Diverse Gender Portrayal on Netflix: Its Influence on Gender Awareness of HUMSS Students

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Abstract: The main aim of this study was to determine the influence of diverse gender portrayal on Netflix on the gender awareness of Humanities and Social Sciences Delpilarians. To achieve this aim, the researcher utilized the descriptive correlational method and used a questionnaire method for the primary data gathering tool. It is a researcher-made questionnaire used to determine the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix and the level of gender awareness of Humanities and Social Sciences Delpilarians. The findings reveal that the correlation coefficient is 0.0284, determining the positive but weak correlation of the knowledge of HUMSS students on gender awareness and the portrayals of diverse gender on Netflix. This means that the gender awareness of Humanities and Social Sciences students of Marcelo H. del Pilar National High School are affected by the Netflix contents with diverse gender portrayal which they consume, however, this representation must still be improved.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Portrayal, Gender Awareness, Netflix

1. INTRODUCTION

The last decade has shown a significant increase in popular media growth, with the rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix and the increased consumption of video media, popular culture has advanced at an exponentially rapid speed [1]. In a study conducted by Insider Intelligence, as of the second quarter of 2021, Netflix has roughly 209 million global paid memberships, an increase of more than 16 million subscribers from the same time period last year [2]. It is undeniable that the majority of the youth population grew up in a continuously growing digitized world where video media and TV series play a big role in tackling different issues which greatly influences its users. This includes the gender representation in Netflix series such as Sex Education, Elite, Atypical, and The Umbrella Academy.

The Queer community has seen increased representation in the video media realm, however, this representation has been majorly problematic. The characters are shown less as people and more as comic elements. Their narratives are often oversimplified to the point that their sexuality becomes confined to lust and not desire and genuine feelings [3]. The portrayal of homosexuality has been evolving since 1990s to present days. Negative portrayals of LGBT character in the film were common at earlier time; for instance, the desperate housewives depict the gay men having trust issue in their relationship and depict them as a dangerous person who would harm a straight man [4]. Numerous theories from sociology, psychology, and media and communication explain how cultural representations in media shape attitudes [5]. This kind of representation could negatively affect the perception on LGBT community and add up to the already prevailing stigma against them.

Studies show different results depending on the condition or context. An investigation was conducted where binge sessions lasted just over 2 h on average, and participants watched more than originally intended in nearly half of the sessions. However, this did not increase feelings of guilt. As expected, participants' own perceptions and definitions of binge- watching were highly variable [6]. While on the other hand, a different study found that the way teenagers view the LGBTQ culture has shifted after watching such contents in Netflix. Evidently, 63% of the respondents responded "yes" to the question. It indicates despite that the uncensored contents in Netflix, teenagers who still consume the content may have a different perception towards the culture [7].

This study aimed to determine the influence of diverse gender portrayal on Netflix on the gender awareness of HumSS students of Marcelo H. del Pilar National High School. The research will scope into a deeper understanding of how watching TV series in a well-known platform could affect the attitude of viewers especially the teenagers.

Since the gay liberation in 1970s, visibility of LGBT people in the U.S. has been increasing through representations in media such as theater and television. These have made it easier for more and more LGBT people to come out because society has been changing little by little to accept LGBT people because of those representations seen in media [8]. This can be spread throughout the world through proper representation. This research aims to contribute to future researchers studying the factors of human behavior and to the LGBTQIA+ community in the call for unproblematic gender representation in media like Netflix.

2. RELATED WORKS

The impact of the increase of people identifying as transgender and gender diverse (TGD) in a study has proved that the LGBTQ community have been given more

opportunities to be represented in different kinds of media coinciding with the rise of the TGD population [9]. The results of this study states that video media format has the power to demonstrate the predominant social values and bringing social change, which is heavily impacted by the audience acceptance for its primary aim is to engage and entertain the audience [10]. These findings conclude that the average millennials tend to binge-watch TV shows and movies in media services like Netflix to relax, relieve boredom, and for escapism, however, analysis of the contextual contingency of how gender is perceived and experienced suggests that any intervention to support and advance gender well-being and gender equality needs to be sensitive both to complex sociocultural patterns, and the shifting and contradictory ways in which gender matters to children and young people [11] [12].

