

## ***BLief Shift: Unveiling the Lived Experience of Self-confessed Homophobic Young Adults Exposed to Boys' Love Series***

Precious Ivane Q. David\*,  
Gie Ann Nicole T. Flores, Lee Andrei M. Quiambao, Mayca U. Yabut  
*For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.*

### **Abstract**

In a world where heterosexism dominates, homosexuality is perceived as sinful and inappropriate. Nonetheless, the media, through its proper and positive portrayal of gay men's lives in Boys' Love (BL) Series, has contributed in alleviating such prejudicial attitudes toward sexual minorities among its homophobic audience. Thus, this qualitative research study utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) aimed to relive the stories of self-confessed homophobic heterosexual young adult males who were exposed to at least two (2) positively-represented, non-restricted Thai BL series. Accordingly, ten self-confessed homophobic young adults who engaged in explicit and/or implicit homophobic behaviors in the past, and are at present high-grade nonhomophobic were purposively selected to individually take part in a semi structured in-depth interview. Subsequently, member checking was employed to validate the credibility of participants' responses, and truthful critique and support were obtained through critical friend technique. Findings of the study revealed that BL series' positive portrayal of gay men and homosexuality, and its lesson-filled stories provided awareness about gay men's realities which led to the shift in homophobic young adult's beliefs.

**Keywords:** Gay Men, Homosexuality, Homophobic, Boy's Love Series

### **Introduction**

Homophobia has been prevalent in many societies throughout history due to the belief that homosexuality, as a sexual orientation, was sinful and inappropriate. However, with the aim of gaining acceptance, homosexuals consistently seek understanding which has resulted in the gradual rise of the sexual orientation's acceptance, motivating other people to come out of their shells. Various campaigns using different platforms voice out issues and concerns for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Ally, and other Non-heterosexual people of the (LGBTQIA+) community for these to be understood. In aiming for recognition and acceptance of the homosexuals, media is one of the most influential platforms to use.

Media's main premise is to tell stories. With good storytelling tactics, every story represents various kinds of characters and situations that exemplify true life experiences. As homosexuality had been denied outright acceptance across cultures, media representations can change and influence the attitudes people have about homosexuals (Gonta et al., 2017).

This is where the researchers decided to include the popular Boys' Love (BL) series in the study of homophobic decline, believing that the BL series has a more vital role in one's life, aside from merely entertaining its audience. The popularity of BL

television dramas from Thailand has clearly risen as reflected in the many fans that it has recently garnered from around the world. BL makes viewers swoon, but it also brings up opportunities for the creation of a more accepting world — one that embraces people regardless of who they love or who they want to be. It is believed that the BL series serves to ignite conversations on the culture and queerness in the community. As culture is dominated by heterosexism, Thailand's BL series demonstrates its positive elements by presenting the real-life difficulties of the LGBTQIA+ community in Southeast Asia that aimed to direct viewers on what it means to live as a gay man (Mampusti, 2020).

The BL series in general is reported to be effective in eliciting a change in an individual's homophobic attitude and behavior toward homosexuality and people characterized by it (Competente, 2020).

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research study is to relive the experiences of the "self-confessed" homophobic young adults after being exposed to BL series. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the sources of the participants' sexual prejudice toward gay men?
2. What are the participants' past behavior toward gay men, prior to BL series exposure?

3. What factors in BL series have influenced the participants' views on gay men?
4. How did the participants' shift in homophobic beliefs impact their lives?
5. What are the participants' realizations?

## Literature Review

### Lived Experiences of Homophobic Individuals

“Being gay was never right,” Karim Jovian, an American YouTuber once said in his middle school years — the time when he asserted himself to be homophobic. This line probably unveils one of the firm ideals of a homophobic individual. Jovian declared in his account that whenever he sees violence against gay men, he never helped. He also believed that having feelings for the same sex is bad and weird. Further, he shared that there was an instance when while he hung out with his close male friend, he became aggressive because of his friend touching and complimenting him while playing (Storybooth, 2016).

Another man named Daniel is another self-confessed homophobic individual for five years now. In his experience, he could not drive a car because a gear stick looks like a male genital. Even a broomstick is something he could not bring himself to use for the same reason. Using the stairs also became his concern as he thought that if he used it, a man might be looking at his buttocks. In line with this, he never picked up the things he had dropped. In some way, he thought that bending over could make a person develop a fantasy about him. He neither used a spoon nor a fork with the thought that using them was like inserting something in his mouth, an act that he finds particularly gay (Miller, 2016).

In 2018, a social experiment was conducted by HumanMeter in the Philippines to test the reactions of people toward gay couples. In the experiment, two men acted as a gay couple who exposed themselves in a public place. A homophobic man has been eyeing the two actors for quite a long time, and not long after confronted them, and said:

“*Kayo dapat ang sinusunog sa impiyerno. Buhay pa kayo, dapat sinusunog na eh.*” (Guys like you should be burned in hell. You should be burned alive.)

“*Dapat nahuhuli kayo eh.*” (You should be caught and put in jail.)

“*Para kayong tanga.*” (You appear/act stupid.)

“*Nakakasuka mga pinang-gagagawa niyo.*” (Your

deeds are disgusting.)

### Homophobia and its Manifestations

Historians emphasized that sexual or gender binary emerged in the 19th century, positioning heterosexuality as accepted, natural, and desirable in the society, in contrast with homosexuality, which was regarded as immoral and out of the natural. The society expects heterosexuality as compulsory, and it is reflected in the clinical, social, and religious definitions of homosexuality in which it is defined as cursed, perverted, evil, sexually obsessed, and even mentally and physically ill (O'Brien, 2001).

The negative emotions and attitudes towards homosexuality have been investigated as forms of both sexual and cultural prejudice (Bernardo, 2013). Lesbians and gay men are mostly the object of such hate and cultural fear because homosexuality does not conform to the society's expectations of gender and of heterosexuality (O'Brien, 2001).

According to Funk and Wagnalls (2018), this form of sexual prejudice towards gay men and lesbians have been referred to as homophobia, a term that has been often used to describe negative attitudes and emotions towards homosexuality or people who are considered or assumed to be gay. Furthermore, homophobia can also be a kind of fear of being in contact with a homosexual (Funk & Wagnalls, 2018).

In being characterized as having homophobia, homophobic individuals manifest their homophobic behavior in ways that are lawfully restricted (Anderson, 2016). Expressions of homophobia are either explicit or implicit.

Explicit attitudes are feelings and emotions that are reflected on one's behavior at the conscious level. These attitudes have more intense influence on one's decisions and behavior, and such behaviors are manifested with intent and are clearly stated and expressed (Kimuyu, 2018). The explicit manifestations of homophobic behavior involves all, but are not limited to, bullying, verbal assaults and derisive joking, sexual harassment, damage to property, negative stereotypical media representations, discrimination in employment, education, housing, medical research and legal defense, physical attack and violence and tacit approval of gay bashing or name-calling (Anderson, 2016; O'Brien, 2001).

On the other hand, implicit attitudes occur without conscious awareness. Typically, due to lack of conscious access, these attitudes are expressed

involuntarily. Implicit attitudes might result in behaviors that an individual may not be aware of, behaviors that cannot be observed directly such as cognitive processes and emotional reaction (Kimuyu, 2018). Homophobic behavior can be derived from the cognitive and affective aspect of a homophobic individual and can be manifested implicitly. Such behavior can manifest because of the homophobic anger which demonstrates anger, disgust, and contempt that one feels toward a homosexual. Statements such as, “I suppose homosexuals should have equal rights, but I’m just not comfortable being around them,” “When I think about two men holding hands in public, it makes me sick,” represent affective reactions of homophobic individuals. Aside from homophobic anger, affective reactions may also come from homophobic guilt which demonstrates shame and guilt. Such emotions were explicitly manifested as discomfort around homosexual individuals as it may come from one’s repressed feelings (Ernulf & Innala, 1987).

### Roots of Homophobia

The occurrence of homophobia originated from heterosexism, society, and gender conflicts. Heterosexism is the belief that the only normal, legitimate, and acceptable sexual experience is the heterosexual construct. In addition, it refers to the view that male-female union is normal and desirable, and anything else that contradicts it is seen as inappropriate and unacceptable. Given that it is human nature to be socially accepted, thus, one goes along with beliefs and views that are perceived as acceptable. This resulted in people lacking understanding of homosexual individuals which further leads to the occurrence of homophobic attitudes (Perry, n.d.).

Another reason for the emergence of homophobia is the influence of society. One’s environment plays a vital role in influencing an individual’s perception of homosexuality, homosexuals, and the manner of their interaction with them. Social class has its hold in the occurrence of homophobia wherein individuals of lower classes and having lower educational attainments are more likely to be homophobic than people who have higher education and belonging in higher social classes because they lack knowledge of homosexuality (Hidalgo & Mellado, 2019; Perry, n.d.).

Along with the influence of society, familial — especially parental — teachings are also vital in developing either positive or negative attitudes towards homosexuality among children. If parents are homophobic, they are more likely to instill their views

onto their children, thus, raising them as homophobic individuals too (Perry, n.d.; What is Homophobia, n.d.).

Aside from heterosexism and society, gender conflict in some cases is also one main reason for the occurrence of homophobia. Gender conflict allows the development of homophobia which further leads to discrimination and emotional abuse toward homosexual individuals. Gender conflicts emerge due to an individual’s own gender identity struggles which results in experiences of consistent anxiety. In this sense, homophobia is used as a defense mechanism in the form of reaction formation, which causes an individual to feel uneasy around homosexuals as a result of their unresolved gender conflicts (Cuncic, 2021; Perry, n.d.).

Religion is also emphasized as one of the leading roots of homophobia occurrence (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Cuncic, 2021; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018a; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018b). It is said that certain religions view homosexuality as a sin. In the study of Reyes (2019), the Philippines, as a collectivist country, holds a strong value on religion where the majority are Catholics, and it was reported that the higher a person holds religious values and traditional beliefs about gender roles, the higher a person holds a negative perspective on homosexuality. In addition, the homophobic attitudes of Filipinos toward gay men are not brought about by intergroup beliefs associated with group dominance-motive, or the desire to maintain the subordinate status of sexual minorities, and of high social regard; rather, it has been reported that the sexual prejudice toward gay men in the Philippines is rooted in the lack of appreciation for openness to alternative value systems, given that the Filipinos have been firm in their normative belief systems (Bernardo, 2013).

Also, it was stated by Kwak et al., (2009) that low self-esteem may be associated with having homophobia as according to studies, low self-esteem manifests by having less empathy towards others.

Another study by Hidalgo and Mellado (2019) suggests that homophobia is highly associated with gender and age.

### Homophobia on the Basis of Gender and Age

Researches show that men are more likely to be homophobic than females (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Kwak et al., 2009). The view on gender norms greatly impacts men’s perceptions of masculinity, including how a man should look and act. Men are also more

likely to live by the belief of heterosexism, which leads them to display homophobic attitudes toward homosexuals (Perry, n.d.). Stein (1999) argues, “The fear of being perceived as homosexual compels men to enforce standards of appropriate masculine behavior that reinforces competition between men, distances men from each other, and maintains derogatory views of women” (p.39). Most men who are heterosexual are influenced by gender norms and heterosexism which arises from society. To ensure that they are not perceived as part of the LGBT community, they try their best to flaunt their masculinity, and stay away from what and who are perceived as gay.

In addition, it was reported that homophobia reaches its extremes during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Therefore, this implies that young adults possess high levels of prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuality (Hooghe & Meeusen, 2012; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018b). As per the synthesis of Teipe (n.d.), individuals who are considered as young adults aged 18 to 24 years old. Studies on adolescent homophobia always start with the presumption that this mentality will persist into adulthood. It has been concluded that individuals with elevated levels of homophobia during adolescence are more likely to become much more radical in their attitudes as they enter young adulthood (Hooghe & Meeusen, 2012).

### Effects of Homophobia

On the other hand, it is relevant to note that prejudicial attitude does not only leave an impact on the victim, but also on the one who holds it. It is important for homophobic individuals to be freed from their homophobic attitudes for these could have negative effects on some aspects of their lives and on the community in general. It is said that people with prejudicial attitudes keep themselves from learning and growing. In this sense, their self-growth isn't only affected, but also the growth of their culture and the society they live in (Couillard, 2013). Also, aside from its effect on their self-growth, having prejudicial attitudes negatively affects one's physical, psychological, psychiatric, social, and mental well-being for homophobia enhances a number of risk factors associated with such (Seitz, 2011; Wagner, 1977).

### Homophobia Attitude Reduction

The internet has a great power and such gay rights movement can contribute to the decline of homophobia (McCormack, 2012). Aside from the use

of media as a medium to reduce homophobia, finding suggests that having a homosexual family member results to lower rates of homophobic attitudes (Kwak, et. al., 2009). In relation to this finding, in the study of Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel (2018a), participants who have gay friends and are in contact with gay people were found less homophobic. Such finding was also presented in another study of the same authors in the same year, relating homophobia to film appreciation (Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018b). Also, another factor that could affect the reduction of homophobia is associated with the educational attainment of an individual (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). In line with the findings of Adamczyk and Pitt (2009), self-expressive values can lessen homophobia more than having survival values aligned with one's cultural orientation.

