

# Postcolonial performativity analysis and its relation to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Southeast Asian BL-themed short movies

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**Abstract.** This study looks at how sex, love, and gender are portrayed in Southeast Asian boys-love (BL)-themed short films. In the popular Japanese subgenre known as "boys love," male characters are explored in their romantic and frequently sexual interactions. But Southeast Asia, where the genre has a devoted following, has seen a substantial increase in its appeal. Understanding how sex, love, and gender are portrayed within this cultural framework is the main goal of this study. To evaluate a variety of Southeast Asian boys who enjoy short films, the research draws on a multimodal analysis which conforms multidisciplinary model of analysis. Departing from queer studies and postcolonial performativity, this study employs careful analysis on the issues of sex, love, and gender between young men in different contexts of region such as Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The results of this study add to the body of knowledge on boys' love and shed light on the distinctive cultural characteristics of Southeast Asian countries. This research offers insight into the negotiating of cultural norms and expectations within the setting of romantic and sexual interactions by looking at how sex, love, and gender are represented in these short films. The study also looks at how these films could contradict or support regional gender norms and conventional roles. In the end, this study seeks to deepen a comprehension of the relationship between sex, love, and gender in Southeast Asian boys' short movies and its possible ramifications for more general understanding on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## 1 Introduction

Boy's Love, commonly abbreviated as BL, started as a Japanese comic genre created primarily by women and for women. BL originated around 1970s and have been gaining a large number of fanbase in recent years [1-4]. The term 'Boy's Love (BL)' itself actually

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comes as the literal translation of Japanese words *shonen ai*. As the name suggests, BL depicts the story of romantic relationship between two male characters [5-10] specifically defines BL as a romantic genre “...whose storylines revolve mainly around love relationships between beautiful boys or bishonen.” BL generally refers to original and commercially-produced stories in visual products such as movies, live action, and/or animations or text-based ones like *manga* and novels [10-13].

In Japanese context, BL (*shonen ai*) does not stand alone; as it is accompanied by another genre known as *yaoi*. While *yaoi* also encompasses stories of homoerotic romance like BL, it usually contains works with more smutty details. [14] state that *yaoi* is more of fan-produced stories or adaptations of original BL visual or text-based works. Many of them tend to be R-rated and are in the form of self-published *dojinshi* or novels. Although both BL and *yaoi* started as a Japanese genre of male homoerotic comics, over the years BL has breached various forms of cultural and literary products. Thus, nowadays, BL includes not only Japanese comics (*manga*) but also novels, animation, games, films, webtoon, and many more. The genres are pretty popular among women and have a huge fanbase both in Japan and other countries. [10] mentions that BL and *yaoi* have “...a largely female heterosexual authorship and audience” in international stage. Unlike the gay genre, BL and *yaoi* are created by and for heterosexual women.

Unfortunately, most studies until far have only concentrated on the practice, interpretation, receptions, functions, experiences, and community of BL and *yaoi* in East Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States. Despite the fact that BL has been gaining popularity in some countries like the Philippines [7,8], Vietnam [7, 8], Middle East [11], and Indonesia [7], a limited number of studies have been conducted on the subject. Queer theory frequently inspires social movements and activities outside of the academic world. It supports inclusion, acceptance, and equality for all people, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, and it fights against discriminatory laws, policies, and practices. It also fights for the rights of LGBTQ+ people [5, 6,9,11,12]. TV shows that focus on LGBT relationships may also be viewed as a kind of cultural and creative expression. They provide actors, writers, and filmmakers the chance to explore a variety of stories that accurately portray the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ people [1,3]. The richness and diversity of the entertainment environment are enhanced by such representation. The success of TV shows like BL series as well as online BL short movies about homosexual couples might be partly attributable to the need for relevant and inclusive material.

From the arguments above, it can be stated that analysing and evaluating short films—including those with LGBT themes—can help people better comprehend the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Short films possess the ability to arouse feelings, stimulate cognition, and initiate dialogues concerning a range of social concerns, encompassing LGBTQ+ rights and equality, which are relevant to many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). One effective way to increase knowledge, dispel myths, foster empathy, and motivate action in support of LGBTQ+ people and communities is to examine gay-themed short films within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We can help create a society that is more compassionate and inclusive and that supports the values of respect, dignity, and human rights for everyone by utilizing the transformational power of cinema and narrative.