Acceptance for the LGBTQ community significantly increased since 2001, on and off screen, by the presence of more gender diverse characters which have not yet existed in said year. Nonetheless, old stereotypes and negative tropes regarding these characters still remain. Studies also show that the amount of LGBTQ characters' interaction with children are less compared to heterosexual characters, suggesting the old anxieties towards LGBTQ people and pedophilia. Researchers have come to the conclusion that the equality for the LGBTQ community in the past two decades have improved remarkably, though true equality is yet to be achieved as long as said characters, across all forms of television, are treated with respect and reflecting the community's diversity [13].

There have been positive strides in terms of scripting and casting of LGBTQ characters. Television has become a platform around which viewers are not only entertained but educated about a once marginalized group in society. Additionally, the tone, type of humor, and displays of intimacy have shifted and are representative of a more accepting culture and storylines that realistically portrays healthy, loving relationships between members of the LGBTQ community [14].

Diversity representation in fictional stories is a growing concern for many minority communities, as these representations have a significant impact on how members of these communities are treated by society. Therefore, any form of representation must be brought about gradually to present the audience with chewable bites that can help gradually improve the way the queer community is perceived [15] [16].

Research findings also stated that social media had been an effective platform for the movements of the LGBTQ community and, in contrast to the former statement, it can also bring negative outcomes to the community members. Social media had become an informal source of learning in today's era which assisted the spread of knowledge regarding gender diversity. However, it attracts both respectful and disrespectful attentions since it is a platform used by different kinds of people [17].

This proves that the creators of movies are normally aware of how they portray characters and makes for a good starting point to conduct possible future research. Gendered content in film is more prevalent than most people are aware of, and can be used in many different ways in a classroom environment to highlight gender issues and possible solutions for how to accept that all humans practice gender differently. This will hopefully lead to more people being understanding towards others more respectful of gender performativity, and lead by example when gender problems arise around them to help spread the message of inclusiveness [18]. Further, the study was conducted with a sample population in which issues related to identity should be particularly important (adolescents and emerging adults) and contributes to building a body of research exploring the causal effects of media portrayals on LGBTQ youth [19].

Portrayals of homosexual sex lives in shows are significant to the viewers' perspective, particularly to fellow homosexuals, as it may affect their own sexual relationships [20]. In recent shows, depictions towards masculinity and gay men have significantly improved, showing different types and experiences of the two [21]. Gender diversity also boosted the exposure of racial portrayal in shows, voicing out living in a critical society as a queer person of color [22] [23].

This study has conducted with a sample population in which issues related to identity should be particularly important and contributes to building a body of research exploring the causal effects of media portrayals on LGBTQ youth. It aimed to understand the psychological processes underneath media portrayals depicting characters from said community [24]. In a different approach, the findings of this following study proved that non-gender diverse audiences found it easier to understand gender nonconformity by showing a relatable character and giving them an optimistic ending [25].

Findings show that, while today's society had grown to accept and represent the LGBTQ more often, there are still members of the community who were under and misrepresented [26] [27]. Another study focused on the common mistakes of comparing genders in an attempt to express gender equality which leads to stereotypical statements regarding gender diversity and found out that such actions tend to backfire, leading one of them to believe that the other is far superior [28].

The representation of teens in some TV shows depicts the reality most teens experience in their daily lives. It portrays what happens in real life where teens are told to act according to their gender/sexuality by the elderly. Later on, as the story progresses, a message is indirectly thrown to the viewers' not to follow other people's words when talking about their gender/sexual identity but follow what they think is more suitable and comfortable to them by showing the show's protagonist doing the same [29] [30].

The researchers had expressed not to focus only on the character's actions and background story but also with their visual designs. It is a possible aspect for future researchers to study how filmmakers have chosen the characters' appearances and the film's setting as these are the parameters to determine how much effort had they put to perfect the images of the characters' genders [31]. Future researchers may investigate the impact of an insecure representation (insecure character and insecure in their sexuality) on viewer attitudes towards the LGBTQ or research the effect of different variations of gender representation on attitudes [32].