### Role of Positive Media Representations on the Decline in Homophobic Attitudes

Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel (2018a) conducted a study using one film entitled *The Parade* to explore how media narratives can affect and reduce the homophobia that the participants hold. Both the experimental and the control group were subjected to a pretest and a post-test to measure the level of homophobia they have through a homophobia scale within a 30-day gap. However, the experimental group, before answering the post-test, were made to watch the film *The Parade* that positively portrayed gay men. Results showed that there was a favorable decline in the experimental group compared to the control group implying that one film is enough to cause decline in one's homophobic attitudes. In line with the previous result, in another study conducted by Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel in Europe (2018b), the same results have manifested that exposure to gay movies builds up positive attitudes toward gay people and lessens homosexual prejudice. Other studies also emphasized how positive attitudes toward homosexuality could be generated from high levels of positive exposure to homosexual content and how frequent a person watches (Gonta et al., 2017; What is Homophobia, n.d.; Serpen et al., 2016; Schiappa & Hewes, 2006).

### Learning Theories on the Decline in Homophobic Attitudes

As this research study focuses solely on how the BL series changed the way self-confessed homophobic young adults view homosexuality, there are two theories on how media influences the viewers leading to changes in behavior.

First is the cultivation theory. This suggests that frequent exposure to a medium can have significant effects such as change in attitude and behavior on a viewer. The viewer perceives real life then in the lens of how the media presents certain situations. In this case, positive portrayals of homosexuality can affect one's thinking and behavior because of its repetitive nature.

The second is the framing theory. In this theory, the information that is highlighted by the media regarding homosexuality affects how homosexuals are viewed in real life. Framing them positively can encourage viewers in ways that could lead to the greater good and acceptance of homosexuals (Gonta et al., 2017).

### Boys' Love Series

The umbrella term "Boys' Love" originally came from Japan's specific media namely anime and manga. Such a term portrays a romantic theme of two men in an intimate relationship (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). As cited by Zsila and Demetrovics (2017), BL stories were specifically written under the genre shōjo manga which aimed to attract young women audience in the 1970s (McLelland & Welker, 2015). However, as BL series gained popularity, other countries such as Thailand, China, Taiwan, Korea, and other Asian countries, according to Fujimoto (2020), took a different direction, highlighting the nuances of the social situations in which LGBTQIA+ people find themselves.

Ambulo and Batin (2016) grasped the idea from previous studies that the BL genre presents a wider scope of concepts regarding romantic relationships to its heterosexual viewers. Therefore, it also allows the audience to explore the less heteronormative norms that do not conform with the socially-set standards wherein one sex must be dominant over the other.

It has been argued that by sensitively portraying the diversity of human relationships, BL works are now breaking social expectations, traditional wisdom, and misconceptions. Realistic BL also bridged the gap between fiction and reality, and with changes afoot in Thailand and Taiwan, BL depicting everyday life may inadvertently enter people's consciousness, ushering in a new age (Yukari, 2020).

### Diversity of Boys' Love Series and its Effects

Filipinos are endlessly curious. Any new thing that happens they want to know and experience first hand. Such curiosity did not let the popularity of the BL series pass. What paved the way for the Philippines to

have its own BL series is the popularity of Thailand's BL series. Such popularity is evident as the favorite Thailand BL series trends on the twitter platform every time there is an update on the particular series being anticipated (Vercide, 2020). The companies which popularized the BL series are the Grammy Television (GMMTV) and Line TV. The first produces TV series and other programs while the second provides global streaming service. Both companies paved the way for BL series to be known. Thirty-three BL series were broadcast under LINE TV, and from 2016 to 2020, GMMTV continuously aired BL series (Kho Lim, 2020).

There is a curiosity as to how influential the sudden popularity of male homosexual series or also known as Boy's Love (BL) Series on self-confessed homophobic young adults is given that casual viewers believed that the BL series leaves an impact on homosexual prejudice toward gay men. According to Competente (2020), Philippine media, as well, ordinarily presents heterosexual contents, and BL series, like "2gether the Series", alters the status quo regarding contents that emphasize heterosexual stories. Such a show became an eye-opener to heterosexuals, paving its way for the acceptance and understanding of homosexuality that exists in society. Also, several social media posts have shown the foreseeable impact of BL series on people's views toward homosexuality, such as:

*"I honestly think BL is important in making this [gay acceptance] happen. When I was kid, I thought you could get AIDS from kissing another boy. Sex Ed. was not great. 15 years ago, my brother said he was a homophobe. Now he goes to gay bars and watches 'Drag Race.' Representation matters."* (Robespierre, 2020)

*"BL (Yaoi) is capable of decreasing homophobia..."* (Origami, 2012)

*"I hope PH BL creators will first focus more on the love story, saka nalang yang mga sex scene. Sana target muna nila is to change the views of Filipinos about gays especially gay couple. I want them to be medium to lessen homophobia in this country."* (I hope PH BL creators will first focus more on the love story, rather than the sex scene. I hope their target priority is to change the views of Filipinos about gays especially gay couple. I want them to be a medium to lessen homophobia in this country.) (Cheonsanani, 2020)

It is believed that BL series are welcomed by Filipinos. However, little research has been done in exploring its

impact on the lives of self-confessed Filipino homophobic young adults. Therefore, this study intends to fill the gaps regarding the scarce evidence of the presented matter.

In spite of the fact that BL portrays a romantic genre, and romance commonly involves a combination of emotional, passionate, and sexual interactions, this study intends to only acknowledge non-restricted BL series as sources to which participants are exposed. Non-restricted BL series are those without nudity and explicit sexual content as its main focus. Restricted Category or what the Thailand Movie Rating System classified as Hard NC-17 is a motion picture rating which is described as prohibitive. It is exclusively for older audiences and is legally restricted compared to other ratings. Selling the mentioned Hard NC-17 products to underaged audiences, as specified on the rating description, is considered illegal. In a cinema, they may have to ask for proof of their age to be admitted to an age-restricted motion picture (Thailand Movie Rating System, 2021).

Having been exposed to sexual content influences the attitude of the viewers in a way that such contents have the capability to instill in their minds that those provided representations are realistically applied in real life. It is important that the audience is not being misled on what the actual nature of homosexuality is. Thus, media representations should be more carefully constructed in terms of portraying the lives of homosexuals for these contents have definitely become sources for research to understand the lives of homosexuals. This is what Nopparat, a Thai BL producer, is trying to inject into every BL series he produces. The vast popularity and acceptance of Thai BL binds the prerogative to express one's gender orientation in Thailand. This expression and acceptance should be rooted in the realistic lives of homosexuals (Koaysomboon, 2020).

However, it is evident that most homosexual films portray erotic scenes in gay life and that gay characters are being presented as people who always desire sex. Moreover, gay people are pictured as flirtatious, sexy, naughty, people who have no hope and no future, and rejected by society — which is not necessarily the focus of homosexual life. As a result, whenever people hear the word 'gay', they tend to visualize negative images about it. Some would say that it is identical to porn films; some believe that gay scenes frequently expose something immoral such as nudity, promiscuity, orgies, etc. Such representations give the audience, and the society at large, a perception that homosexuals are promiscuous which apparently

became a firm label or a stereotype for gay life (Rudy, 2016).

Therefore, BL series with such explicit contents that are believed to be sexually gratifying are not considered in this study for such representations might elicit an exclusive and distorted view of what homosexuality actually is, which would probably affect the study's findings.

### **BLief Shift**

The phrase "BLief Shift" written at the beginning of this study's title signifies the drastic change motivated by BL series regarding the sexual prejudice that the self-confessed homophobic young adults hold. The term "BLief" represents the accustomed views of homophobic young adults regarding homosexuality; the first two letters "BL" were capitalized to give emphasis and associate the phrase to the series. The term "Shift" represents the change that takes place in society's regard for gay individuals or the community in general. The shift in belief exemplifies a phenomenon. In this sense, the shift in belief is associated with how a homophobic young adult's firm view and perspective toward homosexuality could meet an utmost change among viewers due to exposure from BL series.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative study utilized an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). It is participant-oriented; it uses philosophical approaches in interpretation; and it values the subjective and distinct experience of the participant (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The research design in this study enabled the researchers to delve in detail on how self-confessed homophobic young adults assign meanings into their personal experiences.

The utilization of an IPA approach in this research study allowed the researchers to explore the lived experiences of self-confessed homophobic young adults with an idiographic focus wherein they were able to emphasize their own unique personal experience — that of being a previously homophobic individuals who have met a dramatic decline in same homophobic attitude after their exposure to BL series. Through IPA, the participants were able to impart their own insights, understanding, and perceptions about the shift in their homophobic beliefs subsequent to BL series exposure, and how they created a clear, significant meaning out of such a novel phenomenon.

## Participants

Ten (10) participants were recruited from various municipalities and cities in Pampanga. These participants were purposively selected, meeting the below-mentioned criteria. In the recruitment process, the researchers first got a hold of the potential participants whom they assume to possibly have certain characteristics aligned with the criteria for recruitment. The first potential participants were further asked if they knew and could recommend certain people with the same characteristics. The researchers also communicated with BL groups' administrators on various social media platforms, specifically Twitter and Facebook, to acquire potential participants. Subsequently, when the potential participants had been identified, a short conversation was done via Messenger to verify if they really display the characteristics presented in the criteria for recruitment. Afterwards, the survey form or robotfoto was disseminated as an initial screening. Further verification was done by utilizing the other screening tools, namely, the Homophobic Attitude Checklist and the Homophobia Scale to supplementally authenticate the claimed characteristics that the potential participants have. After the qualified participants were finally identified, the researchers asked for their consent to officially participate by providing them with an informed consent form for them to accomplish.

To take part in this research study, the following are the inclusion criteria: (a) heterosexual male prior to exposure to BL series; (b) young adult (18 to 24 years old); (c) a self-confessed homophobic young adult prior to BL series exposure; (d) has reported engaging in at least one (1) explicit and/or implicit homophobic behavior before as measured on the Homophobic Attitude Checklist; (e) has scored 0-50 on the Homophobia Scale; and (f) repeatedly viewed one (1) or viewed two (2) or more positively-represented, non-restricted Thai-BL series. Potential participants with debilitating medical conditions as they themselves voluntarily revealed were excluded from this research.

## Instruments of the Study

The researchers employed a two-phased instrument to relieve the experiences of self-confessed homophobic young adults exposed to BL series.

For the initial phase, the screening tool, survey instrument via google form that was initially accomplished by the participants served as the robotfoto to establish the characteristics of each

participant and is divided into two sections. The first section includes the questions for obtaining demographic information from the participants, such as their personal information which involves age, religion, and the titles of BL series watched; their educational background which includes the school attended or currently enrolled in and year level or educational attainment; and lastly, their family background which involves their living arrangement. The second section elicited information regarding the participant's own understanding of homophobia, their self-confession of holding it, and whether they have been exposed to BL series.

Also, the second section aimed to enumerate the completed BL series viewed by the participants and if such series played the initial role in their homophobic decline. The survey form was utilized as a screening instrument and was virtually accomplished by the prospective participants.

After choosing the potential qualified participants using the survey instrument, the qualified participants were identified using a checklist of both explicit and implicit homophobic attitudes. Some of the items that characterize explicit attitude are, "I used to harm gay men physically (e.g. hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, and pushing)," and "I used to stare at gay men with insulting expression". For implicit attitude, on the other hand, some items are, "I used to feel disgust whenever I see gay men and gay couples," and "I used to feel discomfort around gay men". The participants were instructed to answer the checklist on the basis of their previous homophobic attitude engagement. The purpose of the checklist was to verify the experienced homophobia of the participants before their exposure to BL series. The checklist was subjected for content validation before utilization.

A Homophobia Scale (HS) was also used as a screening tool for the identification of the qualified participants. This self-reporting tool was developed by Lester W. Wright Jr., Henry E. Adams, and Jeffrey Bernat and it consists of 25 statements which the participants are subjected to answer on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). HS is divided into three (3) subscales such as Behavior/Negative Affect (B/NA) with 10 items, Affect/Behavioral Aggression (A/BA) with another 10 items, and Cognitive Negativism (CN) that consists of 5 items. Some examples per subscales are: "Gay people make me nervous." (B/NA); "I tease and make jokes about gay people." (A/BA); and lastly, "Homosexuality is acceptable to me." (CN)

In scoring the HS, two procedures were performed. First, reverse score items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, and 25. The remaining items left unmentioned were not to be scored reversely. Reverse scoring is done by running numerical scoring scales in the opposite direction. Thus, in HS, “strongly agree” with a corresponding value of 1 in the scale would be scored as 5, and “strongly disagree” with a corresponding value of 5 on the scale becomes 1. When the equivalent scores of each item are determined, the second step is to add the scores on the items 1-25, then subtract 25 to calculate for the total HS score. The scores to be computed range from 0 to 100 which indicate 0 as the least homophobic and 100 as the most homophobic. To interpret more accurately, a score of 0-25 indicates high-grade nonhomophobia, 26-50 is low-grade nonhomophobia, while 51-75 is interpreted as low-grade homophobia, and 76-100 is high-grade homophobia. The detailed interpretations of the HS scores are based on the study of H.E. Adams (1996) as instructed on the HS’ manual.