## 2 Methods

The following procedures were employed in order to study the representation of sex, love, and gender in Southeast Asian BL short movies using a postcolonial performativity lens: choosing a variety of films that deal with LGBTQ+ themes, closely observing them spot postcolonial performativity components like cultural hybridity and resistance to colonial

norms, organizing the data from the films into themes and patterns, taking into account the historical and cultural context of each country portrayed, and making judgments about how the films represent homosexual identities, relationships, and power dynamics in the selected Southeast Asian countries. The short movies included in the analysis are *The Right Man*, *Because I Love You* (2016), *Pria* (2017), *Icarus* (2020), *Coalesce* (2020), and *Hey Rival, I Love You* (2021). These films come from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam, respectively.

Methodologically, the methods to analyse the instances follow the following steps: (1). Choosing Relevant Films. This step was to select Southeast Asian shorts with a strong LGBTQ+ theme or character representation. This found out movies that offer perspectives on the political, social, and cultural environments of the area; and the next step is to pay special attention to those that address the experiences and rights of LGBTQ+ people. The researchers then determined which SDGs are pertinent to the topics shown in the chosen films in order to identify the key SDGs. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), for example, may also be pertinent, depending on the specific themes covered in the films. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are particularly pertinent to LGBTQ+ rights.

The next procedure was (2). Analyzing Story and Characters. It looked at the films' treatment of LGBTQ+ people, character development, and story structure. This step was to think about the ways in which the identities of the characters relate to other facets of their lives, such as their religious views, social background, and ethnicity. The researchers then examined the ways in which the movie subverts or upholds gender and sexuality-related stereotypes and societal standards. The next step was (3). Examining Social Context. The researchers looked into the political, social, and cultural milieu in which the movie is situated. This took into account some elements pertaining to LGBTQ+ rights in Southeast Asian nations, such as legislative frameworks, cultural perceptions, and historical advancements. The researchers examined how these elements affect the lives of the characters and the difficulties they encounter in their pursuit of acceptance and equality.

The next step was (4). Evaluating Impact and Implications. This step considered how the movie's themes may affect Southeast Asia's ability to meet the SDGs more broadly. This examined the ways in which the movie advances discourse, challenges bigotry and discrimination, and raises awareness. The researchers then analysed how the movie could affect viewers' views, actions, and perceptions of social justice and LGBTQ+ rights.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Sex And Its Representation in BL Themed Short Movies in Southeast Asia and Their Relationship with SDGs**

When discussing how sex is portrayed in the context of short films with BL themes, it is important to approach the subject sensitively and with awareness of the various viewpoints and attitudes around it. Within the BL genre, there are many different ways that sexual material is portrayed, from subtle and hinted closeness to overt encounters. In certain BL-themed short films, the emphasis may be more on the sentimental and romantic facets of relationships than on overtly sexual material.

In the short films, character development and emotional relationships take precedence above physical closeness as they focus on delving into the depths of love and desire. Many BL themed short movies offer various narrative styles which of course in line with the historical context in which the films were produced. The depiction of sex in BL short movies can range from subtly intimate situations to more overt ones. Some BL productions place

more emphasis on character development, love storyline, and emotional connections than on graphic sexual material. These stories may be emotionally and psychologically charged, examining themes of love, desire, and human development.

On the other hand, some BL works use graphic sexual imagery as a narrative device. Some viewers may find that these sequences heighten the authenticity, drama, and sensuality of the relationships portrayed. Those who value a more explicit picture of desire and connection may be drawn to explicit content. The quality or quantity of sex narrative is not the only factor influencing the market for BL material. The attractiveness and marketability of BL are also influenced by additional elements including compelling storyline, well-developed characters, relatable themes, and overall production value. I

There is no standard method for presenting sex in BL-themed short films in Southeast Asia. In some movies, such as the one in *The Right Man, Because I Love You* (2016), explicit sexual matter is explored with audience approval, while in others, it is completely avoided in favor of focusing on other facets of the LGBTQ+ experience. An important factor in determining how sex is portrayed is the target audience. While films produced for LGBTQ+ groups or foreign film festivals may explore subjects more openly than those produced for a wider audience, the former may take a more reserved stance. In short, the way sex is portrayed in homosexual short films may have an impact on how society views LGBTQ+ people. Increased acceptance and understanding can be facilitated through positive and respectful depictions.

