

## **Elements of Gender Representation: Analyzing Queerness through Narrative Coherence in Selected Filipino Children’s Storybooks**

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**Abstract.** The use of language to promote gender equality is evident in 21st-century Filipino children’s literature, which increasingly explores social issues and unconventional family dynamics (Lee, 2016). While storybooks challenge traditional gender norms, queer-themed literature remains limited and tends to perpetuate stereotypes. To better understand these representational patterns, this study analyzed selected queer-themed Filipino children’s books using Walter Fisher’s Narrative Coherence and Judith Butler’s Gender Performativity. Findings show that the narratives portray queer experiences but also reflect stereotypes, such as presenting queerness through feminine expression and flamboyance. Meanwhile, narrative elements explore themes of acceptance and struggle, as well as the blend of human and fantastical traits to connect with child readers. Amid these, the findings still demonstrate children’s literature’s potential to advance queer acceptance and understanding, fostering inclusivity through imaginative storytelling. With earlier works revealing gender disparity manifested in language use (Mante-Estacio et al., 2018; Wright, 2017), the study stresses that measures must be undertaken to counter discrimination through proper integration of gender sensitivity to storytelling, and in extension, language and instruction.

**Keywords.** *children’s literature, gender equality, queerness, queer culture*

### **Introduction**

Language as a tool in promoting and inculcating gender equality can be observed with emerging Filipino children’s literature in the 21st century. Publications that debunk traditional gender stereotypes among men and women can now be introduced to child readers. Then again, not in a quick view can one easily find a rainbow-driven children’s book on queer experiences, narratives, and representations.

In the Philippines, the presence of queer personalities within the society has long existed before colonization. Shamans during these times are seen to be spiritual and community leaders who may be gender nonconforming, as they may be female expressing while considered male based on the binary gender classifications (Pettis, 2024). Then again, further movements in history had blurred acceptance of queerness until it regained visibility in the modern society anchored on repression (Wright, 2017). In 2006, *Ang Ikaklit sa Aming Hardin* by Bernadette Neri became the first queer-themed children’s book to receive major recognition, as it won the Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Award, though concerns over its appropriateness delayed its publication for six years, leading to self-publication (Ochoa, 2014).

The limitations in queer representation across media only perpetuated stereotypes, which led to issues of discrimination and inequality (Hurlock, 2011; Tarrayo, 2014). Then again, hope can be found as these harmful conceptions can be reformed through literary materials and academic experiences for children (Mante-Estacio et al., 2018). Although complex and systemic, the reshaping of traditional gender views is not impossible, as children do not require stories to be strictly realistic, but they do need to see themselves represented (Lee, 2016). By introducing queer themes, Tarrayo (2014) noted that literature acknowledges traditionally taboo topics, as children’s books reflect prevailing ideologies and are still being shaped by dominant adult perspectives. The problem is that since the storybooks are

developed by adults, existing political and social norms may influence the development and thus inadvertently present stereotypes.

Studies have explored how language and narrative elements in children's literature reflect binary gender norms (Mante-Estacio et al., 2018), but along with this, research on queer representation remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on queer-themed literature for adults (Demetrio III, 2013; Hill, 2016; Hutton, 2018; Payuyo, 2012); therefore, ensuring responsible queer representation in children's literature through examining the language and narration used in these stories should be accomplished.

With the intention to link how narrative elements reveal queer representation in children's literature, this study used Fisher's Narrative Coherence and Butler's Gender Performativity Theory to determine how such elements either debunk or perpetuate stereotypes. As materials present in the formative years of children, this study argues that identifying still-existing gender stereotypes strengthens the case for further reevaluation of queer representation within storybooks.

## **Methodology**

The examination of queerness in selected Philippine children's literature was conducted through Narrative Analysis, using Walter Fisher's (1984) Narrative Coherence, an element of his Narrative Paradigm. Fisher (1984) emphasized storytelling as a form of communication, integrating both argumentative and aesthetic elements. It operates on coherence and fidelity, with which coherence refers to how well a story is structured, whereas fidelity assesses whether the story resonates as truthful to the audience's experiences.