The concurrent validity of the instrument was established through the use of Index of Homophobia. Also, it has a reliability of  $r = .936$  which indicates good internal consistency (Wright et al., 1999). The purpose of the HS was to measure an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding homosexuality. However, its role in this research study was mainly to assess if the participants were certainly free from their homophobic attitudes at present.

The second phase was an interview which aimed to acquire information through the use of guide questions and probing questions as deemed necessary. The guide questions were validated by three (3) professionals in the field of Psychology to ensure their alignment with the research objectives. Moreover, a pilot study and a cognitive interview were first administered to ensure that the guide questions were understandable from the perspective of the participants before the actual data gathering. Lastly, the pilot study and cognitive interview served as a basis for adjustment and improvement of instruments and data-gathering procedures.

### Procedures

An online orientation was facilitated mainly to have an interactive discussion with the participants regarding their held homophobia in the past. The orientation was conducted on the same day as the data gathering, on a one-on-one basis, prior to the interview proper, wherein the interviewer first asked the participants to share their own understanding of homophobia.

Afterwards, the participants were also asked to share a brief summary of two BL series of their choice. This was done to make the participants feel more at ease throughout the interview. After the sharing, the contents of the informed consent form were discussed and explained by the interviewer. This is to settle inquiries, and clarifications from the participants’ end. In general, the orientation served as a means to build good rapport between the interviewer and the participant. After the orientation, one-on-one interviews were conducted virtually at the convenience of the participants. The entire interview session was recorded for transcription. The interviews were transcribed and copies were sent to the participants for verification of their responses. Afterwards, a kamustahan was facilitated as a culminating activity to assess the conditions of the participants after sharing their experiences. The researchers employed the basic principles when it comes to Filipino research as recommended by Sikolohiyang Pilipino in which the paramount concern of the researchers is the welfare of the research participants. The researchers made sure that, from time to time, the participants were asked about their condition during the data-gathering procedure. As deemed required, referral was to be done for those with concerns requiring professional assistance. Fortunately, participants freely shared their experiences and gave assurance that no uncomfortable feelings arose during and after the interview. After the data gathering, collected data were prepared for explication. The researchers were also planning to organize an exclusive webinar for the participants to attend which would allow the communication of the study’s findings. Significantly, the soundness of the academic paper was ensured through the utilization of a critical friend technique.

### Ethical Considerations

The researchers sought guidance and approval from the Ethics Review Board of the university in conducting the research study. The researchers had recognized a risk in asking information from the participants regarding their self-confessed homophobic behavior in a way that it might trigger past experiences that were sensitive for the participants. In order to address this risk, the researchers had conducted a kamustahan as a culminating activity and, as deemed necessary, the researchers referred the participants to a guidance counselor. Also, before data gathering, the researchers first constructed and disseminated a bilingual informed consent form to make sure that the participant had enough knowledge about the topic being studied before declaring voluntary participation. In this consent form, the participants were informed

about the nature of the study, how the information elicited from them will be used, and what consequences could arise from it. Also explained were the rights of the participants to have access to their own information, to ask for further clarification, and to withdraw from the study at any given time. Participants who were not able to complete the entire process expected of them were removed from the pool of the participants. This was due to early signs and symptoms of panic attacks and distress when faced with a situation where their sources of phobia were being discussed. Moreover, the researchers assured the participants of the confidentiality of the information gathered and of their anonymity through the use of code names. Information would only be disclosed with their permission and would be used only for research purposes. Only the researchers were able to transcribe audio files and had access to all information gathered from the participants. The information-containing files were secured after the completion of the study in a folder that is protected with a password for two years. Disposal of the files and other information gathered may be done through reformatting a disk where the folder of those files is contained.

## Results

This section presents the findings according to the study's research questions. To understand the innermost deliberation of the participants' personal lived experience, the study of evidence was performed in three stages— transcription of recordings; generation of code themes and subthemes; and expert validation.

This section contains six tables that summarize the findings of the study. Table 1 to 5 presents the significant information to understand and unveil the lived experience of self-confessed homophobic young adults exposed to BL series.

### Participants' Demographic Profile

All of the participants' ages are between 18 and 24, and are all heterosexual males prior to their exposure in BL series. Majority of them are Roman Catholics. Among the ten (10) participants, five (5) are college undergraduates (UG), three (3) of them are senior high school graduates (SHS GRAD), and the remaining two (2) are junior high school graduates (JHS GRAD). In terms of their schools attended, six (6) participants attended public schools, and three (3) attended private schools, while one (1) participant attended both public and private schools. Nine (9) participants are living

with their family members and relatives, while the remaining one (1) participant lives alone. Further, all the participants viewed at least two BL series with repetitions. In the screening process done prior to data gathering, the number of engaged explicit and implicit attitudes were presented. Such engagements, either explicitly or implicitly, verify that the participants engaged in such attitudes. Lastly, all participants scored between 0 to 25 in the Homophobia Scale, indicating that they are high-grade nonhomophobic in the present, meeting the needed criteria to participate in the study.

### Sources of Prejudice

Table 1 shows the different sources of the participants' prejudice toward gay men prior to the exposure to BL series. As revealed by the participants, their homophobia developed from direct and indirect experiences.

Table 1. *Sources of Prejudice*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of responses
Direct experiences	Sexual assault	8
	Salacious act	5
	Verbal aggression	4
	Crime-inducing act	3
Indirect experiences	Perception of significant people	8
	View of the community and culture	4
	Malicious portrayal of media	1

### Direct experiences

The responses revealed that the participants developed homophobic attitudes from direct experiences. A direct experience denotes an encounter that is gained first hand. These experiences are those activities which the participants have been directly engaged in through their immediate sensory perception. Such direct experiences comprise the participants' experienced sexual assault, salacious act, verbal aggression, and crime-inducing act from gay men.

### Sexual assault

Eight (8) responses revealed that the participants' experience of sexual assault was the source of their homophobia. The sexual assault that the participants had experienced from a gay man was in the form of sexual molestation, mere touching, and other perverted actions that had caused them to develop discomfort, fear, and distrust of gay men which elevated into homophobia.

*"Before, I was...I experienced this kind of thing na*

*kung saan, alam mo yon? May overnight like that, and may mga kasama kang...like noon kasi hindi na ako comfortable with them e. May isang incident na kung saan nagbago na ang tingin ko sa kanila (gay)...may incident na nangyari noon na nagpabago talaga ng pananaw sa mga ano...and syempre natakot na rin...ano siya e...medyo private.” [Before, I was...I experienced this kind of thing wherein, you know? We had an overnight stay somewhere, and we were with...like even before, I wasn’t comfortable with them. There was an incident that changed my views of them (gay)...an incident happened which really changed my perception of them...and of course, I also felt scared...it was a...quite private.] (P1)*

*“Yung parang nababastusan ako sa mga ginagawana nila. Parang ganon. ‘Yung ano, parang...bigla nalang silang...ahh...mang-hihipo.” [I find their actions malicious, if not perverted. They can’t keep their hands to themselves.] (P2)*

*“Actually, group kami ng magpipinsan from mother side. Nagano kami, nag...uminom kami. And syempre, we got wasted. Tapos iyon, nung ano na lahat...may isa isa amin, ininvite nila actually kasi ka-close nila. Tapos ako yung katabi non sa higaan. Tapos napansin ko nalang na yung shorts ko is nakababa na.” [Actually, we were a group of cousins from my mother’s side. We had...we drank. And of course, we got wasted. Then, when everyone was already wasted...one of us invited [a gay person], someone close to them. It so happened that I had unintentionally slept beside him (the gay person) and at some point, I woke up and found that my shorts had been pulled down.] (P3)*

*“Sa group of friend na parang inuman, tapos may ininvite silang ganon. Yung nanghahawak na parang ganon, parang out of the limits na ganon.” [When drinking with a group of friends, they invited someone who was gay and who overstepped the boundaries because he was being touchy feely with us.] (P7)*

*“Actually noong ano...ah...para din akong kagaya ng iba na...wala pa akong...wala pa talaga akong muwang ayun, uhm...kasi ‘yung banda sa tito ko uhm ‘yung LGBT ganon, alam mo ‘yong simpleng hipo ganon, nagiging big deal. Simpleng paghawak sa iyo ganon. Ganon ‘yung nangyari kase e nung bata pa ko, kaya ayun. Parang e ano... noong bata pa ako, mga grade three na noon ako, kaya ayun, may time na-develop, na-develop.” [Actually before...ah...it seemed like I was similar to everyone else...I was still innocent and inexperienced that time. A member of the*

LGBT group living near my Uncle’s place, you know, he was fond of simple touching which at that time was a big deal for me; I was only a child then and so it developed a phobia in me.] (P8)

### Salacious act

Aside from the participants’ experience of sexual assault, five (5) responses also reported that one source of their homophobic attitude was their encounter of a salacious act from a gay. Such salacious acts, as revealed in the two (2) responses, include the participants’ direct encounters with gays being malicious through acting amorous, perverted, and maniac-like which they found inappropriate and very unmannerly. In addition to gays being malicious, two (2) responses revealed that gays offering indecent proposals either personally or online was also a factor in the development of their homophobic attitude. Such indecent proposals were offered by gays for their own satisfaction that is sexual in nature, which the participants found apparently displeasing.

*“Siguro sa mga actions na din. Like, may mga ibang...may mga ibang gays kasi na yung sa utak nila laging mga private like that. Yung tingin pa lang nila sa ‘yo like parang gusto kanilang kainin like that...yung parang ganon.” [Perhaps because of their actions as well. Like, there are gays who always have private things going on in their minds. The way they look at you, it seems like they want to eat you.] (P1)*

*“...they are all manyakis and manghihipo.” [They are all maniacs in my eyes...] (P8)*

*“Ano, dagdag ko lang. Kasama din ‘yung pag...parang nambubwiset sila, parang ganon. Yung ‘Kuya, kuya, 150!’ parang ganon. Uso na kasi dati ‘yun e.” [If I may just add. They tease, such as ‘Kuya, kuya, 150!’ That (the teasing offer) was already a fad even before.] (P2)*

*“Mayroong nagchachat about, ‘yon nga. Gusto nila ng ganito, ganyan. Pagbibigyan daw.” [There are gay who send chats online saying that they want this, and that, requesting that it be granted.] (P3)*

### Verbal aggression

Four (4) responses revealed that a direct experience that the participants had encountered was in the form of a verbal aggression, in which the three participants reported that they experienced overhearing words that seemed to talk about them and found their manner of speaking as offensive, at times. This experience, according to them, led to the development of their

homophobic attitude towards gay that is bounded by their feeling of being insulted and offended.

*“Pero minsan kasi alam ko na sa akin pinaparinggan, or, alam mo iyon? May mga instinct kasi tayo, may mga feeling kasi tayo na alam mo sa sarili mo na ikaw yung pinagparinggan like that.”* [But sometimes I know, we get the feeling that when they say something it is somehow directed at us, to try to catch our attention. Our instinct tells us that is what they are doing.] (P1)

*“May mga katangian kasi ‘yung mga gays. Like ‘yung pagsasalita nila sobrang diretso. ‘Yung kumbaga nakaka-insult, nakakaoffend? ...Masyadong malakas ‘yung spirit nila to talk, to share ‘yung thoughts nila. Kaya minsan nakakainsulto ‘yung mga sinasabi nila.”* [Gays have this characteristic of being straightforward when they speak. That is insulting, and offending. They have a strong tendency to talk directly, and to share their thoughts. That’s why, at times, I find what they are saying is insulting.] (P1)

### Crime-inducing act

Moreover, three (3) responses reported that the participants’ direct encounter with a crime-inducing act from gay men became a source of their homophobia. Such crime-inducing acts include an aggressive traumatic experience that they received from gay men in the form of teasing and aggressive chasing which had caused them to develop homophobia that is bounded by fear and distrust. Aside from an aggressive traumatic experience, one (1) response revealed that an experience of theft became the source of his homophobia. In this encounter, he experienced being thieved by their gay house helper which made him lose his trust in gay men that eventually led to his prejudice toward them.