There is a tangled history of the colonial rule of European powers over the countries of Southeast Asia. In the movie, any remaining effects of colonialism on power dynamics—such as internalized oppression or the legacy of colonial sexual conventions—are depicted. In the movies, *Pria* (2017) and *Coalesce* (2020), the relationship between east and west is twisted and interlaced by the homosexual male characters. Because they have more sex domination and power, the western homosexual male characters in the two films have complete authority over each protagonist character.

A number of social, environmental, and cultural aspects may be shed light on by having conversations about sex in the context of LGBTQ+ experiences in Southeast Asian short films. The SDGs envision a more inclusive, egalitarian, and sustainable future for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. By tackling topics like stigma, discrimination, health, legal rights, and cultural diversity, these talks help to advance this goal. Discussions about sex can cross with many areas of society and the environment while examining gay-themed short films in the context of Southeast Asian social and environmental life and its connection with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, a large number of LGBTQ+ people in Southeast Asia experience violence, discrimination, and societal stigma. The influence of cultural views and conventions on the lives and well-being of LGBTQ+ people can be better understood by examining how sex and sexuality are represented in these movies. Promoting inclusive communities and accomplishing SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) depend heavily on addressing stigma and prejudice.

Sexual health and well-being concerns can also come up in conversations about sex in the context of LGBTQ+ experiences. For the health and empowerment of LGBTQ+ people, access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care, including HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, is crucial. Encouraging sexual health education and awareness can help achieve SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Different Southeast Asian countries have quite different legal and legislative frameworks when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights and sexual expression. By examining how these frameworks affect the liberties and rights of LGBTQ+ people—such as their access to resources and services and their capacity to publicly display their sexual orientation—it is possible to identify areas that need to be promoted and changed. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

cannot be achieved without respecting human rights and guaranteeing equal protection under the law.

Discussions regarding social justice and LGBTQ+ rights can touch on environmental issues even when they are not explicitly related to sex, especially when it comes to vulnerable communities. Climate change, natural catastrophes, and environmental degradation may disproportionately harm LGBTQ+ people, especially those who experience several types of prejudice. Achieving SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) depends on ensuring environmental justice and attending to the needs of vulnerable groups. Diverse cultural traditions and gender and sexuality-related viewpoints define Southeast Asia. Examining these movies' portrayals of sex and sexuality can reveal ways in which culture, identity, and societal conventions interact. Achieving SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) requires acknowledging and valuing cultural variety while advancing human rights and equality.

### **3.2. Love and Its Representation in BL-Themed Short Movies in Southeast Asia and Their Relationship with SDGs**

A key component of the content of BL (Boys' Love) is the representation of romantic relationships. In order to explore topics of love, desire, and human development within same-sex relationships, BL concentrates on the romantic and emotional bonds between male characters. In BL short movies, the love connection frequently serves as the main plot device. It can include a variety of things, including overcoming social difficulties, friendship, and mutual support. BL stories often centre on the emotional closeness and connection between the characters as well as the growth and development of the love relationship. Tone, intensity, and dynamics all play a part in how love relationships are portrayed in BL. A slow-burn romance is emphasized in certain BL productions, which gradually increases the amount of tension and emotional depth. Some may explore themes of forbidden love or societal issues through more dramatic or passionate partnerships. The examples of this issue are seen in *Icarus* (2020) and *Pria* (2017).