For this study, only the coherence element of Fisher's paradigm was used to focus on connections between the stories, as well as how the characters cling to these narratives. Narrative Coherence emphasizes the presence of queer similarities and oneness across storybooks. Elements that represent such coherence shall unveil stereotypes towards queer identities, which may be internal to the queer person or external to their being, despite queer mainstreaming.

Fisher, in his 1984 article "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument", argued how storytelling functions as an effective medium of communicating the human experience. He stressed the ability of narratives to forge connections, stating "symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to introduce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common" (Fisher, 1984, p. 4). Through this, Fisher's paradigm aids in analyzing ideologies from narratives that can be reflective or defiant of existing world views. Particularly, the study adapted Jones' (2017) application of Narrative Coherence in analyzing a storybook by focusing on the setting, characters, narrator, and audience elements of the narrative. The choice of these elements presents an understanding of the "communicative phenomenon in which readers and viewers engage with the character's experience (Jones, 2017, p. 24)" within the narrative.

To further highlight gender representation within the narratives, an application of queer theory as a lens guided the analysis. More specifically, Judith Butler's idea of Gender Performativity revealed how identity is seen as the rejection of the concept of pre-determination, therefore implying that since gender works with performativity, it may be fluid and cannot be easily classified. Butler (2002), in her work *Gender Trouble*, posits suspending classifications as identity is constructed through repeated actions, behaviors, gestures, language, and social norms.

The use of Butler's gender performativity within Fisher's Narrative Analysis examined how gender is represented through the story's narrative elements and how audiences may judge these

performances based on coherence (and fidelity). Butler helps reveal how narratives enforce or destabilize gender norms, especially on queerness, while Fisher shows how these narratives persuade audiences by making certain gendered behaviors appear consistent with their existing notions of being.

Meanwhile, it must be noted that the approach and theory used only specified the method of thematic analysis employed in this study. Upon the selection of storybooks that formed the corpus of the study, familiarization with the text was done, followed by close reading to secure contextualization and content understanding. To gather coherence found in narratives, the process of open coding helped in breaking down text into smaller units of meaning. From the initial codes, themes were determined per the narrative elements earlier identified. Results revealed connections within the narratives that echo the present representation of queerness in Filipino storybooks for children.

### *Corpus of the Study*

Selected storybooks for this study were identified following the primary criterion that the materials feature queer central child characters. Such a criterion was established in connection with the argument that children’s literature influences and guides children in their identity building (Crisp & Knezek, 2010) and, as mirror books (Torres-Yu, 2011), child readers may identify themselves in these characters.

Additional criteria include public availability, whether from commercial publications or advocacy (free) publications with 2023 as the latest release; written by a Filipino author and published in the Philippines; and specifically published for child readers. Meanwhile, other queer-themed storybooks were excluded considering that the queer-characters are adult characters; queerness is not the central theme of the narrative; and is written or published by a non-Filipino. Selected storybooks that comprise the corpus of the study are presented in the table below:

**Table 1**

*Selected Queer-themed Philippine Children’s Storybooks for Analysis*

Title	Author	Publication Date	Synopsis
<i>Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki</i>	Rhandee Garlitos	2013	Adel, the flamboyant <i>beki</i> , lives to express his likeness of pink and traditionally feminine traits. In one family gathering, Adel tamed their neighbor’s dogs, prompting other members of the family to see his strength and celebrate Adel.
<i>Bukas na si Cajon</i>	Jesh Alberto	2018	In a family of drawers, Cajon struggles with self-acceptance since, unlike other members of the family with girls-only and boys-only clothing, Cajon has and likes both.
<i>Si Chow Chow</i>	Angelo Benavidez	2018	Construction is not only for the masculine, and Chowchow, a dog who exudes femininity, proved exceptional skills.
<i>What’s My Power Gear</i>	Mondi Ruedas	2018	To materialize power, Q-kids must choose their gears. Twirlie, a blue Q-kid, likes pink gears.