*“Naglalaro po ako sa labas, kasama ko po iyong mga kalaro ko. Sa labas mga kapitbahay po, tapos bigla pong may ano? May dumaan po na bakla po ganoon, tapos bigla nalang po kaming hinabol.”* [My playmates and I were playing outdoors. Then, suddenly there was...a gay guy appeared to be passing by and then he suddenly just went chasing us.] (P5)

*“Ahh...ayun po kasi ma’am one day naglalakad kami ni kuya ko sa daan then...ayun po may mga grupo po ng mga LGBT po na gay. Ano po hmm parang pinag tripan po nila kami, yung parang may gusto silang gawin na something ganon, tapos po kami po tumakbo*

*nalang po kami. Dahil po dun parang nagka trauma ako. Yung parang pong...gusto nila kaming habulin, parang kikidnapin po ganon, di naman po pero parang gustong molestiyahin ganon.”* [Ahh...one day, I was walking with my brother on the street...there was a group of LGBT gay people. They teased us, as if they wanted to do something to us, then we just ran to escape from them. Because of that, it seemed like I experienced trauma. Because it seemed to me like they wanted to chase us, to kidnap us...to molest us like that.] (P6)

*“Nag start iyon kasi yung kasambahay naman dati, which is gay, nagnakaw siya sa amin ng pera ang ng mga gamit. Tapos doon parang nag start na magkaroon ako ng trust issues sa mga iyon nga, gay persons.”* [It started when our gay house helper stole some money and other items from us. That’s when I began to have trust issues in gay persons.] (P3)

### Indirect experiences

Aside from the participants’ direct experiences, experiences that are indirect were also sources of the participants’ homophobia as the responses have revealed. An indirect experience is an encounter that is gained by the participants through the experiences of others and through their channeled exposure from influential information. Such indirect experiences include the imposed perceptions and beliefs of the significant people in the participants’ lives, the views of their community and culture, as well as the influences of media to which a participant was exposed.

### Perception of significant people

Eight (8) responses claimed that the perceptions of the significant people in the participants’ lives had shaped their prejudicial beliefs toward gay men. These significant people include the participants’ family, relatives, peers, and acquaintances. As they revealed, such perceptions of their family and relatives about gay men were imposed on them including statements on how heterosexual relationships are the only acceptable ones, and that gay men might do something harmful to people. Further, responses also revealed that the views of their peers and acquaintances — their mocking, beliefs, and judgment about gay men — were also imposed on them and thus, had shaped their homophobic attitude.

*“Tapos yun po sinabihan po akong [ng parents ko na] huwag lalapit sa kanila baka anong gawin sa akin.*

*Tapos yun po simula po non, doon po nag-start na hindi na po ako lumapit sa kanila...*” [My parents told me not to get near gay people for they might do something to me. Since then, I started to avoid being near them.] (P5)

*“I don’t want to blame it pero parang...sa father side kasi hindi open yung pagdating sa ganyan kaya ayun hanggang sa na develop...parang na tanim na tapos umusbong na ganon dapat, hindi ka dapat makihalubilo na baka may gawin sayo ganun, lumaki kang ganun.”* [I don’t want to blame them, but my relatives from my father’s side are not open to that (homosexuality), that’s why it (homophobia) developed in me. That’s what has been instilled in me until it further developed. I was told not to socialize with them because they might do something to me, or you might grow up that way [like them].] (P8)

*“I grew up sa family talaga na ano...religious. Yes, at the same time hmm yung naging mindset ko talaga is...boy is for girl and girl is only for boy. Yung ganong mindset kasi hmm naitatak talaga saakin.”* [I grew up in a really religious family. At the same time, I always had this mindset that a boy is for a girl, and a girl is only for a boy. This mindset is what has been actually instilled in me.] (P10)

*“...dahil din siguro sa mga influence ng mga kaibigan ko kaya ko parang na hate yung mga ganon (refers to gay people)”* [Perhaps, I was also influenced by my friends to hate gay people.] (P2)

*“...iba ko ring nakilalang homophobic dati gan’on din, so lalo akong na pu-push na...hindi sila magustuhan.”* [My homophobic acquaintances also pushed me to not like gay people.] (P4)

*“May sinasabi po yung mga kasama ko before na ganon nga po. Baka may gawin sila sa atin ganon, huwag mo silang lalapitan...”* [My acquaintances were telling me before that gay people might do something to us, and warned me not to get near them...] (P5)

### **View of the community and culture**

Another indirect experience that caused the participants’ homophobia development was revealed by four (4) responses. This involved the views held by the community and conventions dictated by culture. The participants reported that the influence of the Filipino culture and the general views/beliefs held by the community where they lived have influenced how they perceive gays, homosexuality, and same-sex relationships. Such views include hate towards gay

men and the value of not being open to same sex relationships.

*“So, ‘yun. Ahh...parang na-a-adapt ko yung environment namin, dito sa lugar namin. Kasi mostly, yung mga tao dito sa amin ano e...parang hate talaga nila yung mga ganon (refers to gay men).”* [And of course, I adopted their opinions and that kind of environment, because most of the people in our place really hate those kinds of people.] (P2)

*“...culture shock kasi hindi naman po kami.”* [I got culture-shocked, because we are not accustomed to seeing same-sex partners here in the Philippines.] (P3)

*“...dahil sa environmental na nakapaligid saakin, like...kasi diba hmm alam naman natin yung mga pilipino is hindi ganun ka welcome sa...mga same sex relationship, so parang insult lagi kapag...gay ganyan bakla so parang dahil sa environment na kinalakihan ko ganun, parang nakuha ko rin and...parang na understand ko na kapag bakla is insult yun.”* [Because of the environment where I lived...we all know that Filipinos do not welcome the idea of same-sex relationships. Hence, it seems like being gay is an insult. So, due to the environment where I was raised, I understood and adopted the belief that being gay is an insult.] (P9)

### **Malicious portrayal of media**

One (1) response reported that the participant’s exposure to malicious portrayals of gay people on television and other media platforms influenced the development of his prejudice toward gay men. Malicious portrayals involve media and television’s presentation of gay men as having intentions of doing harm to others.

*“...it’s more on na exposed ako sa mga television...and syempre pag television malaki ang influenced niyan...ng technology, ng mga napapanood natin and...one time talaga may napanood ako nun na ganun yung naging set up...ng abusement ng mga iba...na hmm meron silang other intentions or sa mga friends nila, or even sa mga katrabaho nila...minsan nga hindi pa natin maiwasan na sa family ganun...and until now naman sa mga napapanood ko merong ganun kung alam niyo rin yung mga hmm palabas sa ABS and sa GMA which is yung Ipaglaban Mo...yan merong mga stories na ganun kasi, na e-encounter ko parin yun...”* [It’s more on because I was exposed to television...and of course, television, technology, and the contents I’ve watched from them have huge



influences. There was a time when I watched a program with that kind of set-up...abuse from some (gay)...they have other intentions toward their friends, and even their co-workers. Sometimes, it also cannot be avoided in the family...and up until now, those stories are still evident on programs shown on ABS and GMA such as in ‘Ipaglaban Mo’...I still encounter those kinds of stories.] (P10)

**Past Behavior Toward Gay Men**

Table 2 shows the past behavior of the participants toward gay men prior BL series exposure. The participants revealed the homophobic covert and overt behaviors they had engaged in toward gay men. The occurrence of such covert and overt behaviors were mainly attributable to unfortunate personal experiences with gay men and the influences of others.

Table 2. Past Behavior Toward Gay Men

Themes	Subthemes	Number of responses
Portrayal of homosexuality	Gay men’s positive traits	11
	Normal expression of boy’s love	5
Story elements	Gay men’s realities	4
	Lesson-filled stories	9
	Aversion-removing stories	4
	Relatable story characters	3

**Covert behaviors**

The participants’ responses revealed their various thoughts and feelings regarding gay men. These thoughts and feelings are considered to be covert behaviors. The thoughts represent the participants’ viewpoints on how they perceived gay men prior to their exposure to BL series. Specifically, these thoughts refer to distrust of gay men, thought of gay men as deviants, and thought of committing aggression against gay men. On the other hand, feelings denote what the participants intuitively felt in the presence of gay men. In detail, these feelings are namely being uncomfortable, annoyed, and hateful toward gay men.

**Distrust gay men**

Ten (10) responses disclosed that they had distrustful thoughts about gay men as they found them to be malicious, amorous, and have aggressive intentions.

“Yung thought ko, initial thought, is...they would take advantage of you pag wala ka na sa sarili mo.” [My initial thought is...they would take advantage of you whenever you are added.] (P3)

“...[naiisip ko na] parang gusto po nilang...parang gustong kidnapin ganon. Tapos yung parang gusto ka po nilang saktan ganon.” “...pag nakita ko sila parang...always na [naiisip ko na] bad yung gagawin parang momolestiyahin...parang gusto ka po nilang i-rape ganon.” [It seems like they want to kidnap and hurt you.] [Whenever I see them, I always think that they would do bad things, such as molest you... as if they wanted to rape you.] (P6)

“...yung sa tingin ko na kapag nakakakita ako ng tulad nila, anytime, may gagawin sila sa akin. Baka bigla hipuan ako ganoon, baka bigla, hablutin ka.” [Whenever I see people like them, I think that anytime, they would do something to me.] (P8)

**Uncomfortable around gay men**

Six (6) responses, on the other hand, pointed out that the participants felt uncomfortable around gay men, especially when they were attempting to get too close to them. With this uncomfortable feeling, some participants did not let their guard down and ensured that they have a companion with them whenever they dealt with gay men.

“...parang kinakabahan na po ako pag marami sila...” [I feel nervous when there are so many of them.] (P6)  
 “...hindi ako makikipag-usap sa kanila na wala akong kasama...” [I don’t talk to them alone; I made sure I had a companion with me.] (P8)

“...kaya hmm dumating na rin sa part ko nun na kahit sa groupings lang or...even nga sa circle of friends e, nagkaroon na rin [ng gay people na kasama] and nandun pa rin naman ako sa part na...its either kasama ko yung mga boys yan...dun ako sumasama madalas and syempre may... kasama ko din kasi yung pinsan ko which is girl so parang bantay ko din siya kahit papaano dahil babae siya ganun.” [It came to a point that in groupings, or even in a circle of friends where there are gay people, I still made sure I was in the company of the boys. I would go with them and also, I had my girl-cousin with me who could act as some sort of a security for me.] (P10)

**Thought of gay men as deviants**

Further, three (3) responses indicated that gay men are thought of as deviants in the society. Specifically, they are thought to be plagues and sinners. The occurrence of these thoughts was caused by the influence of significant people and the negative event experienced in the lives of the participants.

*"I found them na parang sinners talaga."* [I really found them to be akin to being sinners.] (P1)

*"Siguro before yung ano yung salot [yung naiisip ko sa kanila]."* [Maybe before, as plagues.] (P9)

*"...yung word na 'salot' yung ganung part, yun yung sa tingin ko worst na yun na nagawa ko [pambully]."* [I regarded them by the term 'plague', that, I think, was the worst I've done.] (P10)

### Thought of aggressing gay men

Two (2) responses revealed that there were urges of hurting and beating gay men before due to annoyance, and the bad encounter that the participant experienced from gay men.

*"Tapos gusto ko lagi silang bugbugin, parang ganon."*  
*"Parang gusto ko na silang saktan."* [I have this urge to always beat them.] [I feel like I want to hurt them.] (P2)

### Annoyed with gay men

Another two (2) responses also revealed that they had feelings of annoyance toward gay men. Despite the awareness that gay men are artistic, creative, or confident in themselves which one participant pointed out, such a feeling still surfaced because of the nonconsensual experience that the participants had experienced.

*"Actually...sorry ha? Noon kasi, as in, I found them disgusting... Like, basta marumi, negative yung mga naano ko though alam ko naman they are artistic, they are creative, they are confident talaga sa mga sarili nila. Pero noon kasi talaga, as in, kinaiinisan ko like that."* [Actually...I'm sorry [to say]. Before, I found them disgusting. Like they are dirty. I had negative thoughts about them although I know that they are artistic, they are creative, they are confident in themselves. Before, I found them really annoying [gay men].] (P1)

*"...dahil sa mga experience ko nga, 'yung parang...ah...parang lagi akong naiinis."* *"Sobrang inis ko talaga."* [Because of what I've experienced, it seems like I am always annoyed with them. Extremely annoyed.] (P2)

### Hated gay men

Lastly, two (2) responses represent the developed feelings of hatred toward gay men due to what they

had experienced around them.

*"...parang na-hate yung mga ganon."* [I hated them.] (P2)

*"Parang doon po sa bad experienced ko nagalit ako sa kanila."* [Because of my bad experience with them, I hated them.] (P6)

### Overt behaviors

Responses revealed that, prior to BL series exposure, the participants also engaged in overt behaviors. These behaviors were unfriendly actions committed by the participants toward gay men. Such actions included avoiding, discriminating, and verbally insulting gay men. However, contrary to these overt behaviors, participants tried to act civilly despite the prejudices they held, as there were instances where gay men could not be completely avoided. Overt behaviors, in general, refer to the deeds that were explicitly done by the participants toward gay men.

### Avoided gay men

Eleven (11) responses revealed that they consciously avoided interacting with, and being with gay men. Avoidance was done by the participants to negate unforeseeable interaction with gay men.