*Icarus* (2020), is a Philippine gay short movie. Portraying the relationship of two gay guys Kenneth and Rayu, Kenneth is forced to give everything to Rayu since their friendship is unconventional, and he struggles to convey his true emotions. However, after an inadvertent error, things spiralled out of hand, and Kenneth had to cope with the fallout, much as Icarus did when he flew too near to the sun and burnt off his wings. The movie is much about how to connect two worlds into bed. Taking the Greek myth of Icarus as its *protomyth*, *Icarus* (2020) is an interesting short movie. In order to escape from Crete, where King Minos had captured him and his son Icarus, mythological inventor Daedalus created wings out of feathers and wax. But Icarus disregarded his father's advice and soared dangerously near the sun. He lost control of his wings and plummeted into the water, where he drowned. The end of the movie is analogically the same as that of the story of Icarus.

*Pria* is an Indonesian BL short movie produced in 2017 by an Indonesian director. Aris, a gay Muslim teenager living in rural Indonesia, finds himself drawn to his well-travelled English teacher despite his impending marriage to a woman he has no romantic feelings for during a time of high expectation and pressure resulting from the traditions of his upbringing. Aris, who has had his entire life planned out by his overbearing mother, fights with the competing ideas of tradition, obligation, and his own definition of happiness. Aris is in fact trapped in his own inner feelings and conflicts of becoming a husband, and a gay man in a heteronormative society where he has to submit himself as a religious man.

Indonesia is a multicultural nation with a predominance of Muslims and rigid cultural norms governing gender and sexuality. When depicting LGBTQ+ issues, filmmakers may need to negotiate cultural sensitivities. Regarding media that depicts homosexuality and

LGBTQ+ issues, Indonesia maintains severe laws. Filmmakers could encounter difficulties due to censorship or limitations on the material they can use.

*Pria* (2017) is literally a successful BL short movie which portray the coming-of-age issue in its own representation and aesthetics. The rural location and peasant lifestyle serve as powerful metaphors for simplicity and honesty. The complicated and intriguing plot of *Pria* (2017) is made possible by Aris's emotional connection to his foreign acquaintance. As a homosexual guy, Aris is constrained by a range of emotions as well as the expectations of a Javanese family that still follows traditions rich in religious and cultural subtlety. The filmmaker depicts the power dynamic by emphasizing Aris' fear of the mother's domineering attitude, which she still exhibits while also requiring her son to act masculinely in a patriarchal society. The cinematography in this movie also succeeds in capturing the audience's imagination about idyllic Indonesian villages with persistently present religious undertones.

The sexual stimulation provided by *Coalesce* (2020) is comparable to that of *Pria* (2017) in most ways. A suburban background setting, complete with all of its drawbacks, is provided by *Coalesce*. The three characters who work in a unique club in Cambodia for homosexual clientele force the film to undergo modernity, which makes it impossible for it to go without issues. Analyzing those two short movies, could involve analyzing the performance of identity, both individual and collective, within the films and how they intersect with the historical and cultural context in which the movies were produced. To apply postcolonial performativity in *Pria*, for example, it would need to explore how the movie engages with the postcolonial experience, whether through its characters, themes, narrative choices, or visual and symbolic elements.

*Pria* (2017) addresses issues of cultural hybridity, colonial residues, or resistance to dominant power structures. This idea challenges or subverts colonial and postcolonial expectations and norms. The film's performances and representations contribute to the construction or deconstruction of identities, particularly in relation to sexuality, gender, and cultural heritage (culture, norms, and habits). It is important to note that a comprehensive analysis of a film's engagement with postcolonial performativity requires a deep understanding of the movie itself, its specific themes, and its cultural context.

Themes like self-discovery, unrequited love, hidden romances, and coming of age (such as the ones in *The Right Man Because I Love You* (2016), *Pria* (2017) and *Coalesce* (2020), societal hurdles (*Icarus*, 2020), and personal development and self-determination (*Hey Rival, I Love You* (2021)) are frequently explored and represented. These stories enable the audience to empathize with the protagonists as they experience the highs and lows of love and relationships. For a number of reasons, the study of love-related difficulties in BL short movies can be intriguing. It provides a different portrayal of love relationships, defying conventional gender conventions and offering a variety of stories that appeal to a wide spectrum of viewers. The characters' emotional ups and downs might arouse viewers' empathy and give them a sense of vicarious emotional pleasure.