Title	Author	Publication Date	Synopsis
<i>One of the Boys</i>	Arkin Frany	2018	Although hesitant at first, Twirlie proved that pink gears can empower blue Q-kids, too.  A danger begins at City Toyland, and its residents almost lost hope until Kenny steps in, a male doll who likes everything a female doll would love, and saves the land.
<i>Boy Kendeng</i>	Dominic Agsaway	2021	Boy Kendeng likes to dance, but often does so alone. Once, his father saw him sowing fear in Boy Kendeng. Then again, the father is all supportive of letting Boy Kendeng dance again.

## Results and Discussion

### *Narrative Coherence in Settings*

Settings in the analyzed queer-themed narratives have shown how characters navigate their identities within their respective worlds. Two types are identified, which include an imaginative universe or a fictionalized setting where the narrative constructs an alternate reality, and a real-world setting with recognizable environments of actual societal structures. The analysis argues that the selection of settings frames the challenges of queer identities within the narrative.

Most of the analyzed queer-themed storybooks employ imaginative universes to present themes of identity and acceptance. For example, *What's My Power Gear* is set on *Planet Sari-Kulay*, a superhero universe where children discover their abilities through power gears. Notably, this setting reinforces gender binaries through color-coded power rooms and gear assignments reflected in blue for boys and pink for girls, set up. The narrative still mirrors societal norms that categorize activities and attribute them by gender, despite the choice of using an imaginative setting as a metaphor for the actual environment.

### Figure 1

Planet Sari-Kulay, Setting of *What's My Power Gear*



Similarly, *One of the Boys*, *Si Chowchow*, and *Bukas na si Cajon* present fictional settings, to wit *City Toyland*, *Chuchubels Construction Company*, and *Tahanan ng Oroc*, respectively. Even without elements of fantasy, the settings still manage to structure gender biases that can be observed in reality. For *City Toyland*, the universe is animated toys, yet the expectations from the characters are still based on traditional gender roles. This is similar to *Chuchubels Construction Company*, which starts with showing masculine work, and *Tahanan ng Oroc*, which reiterated gendered clothing.

The color-coded power rooms in *What's My Power Gear*, the gendered labor divisions in *Chuchubels Construction Company*, or the clothing markers in *Tahanan ng Oroc* demonstrate how settings subtly script characters into recognizable gender performances that align with dominant cultural binaries. However, the existence of queer characters that assert their being in these settings establishes an act of queering. Related to this, since Butler (2002) argued that gender is not an innate identity but a series of reiterated acts shaped by social expectations, these storybooks exemplify how such performative acts are reproduced even within queer-themed narratives.

Apparently, these settings are observed in other children's literature as well. Lewis et al. (2021) and Green et al. (2024) explained that narratives found in children's storybooks may perpetuate traditional gender roles and thus influence perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior. The analysis has shown that the surrounding elements still situate the queer child in a narrative of traditional gender roles amid the attempt to mainstream queerness through metaphors set in the imagined universe. Then again, the development of the settings still stresses the empowerment of the queer child to manifest agency against surrounding stereotypes in the world they belong to.

However, real-world settings with familiar social contexts are also identified. *Boy Kendeng* portrays a queer child finding joy in self-expression through *kendeng* (dancing) within the private space of a home. In addition, *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki* presents a Filipino community where the protagonist embraces flamboyant gender expression despite societal expectations. These settings provide immediate recognition of queerness that recognizes acceptance and conflict that may unfold within a reality-based framework. For Karniol and Gal-Disegni (2009), such narratives can challenge existing gender stereotypes and encourage children to question traditional gender roles.

The portrayal of queer characters in both imaginative and real-world settings reflects what can be regarded as patterns in children's literature. It is already established that heteronormativity is still dominant even within queer-themed literature (Lester, 2014; Pugh, 2011; Toman, 2014). As a recurring structure that needs to be realigned towards a more inclusive environment, more diverse narratives that challenge traditional stereotypes and provide young readers with a broader understanding of identity and self-expression may be scaffolded in the stories' settings.