*"As long as possible gusto ko wala akong kasamang ganon. Like iniwasan ko talaga sila."* [As long as possible, I want that I don't have any companion [that are gay]. I really avoid them.] (P1)

*"...medyo hindi ko na sila pinapansin talaga e. Parang ako na 'yung umiwas sa kanila non para hindi na umabot sa ibang... parang ano... parang hindi na magkagulo."* [I don't really pay attention to them. I make an effort to avoid them so trouble may also be avoided] (P2)

*"Umiiwas ako as long as kaya. Tapos pag may lumalapit, lilipat ako ng lugar, ganon. Ganon, ganon ako. As in iwas. Todo iwas."* [I avoid them as long as I can. If someone approaches me, I move to another place. That's how I practised extreme avoidance of them.] (P3)

*"...syempre may mga kaklase din naman ako na nasa ano...part ng third sex, kaya medyo that time is...iwas ako kahit papaano, even sa groupings yun..."* [I also have classmates who are part of the third sex. And at that time, I kind of avoided them, even in groupings...] (P10)

### Tried to be civil toward gay men

On the other hand, eight (8) responses revealed that participants tried to be civil with gay men on some occasions, such as in school activities and sport team events, as they needed to communicate and collaborate with them to accomplish their responsibilities and commitments.

*“As a school leader. Syempre dapat maging boses ka nang mga students. So kumbaga. Inaalis ko na lang sa isip ko na may nangyari (referring to the bad incident happened)...”* [As a school leader, of course, I have to be the voice of the students. So it’s like, I try not to think of what had happened before.] (P1)

*“...dahil nga ano rin ako, player ako. E, volleyball din...ang nangyayari ay ‘yung kapag sa team...ano, hanggang training lang, pero outside that hindi ko sila kayang pakisamahan ganon. Hanggang usap lang sa training...”* [Because I am a volleyball player, in volleyball, there are teams. [I interact with them] only in training. Outside training, I don’t go with them. I talk to them during training, but they have other gay companions, I don’t like it.] (P8)

*“Hmm diba po...yung iba po kasi parang kailangan kong makisama kasi hmm like friend siya ng parents ko ganun so dapat minsan sa isang bahay makakasama ko sila...”* [Sometimes I have to get along [with gay men] because they are friends with my parents. So sometimes, they visit us in our house, and I cannot avoid their company.] (P9)

*“...nung time na dahil medyo ano na rin ako nun grade conscious...syempre dahil susunod at susunod ka talaga sa gusto ng professor o teacher during high school, wala akong choice...”* [There was a time that I was already grade conscious, of course, I would follow what the professor or the teacher required during high school. I didn’t have a choice...] (P10)

*“...sa groupings tayo hmm na madalas nagiging leader ako, so dissemination of work loads tayo diba? Ang gagawin ko nalang nun is...hmm meeting and then nakasulat na sa paper ko yung mga work loads nila yung designated work loads nila and then announce lang...kunware this is your work kailangan ganito yung deadline ganun, at least kahit papaano hmm napapakita ko pa rin sa grupo ko na wala akong pinipili o nako consider ko parin lahat, kahit na may...problem din sa akin at least nahahandle ko hmm sa pagiging leader, pagiging tao at pagiging kaglase kahit papaano...”* [In groupings, I am usually the leader. So there is a need for dissemination of workloads, right? What I do is, there will be a meeting and then, I’ll write on a paper the designated workloads and announce them. For example, “This is

your work and has to be accomplished by this deadline.” At least, somehow, I can show them that I don’t favor anyone. That I consider them all even if I have a problem interacting with some of them, at least, I am able to deal with them as a leader, as a person, and as a classmate.] (P10)

### Verbally insulted gay men

Moreover, five (5) responses specified that the participants engaged in acts of verbally insulting gay men. These verbal insults include teasing, arguing, confronting, and verbally bullying them due to hatred, irritation, and influence of friends.

*“...pag nakikita ko po sila lagi ko po silang kinakantiyaw ganon.”* [Whenever I see them, I mock them.] (P6)

*“...tapos meron akong one time...ano baklang nakaaway. Talagang yung mga nasabi ko sa kanya alam ko masasakit, pero yun, gawa din kasi talaga ng perception ko sa kanila.”* [Then there was one time, I argued with a gay guy. I had said hurtful things to him. That’s what my perception of them could do.] (P7)

*“Yung ano sa group of friends, talagang nagkaroon na parang medyo awkwardness kasi kinonfront ko siya talaga don eh. Parang bakit ganyan siya gumalaw ganon, bakit ganyan siya humawak, eh di naman kami close. Tapos sinasabi niya, “Ang kj (kill joy) mo naman.” Tapos ayon, nakuha kong sinabi sa kanya na, “Hindi ako kj!”, “Ang landi mo!” ganon-ganon. “Di mo naman ako kilala, bakit ganyan kayo gumalaw, ganyan kayo malalandi kayo.” Tapos iyon nagkaroon ng problem sa boundaries.”* [In [my] group of friends, there really was awkwardness because I confronted him [a gay man]. Like why does he behave like that, why does he touch [me] when in fact we are not close. Then he said that “You’re a kj (kill joy).” And that’s when I was able to say that, “I am not a kj!”, “You’re a flirt!”, “You don’t even know me yet, but why do you behave like that? You are all like that, a flirt.] (P7)

*“...syempre dahil sa barka barkada during high school diba di mo maiiwasan na hmm sulsol din or influence ng mga barkada mo na mambully ganun...talagang di nawawala yan yung pambully sa part ko na ginawa ko naman din yun, and aminado ako dun.”* [Of course, because of my group of friends during high school, we cannot avoid being influenced by friends who prod us to bully [gay men]. I really did bully them and I admit that.] (P10)

### Discrimination of gay men

Lastly, four (4) responses indicated that gay men were immediately judged and were discriminated against by the participants. As the responses revealed, participants thought that gay men engaged in doing inappropriate actions. Also, they questioned their (gay men) engagement in same-sex relationships, and thought that they were people who should not be befriended.

“...kapag nakikita ko po sila jinajudge ko po sila easily, and kung anu-ano po yung pumapasok sa isip ko.” [Whenever I see them, I judge them immediately and I think a lot of (bad) things about them.] (P5)  
 “Ginawa ko na rin yung ano, nag discriminate din. Nagdiscriminate na din ako ng part ng LGBTQIA+, na parang bakit kailangan nilang maglandi ng ganon. Na parang hindi sila finesse ganon, yung parang sa pag sa kalye inappropriate yung mga gawa nila ganon. Na parang ang iingay nila ganon...” [I also discriminated against some [people who are] part of LGBTQIA+ in a way that, I often asked myself “Why do they have to flirt?” Like they do not act with finesse. They act inappropriately in the streets. They are loud.] (P7)  
 “Hmm siguro more on ‘Bakit sila ganun?’, like kasi parang nasanay ako dati sa other sexual relationship so iniisip ko lagi bakit nila nagawang magka gusto sa same sex nila ganun.” [It’s more on, “Why are they like that?” I had gotten used to other (conventional) sexual relationships, that’s why I wondered why they got to like someone of the same sex.] (P9)  
 “...syempre kapag homophobic karin kasi nandun na yung part na closed minded ka e. Yung tingin ko sa kanila talaga before is ano hmm...hindi dapat pakisamahan, kasi meron akong...may takot sakin na...yan nga yung influence ng media, nakita ko sa kanila na may intensyon sila...” [Of course, when you are homophobic, there is that part of you that is closed-minded. I thought one should not be friends with them, get close to them; they inspired fear in me due to the influence of media, which made me think that [gay men] have [bad] intentions.] (P10)

### **BL Series’ Factors that Influenced Participants’ Views on Gay Men**

Table 3 shows the factors in BL series that influenced the participants’ views on gay men to change. It was reported that BL series provided awareness about homosexuality, same-sex relationships, and gay men’s realities through its portrayal of homosexuality, and its story elements.

Table 3. *BL Series’ Factors that Influenced Participants’ Views on Gay Men*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of responses
Portrayal of homosexuality	Gay men’s positive traits	11
	Normal expression of boy’s love	5
	Gay men’s realities	4
Story elements	Lesson-filled stories	9
	Aversion-removing stories	4
	Relatable story characters	3

### **Portrayal of homosexuality**

Responses revealed that BL series’ portrayal of homosexuality or its depiction of the traits of gay men, their realities, and the expression boys’ love have influenced the participants views on gay men in a way that such portrayal helped them gain a better view of the truths about homosexuality in general, which elicited change in their homophobic attitudes. Specifically, through portrayal, the participants have discovered positive traits of gay men, were able to perceive the normal expression of boys’ love, and lastly, they understood gay men’s realities.

### **Gay men’s positive traits**

Eleven (11) responses revealed that the presented positive traits of gay men in BL series’ portrayals have led the participants’ to obtain a shift in their homophobic beliefs and attitudes. As shared through the responses, good representations of gay men in BL series were observed, leading the participants to see gay men as individuals who are kind, decent, passionate, respectful to people, and capable of giving genuine love. Also, contrary to the negative expectations they previously had that gay men would always do unsuitable actions like being harsh and malicious, no inappropriate actions were portrayed in BL series, and thus enabled the participants to see gay men as people having good intentions in being friends with other people.

“Meron din namang, na sobrang, like kunware si Tharn, hindi mo malalaman na gay pala siya? Kasi masculine tapos ang gwapo and sobrang bait. Marespeto and mahal niya talaga yung tao.” [There are those like Tharn (a character in BL series) that you won’t even know that he’s gay? Because he is masculine, handsome, and super kind. He also knows how to respect and he truly loves the person (refers to the other main character.)] (P1)

“Nakita ko na parang yung mga gay doon [sa BL series], buo sila nagbibigay ng love sa ibang tao, lalo

*na doon sa straight ba...pinaglalaman nila yung love nila para sa isang tao...kumbaga parang ano e, parang mas higit pa yung nakita kong love ng gay doon sa straight kesa doon sa babae at lalaki dito sa atin.” [I saw there that gay men can give love wholeheartedly to other people, especially to those who are straight; they are fighting for their love for that person. Sort of like, I saw that a gay is more loving to the straight one compared to a woman and a man that we know are in a relationship.] (P2)*

*“Yung parang walang sobrang pagkabakla yung galaw. Parang walang malisyoso, walang ano, wala yung inappropriate na galaw nila.” [It’s like there is no excessive “gay men behavior.” There is no maliciousness [seen], no inappropriate behaviors, no inappropriate scenes.] (P7)*

*“...sa part na pagiging friendly nila (gay), tapos ‘yung uhm...pagiging, uhm...pagkakaroon ng pure intention na gusto nilang maging kaibigan, hanggang doon lang tapos walang ibang mangyayareng iba...nakita ko don (in BL).” [I saw there [in BL series] showing gay men as friendly. That they have this pure intention of wanting to be friends with people, no more, no less.] (P8)*

*“...kase nakita ko din yung part din ng ano e...ng passion nila sa education nila, yung passion nila sa music, sa friendship at the same time sa family...at the same time sa part ni Thai na which is dancer siya and we have same passion on that part naman, kaya sabi ko ahh okay ganito pala siya.” [I also saw [in BL series] that their passion for education, their passion for music, for their friendship, and at the same time for their family. Also, in Thai’s (a character in BL series) part, he is a dancer, we have the same passion, so I was like, “Oh. So this is how it is.”] (P10)*

### Normal expression of boys’ love

Aside from the discoveries of the good traits gay men have as portrayed in BL series, it was also shown therein that male to male relationship is as normal as heterosexual relationships. Five (5) responses claimed that the participants were able to perceive the expression of boys’ love as normal as what they have witnessed in the BL series they have watched. Participants’ homophobic views were changed as they got exposed to the portrayal of male-to-male relationships as being no different from how heterosexual relationships work and that only the gender involved varies.

*“...hindi naman ganon ka pangit yung series. Kasi walang ganong harassment, na parang dalawang lalaki nagkainlove...yung parang naramdaman na kakaiba, or yung na feel ko about dun sa series, parang normal lang na taong nagka-inlovevan.” [The series is not that bad. Because there is no harassment, it’s like just two men fell in love [with each other]. It felt different, or [should I say] what I felt about the series is that it is just people who normally fell in love with each other.] (P7)*

*“...pareho lang yung nangyayari sa heterosexual at homosexual na walang pinagkaiba na tao sila na nagkakagusto din.” [It’s just the same with what happens in heterosexual [relationships] and homosexual [relationships]. There is no difference, that they are people who are capable of liking others, too.] (P9)*

*“May time kasi na kapag yung ka relationship mo is third sex is minsan sinasamantala yan, pineperahan sila pero makikita mo talaga kahit na sa BL series mo lang makikita yung pure love na ibinibigay nila...ng mga gay people dun sa taong mahal talaga nila, kumbaga ano lang e, kung irerelate mo lang sa lalake at babae pag mahal na mahal nila ang isa’t isa parang gagawin nila lahat, parang walang pinag kaiba...yes gender lang pero yung pagmamahal kasi is parang wala namang pinag ka iba kasi they gave everything as much as maging okay yung relationship nila...hmm kaya nilang ipag malaki, yun yung nakita ko sa kanila na kahit ano man yung case nila, kahit ano yung ibigay na hate ng ibang tao yung love...” [There are times that when you are in a relationship with the third sex, sometimes they are being taken advantage of, like being asked for money. But in the BL series, you’ll see that gay people can give pure love wholeheartedly to those who they truly love. Sort of like, if you relate it to a man and a woman, when they love one another, they can do everything for the sake of each other. And there is no difference. Yes, in terms of gender [there is a difference] but in terms of the love that they give, it’s just the same. They give everything for their relationship to be okay. They can be proud, that’s what I see. That in any case, even if they receive hate from other people, there is love...] (P10)*

### Gay men’s realities

Moreover, BL series helped in understanding the lives of gay men through their presented realities in said series. Four (4) responses revealed that the

presentation of real-life experiences of gays in BL series helped the participants to get better acquainted with the situation and experiences of the gays. These enabled them to have a good understanding of how gay men act, the truth on how they are being treated, and how they feel in certain situations.