To put that in another way, the way that love-related themes are portrayed in BL narratives can serve as a forum for conversations on individual experiences, interpersonal connections, and the intricacies of love and desire. It might provide as a starting point for discussions on issues like acceptance and the difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ people [5, 9-12]. The attractiveness of BL material goes beyond romantic connections, despite the fact that love concerns are a major draw for viewers. In order to create complex stories that appeal to a wide range of viewers, BL narratives frequently tackle themes of friendship, personal development, and self-acceptance such as in *Icarus* (2020), *The Right Man, Because I Love you* (2020), and *Hey Rival, I Love you* (2021). The appeal of BL material is found in its capacity to present gripping narratives, engaging characters, and a distinctive viewpoint on love and relationships.

Intimacies, love, and relationships between male characters are frequently explored in Southeast Asian short films with a boy subject. These films provide nuanced depictions of same-sex attraction and desire within a variety of cultural settings. By exposing the complexity of human experiences and the innate need for acceptance and connection, these movies subvert heteronormative narratives and conventional gender conventions. Boys love-themed short films serve to promote empathy, understanding, and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people by telling real and relatable stories of love and romance. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of equality, diversity, and inclusion. These movies advocate for the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and through their depictions of love and relationships, they promote positive representations of LGBTQ+ identities, challenge stigma, and encourage dialogue. Ultimately, this helps to achieve SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

In addition, within the context of the SDGs, boys love-themed short films in Southeast Asia provide chances to promote social justice and address more general societal concerns. Through examining the difficulties and barriers LGBTQ+ people have while seeking love and happiness, these movies highlight the pervasive structural injustices, prejudice, and human rights abuses that exist in many communities. Boys love-themed short films support SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by encouraging respect for human rights and diversity, opposing discriminatory laws and practices, and supporting LGBTQ+ rights and visibility. Furthermore, these movies encourage group action to achieve SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality) by promoting positive representations of LGBTQ+ people and fighting for their access to social services, healthcare, and education. They do this by fostering empathy and understanding across diverse audiences.

### **3.3. Gender and Its Representation in BL Themed Short Movies in Southeast Asia and Their Relationship with SDGs**

In the context of BL stories, gender is undoubtedly a significant factor since it is questioned and the notion that love transcends gender is explored. Regardless of the protagonists' sexual orientation or gender identity, BL short movies emphasize connections between male characters that are romantic in nature. By showing love and desire amongst male characters, BL short movies disprove the notion that romantic relationships are only possible between people of the same sex. By widening the portrayal of relationships beyond heteronormative conventions, it creates a space for the investigation of various ways that love may be expressed.

Intimacy and emotional closeness between male characters are frequently emphasized in BL short movies' storylines, emphasizing the intricacy and depth of their relationships. This examination of love and relationships between people of the same gender can provide viewers a chance to question societal norms and established gender roles while showcasing the richness and flexibility of human experiences. They give a feeling of visibility and acceptability in the media and popular culture, representing and validating same-sex relationships and desires.

The emotional complexity, character interactions, and narrative in the genre are valued by many viewers, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. BL short movies have the power to promote empathy, understanding, and respect for a variety of romantic and romantic-like situations. In BL short movies, gender plays a big part through questioning conventional gender roles and examining love that transcends gender. The romantic connections that male characters have are highlighted in BL short movies, which also provides a forum for the investigation of many forms of love. By doing this, it offers

representation and affirmation for LGBTQ+ people while also providing interesting stories and relevant narratives for a larger audience.

In Southeast Asian nations, BL short movies frequently question and disrupt conventional gender norms and expectations by portraying stories that examine same-sex relationships and aspirations. The examination of gender in BL short movies may be seen as a sort of cultural reclamation and resistance within a postcolonial perspective. By allowing for the expression of non-heteronormative desires and relationships within a local setting, it symbolizes a divergence from the gender standards enforced by colonial powers [5,7, 11-13].