LGBTQ Cinema Festivals contends that both festivals and queer film cultures are ephemeral by definition, as the first critique of festival studies from within. It argues that festivals are not mere objects of research but also actors already shaping academic, industrial, and popular cinematic knowledge. This book pays tribute to the work of LGBT organizers, critics, and scholars while also opening up new paths for festival research, based on the author's experience on the festival circuit [33].

The data culled from this study show that some experiences of poor rural bakla youth go in line with the experiences of their urban counterparts. However, the situated identities of the writer's respondents within a disadvantaged gender, class, age, and rural location further complicate the existing literature on the Filipino LGBT [34]. This study looked at the roles and rules that homosexual men play in Philippine culture as depicted in television and Internet commercials. Regardless of the restrictions or conditions set for gay men, it is evident that Philippine culture is slowly accepting and accommodating them [35].

Despite being a brief look into the world of gender identity formation and its relation to media, this paper offers numerous crucial research on the subject of television's effect on the establishment of traditional gender role schemata. Many content evaluations and studies have been conducted to determine what television programs say about different genders and how this affects society. As theory evolves and we continue to view gender as a spectrum upon which we all fall, this dichotomous binary of "man" and "woman" can hopefully be eradicated [36].

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main problem of this study was to determine the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix and its influence on gender awareness of HumSS Delpilarians. Specifically, this study soughts answer to the following questions:

1. How may the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix be described?
2. What is the level of gender awareness of HumSS Delpilarians?
3. Does the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix significantly influence gender awareness of HumSS Delpilarians?
4. What implications may be derived from the findings of the study?

4. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used descriptive correlational research method in this study. A correlational-research is a type of research technique that includes the observation of two variables in order to establish a statistically corresponding relationship between them. Particularly, the main objective of this study is to determine the influence of diverse gender portrayal on Netflix on the gender awareness of HumSS students of Marcelo H. del Pilar National High School.

The respondents of the study consisted of 20 Humanities and Social Science students of MHPNHS during the academic year 2021-2022. The researchers used purposive sampling technique in determining the sample from the population using the following criteria: (1) HumSS student of MHPNHS, (2) have watched Netflix series with diverse gender representation such as Sex Education, Elite, Atypical, and The Umbrella Academy, and (3) have exposed themselves from people with different gender.

To gather the necessary data for this study, the researchers utilized two 15-item self-made questionnaire which aims to describe the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix and gender awareness of students. This questionnaire is a 5-point Likert type questionnaire and is subjected to expert validation.

In data gathering, the following procedures were followed by the researchers:

With a careful approval of the Research Coordinator of the Marcelo H. del Pilar National High School after implementing all the comments, suggestions, and recommendations during the proposal defense, a letter was sent to the school principal to ask permission to conduct the study. With their approval, the researchers prepared the google forms link indicating the consent form on the first part of the survey and then distributed them to the respondents who fit the criteria the researchers have set with the assistance of the researchers' contact persons per HumSS section.

The data were tabulated and processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). To analyze and interpret the data gathered, the following statistical measures was used: mean procedures, frequency counts, and person correlation coefficient/regression analysis.

In accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, this study made sure that ethical standards set by the generic research ethics were followed. In so doing, the participants were informed about all the steps that were taken in this research. The respondents are more important than the study, and therefore always respected. They were informed that the study will be completely voluntary and would not affect their lives as students and as persons, even their families, in any way. Hence, confidentiality was provided,

as the respondents' personal information was not sought by anyone. Lastly, the data collection material was kept and destroyed upon completion of the study.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diverse Gender Portrayal on Netflix