*“Kasi nakikita din nila yung point of view ng isang tao. Not only in their...kumbaga nakikita nila kung paano umasta ‘to. Kung pano yung galaw nila. Kung pano nadedegrade actually yung isang tao.”* [Because BL series allowed them to see the point of view of a person. Not only that, for instance, how they act, how they behave, how they are being degraded.] (P3)

*“...about sa mga films like series like the others, nagiging ano sila...hmm eye opener sa ibang tao na naiintindihan yung nararamdaman ng ibang tao like gay people or other gender na alam natin na commonly mali yung same sex ganyan pero pag yung mga film na to like napanood mo, naintindihan mo hmm nag reflect ka parang magbabago ka talaga, and nakakatulung siya kasi somehow you understand the world ganun.”* [Like the other films, other series, they became an eye-opener to other people - that they now understand how gay men or other gender feel because as we commonly know, same-sex [relationship] is perceived to be wrong. But if you watch this film [BL series], you’ll understand, you’ll reflect to the point that you’ll change, and will help you somehow to understand the world.] (P9)

*“...commonly pinapakita doon yung ano yung napi feel nung mga nasa same sex relationship, ano yung nararamdaman nila tas parang maiintindihan mo na tao lang talaga sila na nagkagusto sa ibang tao...”* [It is commonly shown there [in BL series] how people in the same-sex relationship feel and you will understand that they are humans too that are also capable of liking other people [of the same sex.] (P9)

### Story elements

Apart from the portrayal of homosexuality, BL series’ story elements are another factor that helped the participants to have a change in their beliefs. These elements are enumerated as lesson-filled, aversion-removing stories, and relatable story characters which raised awareness and reflection on the part of the participants. Through such elements, the participants expressed that they were able to remove feelings of aversion, and were able to associate themselves with BL characters which contributed in the shift in their

homophobic beliefs toward gay men.

### Lesson-filled stories

Nine (9) responses reported that the participants gained learnings from the series because such series are lesson-filled. One particular participant even reported that he was hooked and got emotional as he was overwhelmed with the lessons that the stories can bestow on its viewers. Some were able to reflect while viewing the series, stating that such a series is a reality slap. Another ascertained the uniqueness in the stories presented, confirming that BL series can distinctively present lessons that cannot be seen in any other genre. In general, such lesson-filled stories directed the participants to look into themselves and understand the viewpoints of others which in turn changed their beliefs.

*“Honestly kasi ang daming lessons [sa BL series] e. Hindi ko lang kasi sila maisa-isa. Pero sobrang dami. Naiiyak pa nga ako minsan.”* [Honestly, there are too many lessons [in BL series]. I can’t just name them one by one. But there are a lot [of them]. Sometimes, I even get emotional [because of them.]] (P1)

*“Ahh...sa panood ko kasi ng BL series parang nagbigay sila ng ano...parang kumbaga, slap of reality. Kung saan ano... ‘yung parang doon nag-start na magbago ‘yung pakikitungo ko sa kanila.”* [By watching BL series, they gave me, sort of like a slap of reality where I began to change the way I deal with them.] (P2)

*“...and parang binigyan ako ng BL series ng lessons to understand na dapat wag tayong mag-stick sa isang paniniwala.”* [And it’s like BL series made me understand that we should not stick to only one belief.] (P4)

*“... ‘yung sa BL kasi iba kasi ‘yung story type niya sa mga usual romantic, sa mga family, ah... family-related na movies or series ganoon. Iba kasi siya, na may mahahanap ka doon na moral na hindi mo mahahanap sa mga usual, like ayun nga na, uhm... ‘yung pagiging open sa mga ganyang klaseng tao, ‘yun.”* [BL [series] has different story types, unlike usual romantic or family-related movies. It is different in a way that you’ll find their moral [values] that you won’t find usually. [For example,] being open to those kinds people [refers to gay men]. What you will see in the BL series are unusual stories with so many lessons to learn from them.] (P8)

### Aversion-removing stories

In addition to lesson-filled stories, the participants revealed that BL series incorporates aversion-removing stories. Four (4) responses exemplified that through BL series, participants' aversion came to an end. Such an aversion includes hatred, anger, or annoyance that participants initially felt toward gay men prior to BL series exposure. Responses implied that viewing of BL series helped the participants to get rid of their negative feelings toward gay men.

"...*'di ko alam ba't wala akong naramdaman na ano...wala akong naramdaman na inis? Wala akong naramdaman na galit or hindi ko naalala yung nangyari before.*" [I don't know why I didn't feel any annoyance. I didn't feel any anger or, it didn't even bring to mind what had happened before.] (P1)

"*Like parang nahiya ako sa sarili ko na...nahiya ako sa sarili ko na ba't ito hindi ko kinaiinisan? Like, may mga kissing scene pero hindi ako nainis like that.*" [I felt ashamed of myself, I was embarrassed of myself because [I thought], "Why am I not annoyed by this?" There are kissing scenes but I didn't feel any annoyance.] (P1)

"...*after kong manood ng BL series ganon, yung parang na lessen na yung anger ko sa kanila.*" [I felt ashamed of myself, I was embarrassed of myself because [I thought], "Why am I not annoyed by this?" There are kissing scenes but I didn't feel any annoyance.] (P7)

"*Nakatulong yung BL sakin, kasi nung una palang nanood nakong BL wala ako sigurung naramdaman na awkwardness...*" [BL [series] helped me. The first time I watched the BL series, I didn't feel any awkwardness...] (P7)

### Relatable story characters

Lastly, BL series are found to have relatable story characters. Three (3) responses revealed that the participants were able to relate and mirror their past selves in relation to the gay characters in BL series. The participants were reminded of their homophobic behaviors before and of their negative experiences. Such a reflection prompted the participants' awareness of their past actions, leading to a positive change within themselves.

"...*may mga lessons doon na parang ako yung pinapatama. Like kaugali ko yung isang main*

*character. Kasi yung isang character, ganoon din siya. Homophobic din siya. Pero noong nakilala niya yung isang guy na nagpalambot ng puso niya, ayon, nagbago yung pananaw niya sa mga LGBT persons.*" [There are lessons there [in BL series] as if they were aimed at me. I have the same temperament as one of the main characters. Because that one character, we're the same, he is also homophobic. But when he met the guy, the one who softens his heart, his views about LGBT persons changed.] (P1)

"*Nagustuhan ko po yung Tharntype kasi parang nung napanood ko po yung first episode niya, 'yon nga po, takot din siya sa gay. Parang nakita ko po yung sarili ko before. sa kanya. Tapos nung nalaman ko din po na victim of abuse, sabi ko, "Ah, oo." Sabi kong ganon, parang mas naka-relate po ako don sa protagonist sa series na iyon.*" [I liked Tharntype because when I watched its first episode, one of the characters is scared of gays. I saw myself in there, in that character. And then I knew eventually that he was a victim of abuse and I said to myself, "Ah. yes." I said that [because] I relate to the protagonist of that series.] (P3)

"...*halos sa BL series ko lang din kasi nakita, yun nga dati. Nung dating ayoko sila talaga, yung ginagawa kong way para hindi sila makasalamuha at lalayo ako, so hindi ko talaga sila nilalapitan ganon.*" [It is almost in the BL series that I saw the past. The times when I didn't really like them. When I did not mingle with them, but tried to avoid them.] (P4)

### Impact of the Shift in their Homophobic Belief

Table 4 shows how the change in belief towards homosexuality impact the participants' lives. Through their exposure to BL series, the participants obtained interpersonal, and personal development.

Table 4. *Impact of the Shift in their Homophobic Belief*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of responses
Interpersonal development	Extended friendships with gay men	14
	Became allies of LGBTQIA+ community	3
	Acknowledged gay men	3
	Learned lessons from gay men	2
Personal development	Developed attraction to same sex	1
	Became open-minded	4
	Freed from hatred	3

### Interpersonal development

After the participants' exposure to BL series, their responses revealed that this experience had impacted

their interpersonal development. Interpersonal development depicts the improvement of the participants' manner of connecting, dealing, and listening to gay men. This development that they claimed to have obtained involved extending friendships to gay men, becoming allies of the entire LGBTQIA+ community, acknowledging gay men, and interestingly, as one of them reported, even developing attraction to people of the same-sex. With this development fueled by BL series exposure, barriers put against gay men were removed.

### Extended friendship with gay men

Fourteen (14) responses unveiled that participants were able to welcome friendships from and/or extend friendships with gay men, became more comfortable talking to homosexual males than they were before, and, also, became more familiar with the LGBTQIA+ community. However, some participants shared that they are still observing boundaries when it comes to interacting with them.

*“Like, sobrang free ko lang to even talk to them, to even have a conversation to them. Yung kahit nga na makipag-ano sa kanila e...ah actually may mga naging friends na rin ako hanggang ngayon.”* [Like, I just feel so free in talking to them, even having a conversation with them. Even if I have to deal with them...ah, I've actually made friends with some of them.] (P1)

*“Okay naman, okay sila kasama and masaya...masaya pala talaga silang kasama, actually hanggang ngayon nag iimprove pa yung quality or yung way ng pakikisalamuha ko sa kanila in a good way na appreciate ko na sila ngayon, mas gusto ko na din silang nakakasama parang wala ng awkward awkward pag kasama sila.”* [It's okay, they're actually okay to be with and it's fun... they're really fun to be with. Actually up until now, I am improving the way I socialize with them and I really appreciate them now, and I prefer to be with them most of the time. And there are no more feelings of awkwardness when I am with them.] (P4)

*“...parang naging open ako yung open na ko sa friendship, pero meron pa din pong limitations yung ganun.”* [...It seemed like I became more open to be friends with them, but there are still limitations like that.] (P6)

*“...okay na rin naman [yung pakikitungo ko sa kanila]...may mga nakakasama na rin naman, and may mga nakakausap, ayun naging open and naging okay,*

*okay pa naman on the run 'yung start ng pag-open to be friends with them.’* [...seems to be fine [the way I socialize with them]...I had interactions, and had some small talks, I became open and it's fine. It's okay on the run to start opening a friendship with them.] (P8)

*“Parang hindi na limited sa hmm boy or girl yung mga close friend ko like hmm may mga friends na kong gay, if meron man na dadagdag na ibang gender okay lang rin sakin like tao sila okay, pwede silang maging bestfriend ko ganun.”* [It seems like my close friends are not anymore limited to boy or girl because I already have friends who are gay, if I gain more friends who belong to the third gender, its fine by me. They're people, too, and we can be best friends.] (P9)

### Became allies of LGBTQIA+ community

Three (3) responses indicate that they were able to become allies of LGBTQIA+ members in which they shared that by being their allies, they would be able to help them.

*“Siguro oo kasi being open minded sa mga bagay na ganito, makakatulong ka din sa kanila e. Kasi you can help with their problems. Kasi aminin natin sa hindi, minsan, pinagbubuntungan ng problema yung mga members ng LGBTQIA+, diba? Minsan, madaming...madami tayong makikita sa social media na salot, ganyan. Pero kung yung kaibigan mo is one of them, supporting them or being an ally for them is a big thing already.”* [Maybe yes because I am open-minded to stuff like this, it will be helpful to them anyway. Because you can help with their problems. Admit it or not, sometimes, troubles are common to members of the LGBTQIA+, right? Sometimes, there are a lot of closed minded people on social media. But if your friend is one of them, supporting them or being an ally for them is already a big (helpful) thing.] (P3)

*“Mas lalo pa po ako naging comfortable towards them and if ever man po na may ma eencounter ako na homophobic, I think I can tell them na,”Hindi po sila kagaya ng nakikita natin sa panlabas. Mas marami pa pong bagay na maganda sa kanila.”* [I became more comfortable towards them and if ever I would encounter somebody who is homophobic, I think I can tell them that there is so much more to them, more positive things than what the eyes can see. There are a lot of good things about them.] (P6)

*“Ngayon supportado nako sa LGBTQIA+.”* [I now support the LGBTQIA+.] (P8)

### Acknowledged gay men

Three (3) responses revealed that they learned to acknowledge gay men, which also means they now give respect to gay men's rights to have a normal life, treat them fairly like they do heterosexual people, and became accepting of gay men as members of the society.