### *Narrative Coherence in Characters*

The analysis focused on the central characters of the storybooks who personify queerness as compared to the other characters. Results revealed that characterization of queer individuals within the selected children's storybooks can either be (1) a self-assured identity or (2) coming to terms with identity.

Being the only character with explicit gender identification, *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*'s protagonist, Adel, is characterized by flamboyance and femininity. Adel's claim that "pink makes me think" (p. 6) indicates the use of queer characteristics as an empowerment of acceptance and belonging. Similarly, *What's My Power Gear* features Twirlie, a blue Q-kid (boy) who prefers pink power gears, traditionally associated with girls. Twirlie's story is reflective of the common experience

of queer children finding comfort in gender-nonconforming interests. Notably, the narrative avoids gendered pronouns, using "T" or "Twirlie" throughout and instead challenges traditional gender binaries through the characters' actions and choices.

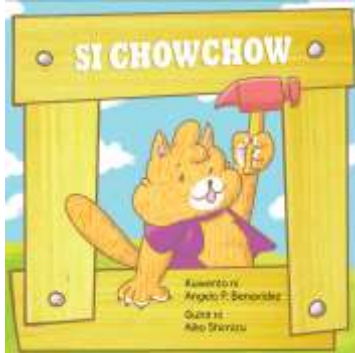
**Table 2**

*Narrative Description of Queer Characters*

STORYBOOK	CHARACTER	PRIMARY DESCRIPTION
<i>Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki</i>	Adel	Pink shoes, pink socks, pink shorts, and a pink wallet with a pink kitten on it. My brother Adel doesn't have any favorite color but pink (p. 4).
<i>Bukas na si Cajon</i>	Cajon	<i>...punumpuno na ako ng mga damit na sari-sari, nahihirapan akong buksan ang sarili</i> (p. 2).
<i>Si Chowchow</i>	Chowchow	<i>Si Chowchow ay isang aso na mapilantik at mahilig magsuot ng mga ribbon na iba't iba ang kulay tulad ng asul, kahel, at lila. Mahilig din siyang gumawa ng bahay ng aso</i> (p. 2).
<i>What's My Power Gear</i>	T/Twirlie	"I think I like the pink section more," T thought while looking at the assortment of colorful Gears on display like <i>saya, malong, alampay, and sarong</i> (p. 4).
<i>One of the Boys</i>	Kenny	He's made out of plastic and thinks life's fantastic and he's good at gymnastics. He's a doll so bombastic who likes to sew all of his clothes. And he cooks, and he bakes, and all these he knows with all his heart. For him, grooming is an art, he sings and dances like a star (p. 3).
<i>Boy Kendeng</i>	Boy Kendeng	<i>Mayroon akong lihim. Ayaw ko muna sabihin... mahilig ako kumendeng!</i>

The use of femininity as a mode of queerness for what seems to be masculine characters continued in *One of the Boys*. The central character, Kenny, a male doll, confidently wears "sequins, sashes, and shoes" (p. 7) and enjoys activities like "cooking, gymnastics, singing, and dancing" (p. 7).. More so, *Si Chowchow* portrays a flamboyant dog working in a construction company. The queerness is further exemplified by carrying a flowery bag and a pink hammer, and enjoying *kembot* (dancing) during work. The heteronormative deviations of these central characters mainstream queerness in children's literature, which is observed to still be a conservative territory. Then again, it is noticeable that despite the mainstreaming, the characterization echoes what is stereotypical of how society currently sees gay individuals, thus extending the arguments of Lester (2014) and Scieurba (2017) that children's literature often reinforces traditional gender roles, as with activities that are "feminine" and "masculine".

**Figure 2**  
 Traditionally Feminine Characteristics of *Chowchow*



In terms of the other storybooks, it was found that not all central characters exhibit self-assured queer identities. In *Bukas na si Cajon*, a family of drawers serves as a metaphor for a heteronormative family, with each drawer containing gender-specific clothing, except for Cajon. Cajon's struggle to "open up" reflects the challenges of coming out in a restrictive environment. Similarly, *Boy Kendeng* chronicles a young boy's hesitation to enjoy dancing due to fear of external disapproval, reflective of the internal conflicts faced by queer children.