Table 1. Diverse Gender Portrayal on Netflix

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1.) Netflix series have diverse gender representation.	4.41	Appropriate
2.) The gender portrayal on Netflix series is unproblematic.	3.36	Neutral
3.) Series like Sex education, Elite, Atypical, and the Umbrella Academy portray its LGBTQIA+ characters accurately.	4.42	Appropriate
4.) Netflix series use LGBTQIA characters for clout.	3.47	Neutral
5.) The way the LGBTQIA+ characters act on Netflix series is nearly the same as how LGBTQIA+ people act in real life.	4.37	Appropriate
6.) You can learn a lot about sexuality through Netflix series.	3.94	Appropriate
7.) Gay characters are only seen as sexual figures.	4.18	Appropriate
8.) Featuring LGBTQIA characters feels forced in some Netflix series.	3.43	Neutral
9.) There is enough lesbian representation on Netflix series.	3.21	Neutral
10.) Homosexual relationships in Netflix series are meant to satisfy the fetishes of its viewers.	3.21	Neutral
11.) LGBTQIA+ character are mostly being given stereotypical roles.	3.98	Appropriate
12.) LGBTQIA+ characters are being put on Netflix series just to say that they showcase diversity, nothing more.	3.44	Neutral
13.) Netflix series plays an important role in achieving gender equality.	4.39	Appropriate
14.) Netflix series with diverse gender portrayal can make its viewers open-minded.	4.75	Strongly Appropriate
15.) Netflix series should improve the way they represent LGBTQIA+ community.	4.85	Strongly Appropriate
Average	3.96	Appropriate

Diverse Gender Portrayal on Netflix. It is shown in Table 1 that the portrayal of diverse genders on Netflix was appropriate as shown by the average score of 3.96. Respondents agree that diverse gender characters are very present on Netflix (4.41). This gender portrayal is shown to be unproblematic (3.36), has enough lesbian representation (3.21), accurately depicted on series like Sex Education, Elite, Atypical, and The Umbrella Academy (4.42). The audience can also learn a lot about sexuality through Netflix series (3.94) due to shows portraying the way characters nearly act similar to LGBTQIA people in real life (4.37). Gender portrayal also plays an important role in achieving gender equality (4.39), resulting to viewers being open-minded to diverse genders (4.75). On the other hand, some Netflix series uses the LGBTQIA characters for clout (3.47) that people still view gay characters as sexual figures (4.19) and homosexual relationships in Netflix series are only meant to satisfy the fetishes of its viewers (3.21). These were caused by LGBTQIA characters mostly being given stereotypical roles (3.98) and put on Netflix series just to say that they showcase diversity, nothing more (3.44), and so it sometimes feels that featuring LGBTQIA characters feels forced in some Netflix series (3.43). People agree that Netflix series should improve the way they represent the LGBTQIA community (4.85).

The result was supported by a study which claims that there is a greater need for characters that show intersectionality and diversity to show true progress and inclusion in the video media format to normalise queer community. It can be seen that there is a lack of lesbian representation and at some point, the representation feels forced. This is why there is a need to improve the way Netflix represents LGBTQIA+ characters as it affects the viewers' open mindedness towards diverse gender. Diversity requires representation from all gender spectrum and not just few ones. [37]

Gender Awareness

Table 2. Gender Awareness

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1.) Homosexuality is not a	4.7	Extremely

sin.		High
2.) Not only heterosexual couples can have kids because the basic foundation of a family is a father and mother.	4.65	Extremely High
3.) Gay people can be masculine..	4.75	Extremely High
4.) Feminine guys are not always gay	4.65	Extremely High
5.) Transwomen are not gay.	4.45	High
6.) Men should not be needed to always act tough because they are the head of the house.	4.85	Extremely High
7.) Girls shouldn't be require to always act feminine and conservative.	4.95	Extremely High
8.) Bisexuality is real.	4.85	Extremely High
9.) Gender stereotyping is often used to identify someone's sexual orientation.	3.75	High
10.) Homophobia exists because of traditional gender roles schemata.	4.3	High
11.) Children should not be taught how to behave based in their biological sex.	4.4	High
12.) Pronouns are a big deal.	4.3	High
13.) LGBTQIA+ members should be respected but not tolerated.	2.55	Neutral
14.) Men are not the only ones to always work for the family nor should women stay in the household to take care of their children.	4.85	Extremely High
15.) Homosexuality is not a sickness to be cured.	4.45	High
Average	**4.43**	**High**