*“Yung parang naging equal na ‘yung pakikitungo ko sa kanila, na kahit lalaki, babae, bakla, o kaya, tomboy...”* [Something like considering them as my equals, regardless of their gender, whether a boy, girl, gay or lesbian...] (P2)

*“Dahil tao lang naman din po sila na may karapatan mabuhay ng normal sa isang community.”* [Because they are also human beings and they have the right to live a normal life in a community.] (P6)

### Learned lessons from gay men

Further, two (2) responses reported that this experience allowed them to learn lessons from gay men which enabled the participants to change their perceptions about them and, eventually, accepted them.

*“May mga gay people din na nag-teach sa akin ng mga iba't ibang life lessons, like that. And everything talaga nag-change.”* [...There were gay people who taught me various life lessons. And everything did change.] (P2)

*“...marami rin kasi akong learnings na nakukuha sa kanila kaya mas tinanggap ko sila.”* [...I have learned a lot from them so it was easier for me to accept them.] (P4)

### Developed attraction to same-sex

One (1) response revealed that his experience influenced him to develop attraction to a person of the same sex.

*“Much better of course yung ngayon (participant's life)... Honestly, may crush ako ngayon and ayon, same gender.”* [Of course, it's much better now (participant's life)... Honestly, I have a crush on someone of the same gender.] (P1)

### Personal development

Aside from their interpersonal development, the participants' responses revealed that the decline in

their homophobic attitude and change of views about gay men led to personal development. Personal development refers to the enhancement of the participants' inner self, overcoming the negative thinking and beliefs they hold, leading to better treatment of gay men. Such a development includes them becoming open-minded, and being freed from hatred.

### Became open-minded

Four (4) responses unveiled that watching BL series had opened their minds about gay men's realities which allowed them to no longer avoid gay men.

*“Mas gusto ko yung [life ko] ngayon kasi mas open nga yung mind nung tao towards that issue. And wala na din namang ano, kumbaga hindi ka na din---wala ka ng masyadong iniwasan kasi okay na siya eh. Okay na. The past issue is solved.”* [I like life now because people's minds are becoming more open towards that issue. And there's nothing left, (of the old negative feelings) --- you don't need to avoid them because it's okay. It's okay now. The past issue is solved.] (P3)

*“Masasabi ko siyang may pagbabago, sa personality ko rin na mas maging open minded yung hindi agad mag jjudge kung ano lang yung nakikita mo...”* [I can say that there really is a change, even in my personality, I became more open-minded and I do not easily create judgments based on what I see...] (P4)

### Freed from hatred

Three (3) participants stated in their responses, that through their experiences, obtained personal growth, which includes freeing themselves from hatred, and from heaviness of the heart.

*“Ohh...in general. Mas naging ano, alam mo iyon, mas naging ano yung puso ko...no hatred. No...no...parang walang dark na nararamdaman.”* I felt ashamed of myself, I was embarrassed of myself because [I thought], “Why am I not annoyed by this?” There are kissing scenes but I didn't feel any annoyance.] (P1)

*“Like, yung...yung puso naging maluwag. And ayon, sobrang sarap sa pakiramdam.”* [Like, my heart no longer feels heavy. And it really feels good.] (P1)

*“Tsaka parang gumaan na rin ‘yung loob ko, parang ganon ba.”* [Also, I feel relieved, something like that.] (P2)

## Realizations from the Experience

Table 5 shows the realizations of the participants, from being a self-confessed homophobic individual who was exposed to BL series to experiencing a shift in their homophobic beliefs. The participants learned and understood how to value diversity, acknowledged inclusivity in love, and observed people impartially.

Table 5. *Realizations from the Experience*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of responses
Valuing diversity	Refrain from generalizing	12
	Recognized the existence of different non-heterosexual identities	3
Acknowledging love inclusivity	Love has no boundaries	7
Observing impartiality	Be open-minded	6
	Refrain from judging	5
	Be fair and give equal treatment	3

### Valuing diversity

The majority of the participants acknowledged that valuing and knowing diversity was an essential lesson emerging from such an experience. Valuing diversity recognizes differences among individuals and acknowledges that these differences are a valuable asset. It describes the significance of not judging gay men whatever their preferences are. Such realizations include refraining from generalizing and recognizing the existence of other non-heterosexual identities, as their responses indicated. These realizations reflect the participants' discovery of gay men being different from what they had thought about them before.

### Refrain from generalizing

Twelve (12) responses revealed that the participants have discovered and realized that not all the members of the LGBTQIA+ community were like what they had thought them to be. Watching BL series paved the way for them to know and understand that the LGBTQIA+ community is diverse. They possess varied characteristics, attitudes, and behavior. Lastly, because of these discoveries, their belief about gay men and in the LGBTQIA+ community had changed for the better.

*“Siguro yung realization ko is that people change. And, alam mo iyon? Hindi siya pack-one-pack-all. Like, kapag nagawa ng isa dapat madadamay din yung iba.”* [Maybe my realization is that people change. And, you know that? It's not pack-one-pack-all. Like [it's not], when one does it, the other must

also be affected.] (P1)

*“...na realized ko po na wag nating lahatin yung mga tao...matutong unawahin muna yung situation bago mag argue yung galit sa isip yung ganun sa kanila.”* [...I realized that we must not generalize everyone of them (gay people) and learn to understand their situation first before arguing with them or expressing negative attitude towards them.] (P6)

*“Saka yung nga narealize ko hindi sila pare-pareho, in the fact that, na hindi lahat ng bakla may masamang balak sa iyo ganon.”* [Then I realized that they are not the same, with the idea that not all gays have bad intentions towards you, like that.] (P7)

*“Uhm, siguro nagchange yung perception ko sa kanila dahil hindi naman pala lahat ng LGBTQ pare-pareho. Yung parang hinaharass ka, merong mga malisyoso gusto gawin sa iyo...na change yung perception ko sa kanila kasi, hindi pala lahat ng LGBTQ, lalo na yung specific na bakla na yun lang yung habol sa iyo. Na parang merong din silang damdamin na in a good way, na parang hindi lahat ng part ng LGBTQ ih haharass ka.”* [Uhm, maybe my perception about them has changed because I realized that not all members of the LGBTQ are the same. Like there are some who harass you, or want to do something malicious to you... my perception has changed because I realized that not all members of the LGBTQ have the same intention of getting close to you. That there are also some members who have pure intentions of friendship, not harass you (verbally or sexually).] (P7)

### Recognized the existence of different non-heterosexual identities

Three (3) responses from the participants reported that they have recognized the existence of different non-heterosexual identities. They have recognized that gay people are diverse, they have categories, and have different attitude and characteristics from one another.

*“There are many types of---akala ko kasi dati, when a person likes boys, they're ano na...they're gay. Pero there are many ano pala...there are many kinds like bisexuals, lesbians, ganyan. Then you can be both. You can be pansexual as well. Madami. So homosexuality is a broad spectrum. Hindi lang siya isa.”* [There are many types of---I thought before, when a person likes boys, they're what...they're gay. But there are many...there are many kinds like bisexuals, lesbians,

ganyan. Then you can be both. You can be pansexual as well. A lot. So homosexuality is a broad spectrum. He is not the only one.] (P3)

### Acknowledging love inclusivity

As revealed in the responses, acknowledging love inclusivity refers to the realization that love can be experienced by couples regardless of the gender involved. Participants had realizations regarding the concept of love, because according to them, acknowledging love inclusivity was apparently represented in the BL series they had watched. Love has no boundaries is their main realization concerning love inclusivity.

### Love has no boundaries

Seven (7) responses revealed that the participants realized that love has no gender, love is so flexible, and love has no boundaries, that no matter what characteristics your loved one has, whatever they are, and whoever they are, as long as their heart is pure, acceptance is due them. In addition, the participants realized that whatever criticisms, discriminations, and prejudices the society gives toward same-sex relationships, love can still be experienced by people of the same sex.

*“And syempre, love is so flexible. Like kahit na hindi mo...hindi mo siya maiisip. Pero kapag...kapag yung puso kasi yung nag-drive...like kapag yung puso yung nakaramdam, hindi mo siya mapipigilan.”* [And of course, love is so flexible. Like even if you don't...think of it. But when...when the heart drives your emotions...like when the heart is the one that feels, you can't stop it.] (P1)

*“Yun nga, pinaglalaman nila ‘yung love nila para sa isang tao. Na kahit ano pang sinasabi ng society, ‘yun nga, parang hindi naging hadlang ‘yung...parang kumbaga, gay ‘yung ano nila, gender ba ‘yung tawag doon? Sa love nila kasi ‘di ba, love has no boundaries ba ‘yun?’* [That is, they are fighting for their love for someone. That no matter what society says, it's like, their gender doesn't seem to be an obstacle. Their love, isn't it, love has no boundaries?] (P2)

*“Based din sa BL pinarealized niya sa akin na hindi masamang ma-inlove sa kapwa mo lalaki, or kung straight ka man ganon. Basta kapag nagkaroon ka ng feelings sa isang tao, yun yung hindi mo malalabanan parang ganon.”* [Also based on BL, it made me realize that "it's not bad to fall in love with your fellow man",

or if you're straight like that. "As long as you have feelings for someone, that is hard to fight against.] (P7)

### Observing impartiality

Lastly, the participants emphasized the importance of observing impartiality as it signifies the realization that no side should be overlooked since gay men have the right to be heard and understood as well. As revealed in their responses, they have realized the importance of becoming open-minded, refraining from judging, and being fair and equal.

### Be open-minded

Six (6) responses revealed that there is nothing wrong with being gay or with being part of the LGBTQIA+ community. As the participants reported, they should keep an open mind toward gay men because this freed them from heaviness of the heart. Also, the participants recognized the importance of being open-minded toward the gay community in order to be able to help and support them fully.

*“And mas maging ano lang...mas maging open yung heart. Mas maging open yung mind. Kasi doon, kapag inopen mo yung heart mo, inopen mo yung mind mo, mas magiging free ka. Mas magiging maluwag yung puso mo. Mas magiging malawak yung pag-iisip mo.”* [And the more it becomes...the more the heart becomes open. Be more open minded. Because there, when you open your heart, you open your mind, you will be more free. Your heart will become more open. Your mind will be broader.] (P1)

*“...homosexuality is not a sin. And these people did not chose to be homosexual na kasalanan iyan ganyan. No. It's not. It's just, they are showing who they are. We need to accept that because this world is thinking fast...so we have to be accepting and we have to have our mind open.”* [...homosexuality is not a sin. And these people did not choose to be homosexual which is regarded as a sin by others. No, it's not. It's just, they are showing who they are. We need to accept that because this world is changing fast...so we have to be accepting and we have to have our mind open.] (P3)

### Refrain from judging

Five (5) responses from the participants revealed that they realized the importance of avoiding discrimination and judgment of gay people. One of the participants pointed out that people should not 'judge a

book by its cover'. Some of the phrases mentioned by the participants reflect thoughts of letting gay people be themselves, refraining from judging them, and lastly, setting gay people free from accusations and judgments. In general, they learned that minds and hearts must be open for gay people, for they also have the right to live freely.

*"Uhm, siguro parang narealized ko na hindi naman sila dapat pandirian or hindi rin sila dapat katukatan, hindi rin sila dapat iwasan. Kasi may mga ano din sila, may mga feelings din sila, na huwag agad mag judge, kung di ka naman naapektuhan sa mga ginagawa nila. Na parang let them be na kung saan sila masaya kasi, yun sila eh."* [Uhm, maybe I realized that they shouldn't be feared, or ostracized; they shouldn't be avoided either. Because they also have feeling; do not judge them immediately, without any basis and if you are not adversely affected by what they do...It's like let them be where they're happy because, that's what they are.] (P7)

*"Yung ano, na-try ding kaibiganin 'yung mga LGBT na nakakasama natin. Try nating i-open 'yung sarili natin from them, na huwag nating ano, huwag nating i-judge agad. Sabi nga, don't judge the book by its cover, na ano, try nating i-open, maging open-minded, ganoon."* [This, we try to be friends with the members of the LGBT. Let's try to open 'ourselves' to them, not to do anything, not to judge immediately. That said, don't judge the book by its cover, that's what, let's try to open, be open-minded, that's it.] (P8)

*"Yun ang realization ko and media pa rin dahil marami na kong nakikitang...even personality na may karelasyon silang LGBT members and that's okay, and kung mahal naman talaga nila yung isa't isa hmm I think we don't have right to judge them or to discriminate them, or to question their love kasi we are not part of their reasons why they are together now."* [That was my realization and because of media I've seen a lot of... even personalities who have a relationship with LGBT members and that's okay, and if they really love each other hmm I think we don't have the right to judge them or to discriminate against them, or to question their love because we are not part of their reasons why they are together now.] (P9)

### **Be fair and give equal treatment**

Three (3) responses from the participants showed their realization that they should be fair and treat everyone equally. Also, they learned the importance of being

kind to the people around them, particularly to gay people.