Southeast Asian short films featuring boys love-themed movies provide a distinctive perspective on gender dynamics and conventions in the area, questioning conventional notions of masculinity and femininity. These movies frequently feature masculine protagonists negotiating complicated emotional and romantic relationships in a culture where gender norms are ingrained. Boys love-themed short films challenge conventional gender stereotypes by showcasing the close and passionate relationships between male leads, emphasizing the flexibility and variety of gender expression. The investigation of gender variety and nonconformity advances inclusive narratives that uphold the identities and rights of every person, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation, hence supporting SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Furthermore, gender-based violence and discrimination—which disproportionately impact LGBTQ+ people in the region—can be addressed through the short films with a love theme for boys in Southeast Asia. These films illuminate the widespread stigma and discrimination associated with non-heteronormative identities by showing the difficulties and barriers encountered by male characters in their pursuit of genuine relationships and acceptance. Boys' love-themed short films support the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people and challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that fuel violence and marginalization. They also contribute to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through their portrayal of resiliency, love, and solidarity.

Moreover, advocacy campaigns and social change initiatives working to advance LGBTQ+ rights and social justice in Southeast Asia can be spurred on by boys-love-themed short films. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) may be achieved by discourse and action inspired by these videos, which advocate for the rights and inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in all spheres of society by fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance of varied gender identities and expressions. Boyfriend-themed short films also support the creation of inclusive and equitable societies where everyone can live without fear of prejudice or discrimination, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, by encouraging communication and cooperation among a variety of stakeholders, such as legislators, activists, and members of the community.

### **3.4 Sex, Love, and Gender in Southeast Asian BL Short Movies within the Context of Postcolonial Performativity and Their Relationship with SDGs**

It is possible to interpret the acceptability and popularity of BL short movies as a reaction against Western cultural and media imperialism. Southeast Asian producers recover agency and subvert the predominance of Western-centric viewpoints and depictions of gender and sexuality by inventing their own narratives and representations. Although varied and nuanced, gender relations in BL short films must also be acknowledged. While some of the established gender standards are challenged by BL short movies, others may be perpetuated, such as romanticized views of masculinity [3,7,8,10]. In certain cases, the genre's emphasis on male-male interactions can promote binary conceptions of gender and restrict the depiction of non-binary or gender-non-conforming identities.



In order to understand power relations and potential cases of cultural appropriation or the reproduction of global commercial trends, it is also necessary to critically study the creation and consumption of BL short movies within a postcolonial framework [5,8,13]. The importance of valuing and emphasizing the voices and viewpoints of regional producers and communities must be upheld in these works. Thus, the examination of gender within the context of postcolonial performativity in Southeast Asian nations is a kind of cultural resistance and reclamation. These short movies question sexist stereotypes and provide LGBTQ+ people and communities representation [5,7,13,15]. It is crucial to keep in mind that while discussing potential prejudices in BL short movies, the prevalence and impact of stereotypes might change across various productions and circumstances. The following are a few examples of stereotypes that have been noticed in several BL narratives. First of all, characters frequently take on stereotyped roles in various BL narratives. While the "seme" is often regarded as more male, authoritative, and protective, the "uke" is typically portrayed as more feminine, submissive, and emotionally fragile [7,11,12]. In addition to perpetuating some misconceptions about the roles and actions of people in same-sex relationships, this can promote binary conceptions of gender [3,5,8].

Second, the depiction of characters with excessively long, thin hands—often referred to as "*yaoi hands*"—is another cliché frequently connected to black and white literature. Although this is mostly a norm in the arts, it can lead to exaggerated and false depictions of masculinity and physical characteristics. Third, Sometimes, BL short movies can romanticize and idealize same-sex relationships, turning them into objects of desire or fetishizing the persons involved. This might contribute to the maintenance of stereotypes and strengthen erroneous beliefs about LGBTQ+ people and relationships.