Gender Awareness. In table 2, it is presented that HUMSS Delpilarians have high levels of gender awareness visibly seen in the average score of 4.43. Gender Awareness tells us that children should not be taught how to behave based on their biological sex (4.4) because gender stereotyping is often used to identify someone's sexual orientation (3.75). Men should not be needed to always act

tough because they are the head of the house (4.85) and girls shouldn't be required to always be feminine and conservative (4.95). This also means men aren't the only ones to always work for the family nor staying in the household to take care of their children should be limited to women (4.85). Gender awareness is also being aware that gay people can be masculine (4.75), homosexuality is not a sin (4.7), feminine guys are not always gay (4.65), and transwomen are certainly not gay (4.45). The basic foundation of a family isn't always a mother and a father because homosexual couples can also have kids (4.65). Homophobia exists because of traditional gender roles schemata (4.3). Proper usage of pronouns should be learned because these are big deal to people (4.3). Gender awareness taught people how bisexuality is real (4.85) and homosexuality isn't a sickness to be cured (4.45). Even so, there are a few others that think LGBTQIA+ people should be respected but not tolerated (2.55).

The result was supported by a study which suggests that growing awareness of gender diversity is dramatically changing ideas about gender identity and equality in educational contexts and beyond, and across age groups of children and young people. The student respondents broke old gender stereotypes by agreeing that men should not be needed to always act tough because they are the head of the house and girls shouldn't be required to always be feminine and conservative. Moreover, LGBTQIA+ people should not just be respected but also be tolerated. [38]

Effects of Diverse Gender Portrayal on Netflix to HumSS del Pilarians

Findings reveal that the correlation coefficient is 0.0284, determining the positive correlation of the knowledge of HUMSS students on gender awareness and the portrayals of diverse gender on Netflix. The results show a positive correlation, however, it also shows weak relationship between the variables. This means that HUMSS students have high understanding of gender awareness which is somehow affected by the diverse gender portrayals shown on Netflix. Although, its weak relationship as variables suggests that while having diverse gender portrayal, it still needs to be improved for better representation.

Implications Based on the Findings of the Study

The outcome shows that diverse gender portrayal on Netflix has a significant effect on the gender awareness of HumSS Delpilarians as the majority of them are aware of gender diversity. The key is that streaming platforms like Netflix must produce series that promote gender diversity in a more appropriate and efficient manner, as this adds to a greater understanding of how these series may affect viewers' perspectives toward the LGBTQIA+ community. The media should make more efforts to represent the reality faced by members of the LBTQIA+ community on various streaming platforms because it will help in the

community's daily existence and could even change how society treats them. In this case, making efforts to create TV episodes or series that accurately portray the truth behind different gender identities will help to educate and make society more welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ community, as it influences viewers' open-mindedness toward diverse gender identities.

6. CONCLUSION

Base on the findings of the study, the researchers drew the following conclusions: first, the diverse gender portrayal on Netflix can be described as "appropriate"; second, the level of gender awareness of HumSS Del Pilarians was shown as "high"; third, determined that there is a positive but weak correlation of the knowledge of HumSS Del Pilarians on gender awareness and the portrayals of diverse gender on Netflix; fourth, Netflix series can tackle timely and relevant sociopolitical issues such as about gender.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusion, the researchers offer the following scope for the future: (1) the researchers would like producers from Netflix and other streaming platforms to use this study as a basis on creating series with better, accurate, and informative representation of gender diversity in media as it affects the gender awareness of its viewers, (2) make Netflix and other streaming platforms an avenue to tackle relevant socio-political issues not just about gender awareness but also about social struggles, freedom of expression, religious beliefs, and more, , (3) educational institutions such as the Marcelo H. del Pilar National High School should establish a program called LearnFlix: Learning through Netflix where they will make students watch media contents from Netflix such as Sex Education to learn about gender and sexuality, (4) media contents should be more available and accessible to the viewers, especially the youth, for its purpose to have greater reach.

For the limitation of the study, first is the population sample. The researchers suggest having higher number of respondents for future studies to have a more reliable and justifiable results. Next, future researchers are highly encouraged to use standardized instrument of the study that is verified by professionals to have a more effective set of questionnaires. In addition, the researchers suggest venturing to other streaming platforms instead of being limited to Netflix.

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