li, Q., Liu, Z., Yan, S., & Yin, R. (2023). The influence of homosexual media portrayals on the identity of homosexual young adults. Journal of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences, 8. https://drpress.org/ojs/index.php/EHSS /article/download/4719/4570

Nerlich, E. (2022). The influence of social media on self-acceptance in queer youth [Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente]. http://essay.utwente.nl/91329/1/nerlic h_BA_bms.pdf

Ng, E. (2021). Queer Production Studies. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780 190228613.013.1162

Realgo, B., Prado, V., & Guzman, J. (2023). Portrayal of love and social issues of LGBTQIA+ in Pinoy Boys' Love (BL) series. Journal of Humanities, Music and Dance, 3(4), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.55529/jhmd.34.1.11

Riggs, D. W. & Trehane, G. J. (2017). Queer Theory. In B. Gough (Ed.), The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Social Psychology (pp. 101–121). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51018-1_6

Rumens, N. (2016). Sexualities and accounting: A queer theory perspective. Critical Perspectives on Accounting, 35, 111–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2015.05.0 03

Schaefer, I. (2023). Children's television and its effects on LGBTQ youths' identity milestones, acceptance, and comfort in identity. Journal of Student Research, 12(4). https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v12i4.52 12

Thomson, K. (2021). An analysis of LGBTQIA+ representation in television and film. Bridges: An Undergraduate Journal of Contemporary Connections, 5(7). https://scholars.wlu.ca/bridges_contemp orary_connections/vol5/iss1/7/

Townsend, M., Deerwater, R., Adams, N., Hurwitz, A., Trasandes, M., González, G., & Usher, D. (2022). Where are we on TV? GLAAD Media Institute. https://assets.glaad.org/m/49c8b636b1 ee99eb/orIginal/GLAAD-2021-22-Where-We-Are-onTV.pdf

Troiden, R. R. (1989). The formation of homosexual identities. Journal of Homosexuality, 17(1-2), 43-73. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v17n01_02

University of the Philippines. (2021). 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study. https://www.uppi.upd.edu.ph/research/yafs5

Uy, C. E. (2021). Analyzing the depictions of queer struggles in selected Asian BL series [Conference paper]. Animo Repository. https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/conf_shsrescon/1702/

Vinney, C. (2024a). What Is Cultivation Theory in Media Psychology? Verywell Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/cultivation-theory-5214376

Vinney, C. (2024b). What Is Uses and Gratifications Theory? Definition and Examples. ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/uses-and-gratifications-theory-4628333

Zsila, A., & Demetrovics Z. (2017). The boys' love phenomenon: A literature review. Journal of Popular Romance Studies, 6, 1-16. https://www.jprstudies.org/2017/04/the-boys-love-phenomenon-a-literature-reviewby-agnes-zsila-and-zsolt-demetrovics/