Fourth, a lack of variety in terms of body types, races, or depictions of non-binary or gender non-conforming identities might result from some BL storylines prioritizing a particular sort of idealized masculinity or attractiveness. The inclusiveness and authenticity of the storytelling may be hampered by this lack of representation. There are several examples of BL stores that question and defy these tropes, therefore it should be taken into consideration that not all BL works support them. The genre is varied, and different authors approach it from different angles and with different goals. By identifying stereotypes and challenging them, critical interaction with BL materials may promote more complex and real-world representations of gender, sexuality, and relationships. Furthermore, media and social beauty standards can be related to the portrayal of attractive and idealized people in BL. The media, which includes BL material, frequently mirrors and upholds social standards and ideals of appearance [7,11,13]. Character depiction and audience perception and response can be influenced by these principles. More people are becoming aware of the need for varied and inclusive representations in BL material, and there is a rising clamour for more diversity in body types, races, and unconventional beauty standards to be reflected in BL content. These opinions emphasize the value of questioning and broadening conventional ideas of attractiveness, encouraging inclusion, and creating more sympathetic and genuine characters for a variety of audiences.

Southeast Asian short films with a love theme for boys deftly intertwine stories of sex, love, and gender, providing moving insights into the intricacies of identities and relationships in the area. These movies show the close relationships between the male characters in these films sensitively and authentically, challenging heteronormative assumptions and conventional gender conventions. Boys love-themed short films work to promote diversity and challenge social preconceptions by showcasing a range of manifestations of love and desire. They also connect with the objectives of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by supporting the acceptance and acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships. These movies also show the difficulties LGBTQ+ people encounter in finding true love and acceptance, as well as gender-based violence and prejudice. Boys love-themed short films challenge

structural injustices and inequalities and fight for the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people while also promoting resilience and solidarity, which helps to achieve SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Additionally, in Southeast Asia, short films with a love theme for boys are effective means of promoting awareness and encouraging discussion on topics related to social justice and LGBTQ+ rights. As they advocate for the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable populations, including LGBTQ+ people, these movies encourage group action towards accomplishing SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by igniting dialogues and fostering empathy and understanding. In addition, as they advocate for access to inclusive healthcare and support services and positive depictions of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships, short films with a love theme for boys support SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Boys love-themed short films contribute significantly to the SDGs' goal of a more inclusive, egalitarian, and sustainable future for all people in Southeast Asia and beyond through its transforming power on attitudes and views.

## 4 Conclusion

In conclusion, viewers of BL short movies' materials are particularly drawn to the discussion of sex, love, and gender concerns and relationship dynamics. In BL short movies, the study of sex, love, gender and their complications within same-sex relationships serves as prominent topics and are essential in grabbing viewers' interest. The way romantic relationships are portrayed in BL short movies may have an impact on drawing viewers and building a devoted fan base. In search of relevant and captivating stories that examine the complexity of sex, love, gender, desire, and interpersonal connection, many BL fans are drawn to the romantic themes. It is important to consider that while the attraction of the genre goes beyond LGBTQ+ audiences, BL short movies predominantly concentrate on love connections between male characters. Diverse audiences have grown to love BL short movies because of its topics, character relationships, and emotional narrations through the use of poetic language in both dialogues and cinematographic packages. As they explore the complexity of love, desire, and personal development in same-sex relationships, Southeast Asian BL short movies' narratives focus on the emotional and romantic bonds between male characters and provide viewers with interesting and sympathetic experiences. By looking at those issues, it is possible to assess the cultural hybridity in the works being evaluated. This may better comprehend how the movie depicts the blending of many cultural influences and how it impacts the identities and experiences of the individuals by concentrating on these elements.

In the Southeast Asian setting, short films with a boy love subject provide insightful analyses of the relationship between gender, sexuality, and love, therefore advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the area. By questioning conventional gender stereotypes, encouraging inclusion, and standing up for the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people, these movies act as catalysts for societal change. Boys love-themed short films support the acknowledgment and celebration of LGBTQ+ experiences, which is in line with the values of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through its representation of varied relationships and identities. These films also teach empathy, understanding, and acceptance. Additionally, by supporting the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable populations, these movies advocate for the achievement of SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and address more general social justice concerns, such as violence and discrimination. They also encourage discussion and action. More representation and diversity in narratives, as well as more cooperation between filmmakers, activists, and legislators to address structural injustices and advance inclusive societies, are potential future advances in this field. Boys love short movies have the power to change people's attitudes and perceptions, motivate action, and help realize the SDGs' goal

of a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future for all Southeast Asians by utilizing the transformative power of storytelling.

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