*"Like, be fair sa lahat ng tao. Like, not everyone can do that. Not everyone are, alam mo iyon, not everyone kaya nilang gawin yung mga bagay na iyon."* [Like, be fair to everyone. Like, not everyone can do that. Not everyone is, you know that, not everyone can do those things.] (P1)

*"Na-realize ko na maging mabuti, maging mabait sa nasa paligid mo. Kahit na magkakaiba man 'yung mga gender, syempre kailangan mo silang i-treat na equal, parang ganon."* [I realized that [we should be] kind, kind to those around you. Even if we differ in gender, of course you have to treat them equally, like that.] (P2)

## **Discussion**

The viewers of BL series in the present study were self-confessed homophobic young adults who have experienced a significant change in beliefs as a result of their exposure to BL series is. Contrary to the impacts they obtained, these self-confessed homophobic young adults held prejudices before the exposure to BL series due to nonideal direct and indirect experiences. Findings report that direct experience is an encounter that the participants had directly gained. Such an experience was mainly in the form of experiencing sexual assault from gay men. The counseling center of the University of Tennessee Knoxville asserted that male individuals who are sexually assaulted become fearful and act in ways that avoid in general those who are like the perpetrators (For Male Survivors, 2012). Parallel to the study's findings, the participants' experienced nonconsensual sexual event has caused them to develop fear, discomfort, and distrust of gay men which eventually led to the occurrence of their homophobic attitudes.

Moreover, the indirect experience that participants gained through the experiences and beliefs of others that were imposed on them markedly stirred up homophobia. Findings revealed that the perception of the significant people in the lives of the participants, namely the family and peers, also had a huge impact on the participants' homophobia development by imposing negative beliefs about nonheterosexual identities. As mentioned by earlier claims in the study's background, families, specifically the parents who are homophobes, tend to foster such values in their children, raising them to be one of them (Perry,

n.d.; What is Homophobia, n.d.). This also mirrors the claims of Mulcahy (2017) that children exhibit congruent levels of prejudicial attitudes as those of adults to whom they observe the modeled beliefs — mainly parents. Also, a child's level of gender biases and sexual prejudice would increase once parental influences are reinforced further. Along with family's influence, participants also learned from their peers as they grew fond of them, letting themselves be influenced as they go along with norms that their peers are into (Roi, et al., 2020).

Such experiences became the reason why they apparently developed homophobic behaviors that were manifested covertly and overtly. Covert behaviors are behaviors that are not to be observed directly and can only be inferred by the person in engagement. These behaviors have a huge and direct influence on one's manifestation of overt behaviors. Generally, mainly two examples of covert behaviors are thinking, and feeling (Shrestha, 2017). Hence, in terms of the covert homophobic behaviors engaged in by the participants, in general, include their homophobic thoughts and feelings, specifically thoughts of distrust, uncomfortable feelings in the presence of gay men, and acts of avoidance as a manifestation of one's past unfortunate direct experience with gay men. Alternatively, preliminary studies reports that the explicit or observable manifestations of homophobic behaviors include the act of insulting gay men verbally and act of discriminating which supports the studies' findings. And these explicit manifestations of homophobic behaviors through actions are regarded as overt behaviors, or visible behaviors that can be directly observed by audiences easily, such as the above-mentioned examples (Shrestha, 2017). However, contrary to the above-mentioned destructive behaviors, most of the participants chose to engage in evasive actions by simply avoiding gay men. As reported on one of the preceding paragraphs, developed fear leads to avoidance of people whom they perceive as similar to the source of their fear (For Male Survivors, 2012).

In the face of all the nonideal experiences, exposure to BL series had shifted the homophobic beliefs of self-confessed homophobic young adults toward gay men. This has substantially proven the claims of Competente (2020) that BL series in general is reported to be effective in eliciting a change in an individual's homophobic attitude and behavior toward homosexuality and people characterized by it. The shift in belief was interestingly brought about by the gained awareness of homophobic young adults through BL series' portrayal of homosexuality, and its story

elements.

As stated by the framing theory, what was given emphasis on the portrayal of gay men in BL series can greatly affect how viewers perceive gay men in reality — BL series' portrayal of gay men or homosexuality in a positive manner made the participants be aware of the positive traits that gay men have. With positive representation, there is a significant influence on the viewer, leading to the lessening or eradicating of the homophobic attitudes that one holds. Such a finding supports the study of Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel (2018a) that through a film that positively represents gay men, homophobic behavior significantly declines. Further, Zsila and Demetrovics (2017) mentioned Pagliassotti's and Mizoguchi's studies highlighting that positive representation of gay men in Boys' Love media can raise awareness that increases the probability of gay men's acceptance, thus reducing homophobia.

Further, the realities of gay men were portrayed in such series. Wong (2021) stated that BL series has the capacity to affect the views of the people in a way that is favorable to the LGBTQIA+ community as the series can present accurate representations of their lives reaching its viewers to gain enlightenment and awareness. To further support this claim, a BL series producer who had numerous experiences in making such series assures the realness of the stories presented as they not only focus on the romantic relationship but also tackles legitimate issues surrounding homosexuality (Koaysomboon, 2020; Mamputsi, 2020).

As mentioned by Koaysomboon (2020) that real-life issues were also presented in BL series' stories and its story elements, such issues gave awareness, reflection, and understanding to the participants on how they dealt with gay men, giving them learnings and understanding of themselves and of gay men, resulting to change. Parallel to this, Yukari (2020) believed that the BL series were meant to break social expectations, traditional wisdom, and misconceptions. Through this, influence of BL series' exposure can significantly turn the tables, eliciting more advantages not only for the gay community but also for individuals who hold prejudices against them.

Interestingly, findings suggest that this phenomenon has left beneficent impacts in the lives of homophobic young adults in two principal life aspects.

In the present study's background, it was mentioned that having homophobic attitude does not only leave destructive impacts on the victim, but also on the

person who holds it. It was emphasized that prejudicial attitudes keep oneself from learning and growing (Couillard, 2013). The current study revealed that when the previous homophobic young adults had been exposed to BL series, their views toward homosexuality changed which in turn freed them from their homophobic attitudes. This is also supported by the claim of Wong (2021) wherein she declared that BL series is markedly influential on people with previous homosexual hostility to later perceive gay people and same-sex relationship with approval. This freedom from prejudicial attitude toward gay men brought about by BL series exposure has led them, as they revealed, to obtain personal development. Such a development of oneself mainly involves becoming open-minded, in ways that BL series paved the way for their minds to be enlightened about gay men's realities and this allowed them to improve in that they have become understanding and non-judgemental toward gays. Such a claim is supported in Wong (2021), where it was given emphasis that BL series exhibits a latent capacity to open the minds of its audience toward gay men and homosexuality.

Moreover, the impact of the experience to self-confessed homophobic young adults is not only limited to the improvement of oneself. Rather, the experience also has impacted the social aspect of their lives.

The findings of the present study revealed that the experience had contributed to the interpersonal development of the participants. This improvement in their way of interacting with others is not only particular to gay men, but also to the entirety of the LGBTQIA+ community. This attainment of the homophobic young adults' interpersonal development is characterized by wanting to extend friendships with gay men, and allowed themselves to acknowledge them. In support of this, Mampusti (2020) stated that the ultimate impact of Boys' Love series is that it creates an opportunity for a more inclusive society by allowing people to acknowledge non-heterosexual people and the love they choose to have. Further, the experience has also impacted the participants in a way that some of them became actual allies of the LGBTQIA+ community in general. As reported by the study of Lopez (2013), the reduced homophobic attitudes had made LGBTQIA+ members perceive themselves as acknowledged by the society due to the social acceptance they receive. Similarly, as per the American Psychological Association (Reducing sexual prejudice, 2013), the decline in prejudicial attitudes against LGBTQIA+ members has led to an increased support for the mentioned sexual minority group. This

support can either be centered around political and social context.

Giving interest in the study's findings, the participants became empowered as allies of the LGBTQIA+ community which is a very significant manifestation of their interpersonal development. As reported by Atcheson (2018), to be an ally is not just mere support-providing, rather, it is bounded by an interpersonal connection between the dominant and less-privileged group with which the ally unites itself, providing conscious, intentional, and positive efforts to advocate and promote a common interest that would benefit the less-privileged in its fight against discrimination and unfair treatment. When a person becomes an LGBTQIA+ ally, he or she makes a personal commitment to align himself/herself in advocating for the needs and rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. Being an ally opens an individual to an additional 10% opportunities of establishing healthy, close relationships with other people. Further, being an ally elevates the capacity of a person to have genuine and loving relationships with friends of other genders (What is an Ally, 2015). In general, allyship is a representation of interpersonal improvement for it is a lifelong process of establishing interpersonal relations with less privileged minority groups and individuals that is bounded by responsibility, consistency, reliance, and trust (Atcheson, 2018).

From being self-confessed homophobic prior to BL series exposure, the dramatic change in the participants' beliefs had given BL series a novel significance in their lives. This novel experience directed the participants to gain realizations about refraining from generalizing gay men as there is diversity in their characteristics, attitudes, and behavior.

Dittrich (2016) attested that through visibility, by clearly seeing things as they are, it is non negotiable to treat genders not perceived to be normal, differently. Regardless of one's sexual orientation, each individual has the right to equality and anti-discrimination. Such knowledge was realized by the participants, combatting the prejudices they held which led to the acknowledgement of gay men, and other genders in general.

In addition, the participants acknowledged love inclusivity stating that love can actually be experienced regardless of the gender involved. A study by Pagliassotti in 2008 affirmed the idea that there is no difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships, only the gender varies. With BL

representations of such homosexual relationship, it is confirmed that BL series can promote acceptance and supporting attitudes driving the participants to arrive at such a realization (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017).

Lastly, the value of observing impartiality was realized as it signifies that no one should be socially deprived, since gay men have the right to live and to be heard in the society. Evidently, the participants realized the importance of being open-minded. Such a finding is supported by Santlago (2019) claiming that mistakes are normal; however, to have a better relationship with the LGBTQ community in general, it is important to acknowledge one's mistakes and move forward. With such acknowledgement, actions can be taken and it is through being open-minded as a starting point for change to happen. Because as one becomes open, the easier it will be to connect, learn, and communicate with the said community. In this study, through BL series, there occurred a change which led the participants to reflect on their behavior, realize the value of becoming open-minded as gay men are humans, too, who should not be neglected and judged for being the way they are.

## Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of self-confessed homophobic young adults exposed to Boys' Love series. Both direct experiences, mainly in the form of sexual assault, and indirect experiences, through the imposed perceptions of significant people in their lives, were revealed to be the principal sources of the participants' homophobia. This developed homophobia motivated them to engage in derogatory attitude, thus having distrustful thoughts, uncomfortable feelings, and evasive actions against gay men. Boys' Love series does not only provide entertainment to its audience, it has also demonstrated an eminent importance for initiating decline in homophobia by its capacity to provide awareness concerning homosexuality, same-sex relationships, and gay men's realities in particular. Specifically, awareness-raising BL series' portrayal of positive traits of gay men, and its lesson-filled stories has influenced the shift in their homophobic beliefs. Further, being freed from their prejudicial attitudes have significantly impacted homophobic young adults' salient life aspects — personal and interpersonal, in a manner that these two life aspects have obtained significant improvements. Lastly, the participants in this study recognized that valuing diversity among people, acknowledging the existence of inclusivity in love, and the importance of being impartial should be

observed.

## Acknowledgement

The researchers are genuinely grateful to Almighty God who has showered them with all His graces, provisions, and blessings, and for being the researchers' ultimate source of strength in accomplishing this research undertaking. This research study would not have been attainable without His bestowed guidance, and unconditional love. To the following individuals who encouraged, inspired and motivated the researchers in all ways possible, in reaching their best to attain their goals for this research, a sincere appreciation and gratitude are what the authors wish to send you all. To Mr. Noli Franco, Thesis professor, the researchers are beyond grateful for his meticulous guidance, for having had to endure fewer hours of sleep to guide the researchers toward the right path of thesis writing, for inspiring them to do beyond what they think they can do, and for tirelessly giving the researchers even his little personal time for the study and sharing his expertise to ensure its success. To Ms. Glaiza Pangan, Thesis Consultant, for believing in what the researchers can do, for giving them the time, effort, and guidance while heading to a fascinating yet meaningful completion of the research study. Next is Dr. Edna Calma, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences for the unending emotional support in making the research study an accomplished one, and for consistently checking on the researchers' health and well-being. Then, to Ms. Maria Heidi Arconado, and Ms. Judy Vinuya, the validators of the IGQs, for the encouragement in creating a clearer and richer research questions. To the Participants, the life blood of the research, for their cooperation, valuable time and intelligent minds in imparting answers to the questions in the study. Lastly to our dearest parents, for the unending support—morally, for the life-lessons; mentally, for the words of encouragement; spiritually, for helping strengthen the authors' faith; and, financially, for working hard to support the expense required in the research study.

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## Affiliations and Corresponding Information

### Precious Ivane David

School of Arts and Sciences  
University of the Assumption, Philippines

### Gie Ann Nicole Flores

School of Arts and Sciences  
University of the Assumption, Philippines

### Lee Andrei Quiambao

School of Arts and Sciences  
University of the Assumption, Philippines

### Mayca Yabut

School of Arts and Sciences  
University of the Assumption, Philippines