The narratives further demonstrate queer representation through characters whose identities emerge from the accumulation of gendered behaviors (as a reflection of gender performativity), such as Twirlie's preference for pink power gears, Kenny's enjoyment of sequins and creative activities, or Chowchow's flamboyant expression in a traditionally masculine workspace. Then again, the narratives predominantly depict queer identities through traditionally male characters exhibiting feminine traits, echoing conventional perceptions of gay individuals as flamboyant and hyperfeminine. Crawley (2019) agreed with this, as he claimed that similar narratives reinforce binary and heteronormative understandings of gender.

As the characters interact with other characters and their environment, the influence and roles of the other characters remain primary. For one, *Adel's* confidence is strengthened by friends with similar personalities; on the other hand, *Cajon* finds comfort with other extended family members who express individuality and empowerment. This shows that supportive characters are often family members whose understanding stems from love and care. On the other hand, characters like *Cajon's* father, *Tatay Oroc*, and *Adel's Uncle Braulio*, embody heteronormative perceptions that reject queer expressions. This dynamic reflects societal challenges where queer individuals face both support and opposition within their communities.

In general, the characterizations rely on traditional perceptions of queerness, particularly for how society sees gay expression (i.e., male or boy characters displaying feminine expressiveness). What the analysis revealed goes along with the argument of Adam et al. (2021), stating that as children's literature evolves, it is essential to include stories that challenge traditional gender roles and provide diverse representations of identities, thus working on a more inclusive understanding and attitude among young readers. Altogether, the stories reaffirm Butler's claim that gender, and by extension, queerness, is continuously negotiated within social structures, performed through interactions with other characters, and shaped by the presence or absence of validation within their communities.

### *Narrative Coherence in Narrator*

Dominant in the analyzed storybooks is the use of third-person narration, which presents the characters as they act and behave within the narrative. Such an approach allowed the characters to be seen as how the readers, as onlookers, see them; then again, a similar approach may have limited a more authentic exploration of the characters' feelings and thought processes, thus limiting their agency.

Some examples include how Kenny's confidence in his deviance from heteronormative society is explored through a narrator overseeing the events in the narrative. Similarly, *Si Chowchow* portrays Chowchow's confidence in queer expression through an external narrative perspective. These approaches present the characters' qualities, but at the same time, they may also reinforce heteronormative stereotypes by presenting queerness as an observed deviation rather than a personal identity.

While narrated in first person, the narrator is still not the central queer character in *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*. As such, queerness is portrayed through the perspective of Adel's non-queer brother, with apprehensions about Adel's queerness exemplified by the flamboyance and femininity. What the flow of narration reveals is that the discomfort with queer expression reflects societal hesitations rather than outright queerphobia. Then again, the narrator's perspective evolves as the story progresses, leading to acceptance and celebration of Adel's identity.

Viewed from the perspective of a family member, the narrative emphasizes how personal relationships influence queer understanding, especially with the brother's journey paralleling Adel's self-expression. Although told from an external viewpoint, the narrator ultimately empowers queer agency by recognizing Adel's strength and confidence after being faced with external struggles.

### **Figure 3**

Family Member as a Narrator in *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*

*Despite his talents and guts, Adel has weaknesses. He easily cries while watching scenes from his favorite drama shows on television. He gets queasy when he sees blood or the guts of fish. He also gets scared, not of ghosts or monsters, but spiders, cockroaches, and little mice that sometimes come into our house.*

*"Kuya!" He ran away from the house spider dangling on the curtain.*

*"Hurry up!" He scampered away from the coffee-colored cockroaches diving like kamikaze planes on his head.*

*"Get rid of them!" He immediately pointed to the two mice that got caught on the sticky paper trap.*

*"Can't you shoo them away?" I asked him while sweeping the poor creatures out of the house with a broom after a long chase using our slippers. "But you're the bigger one. I'm as thin as a broomstick!" my brother replied, embarrassed. He really finds them disgusting.*



15

*Boy Kendeng*, on the other hand, utilizes an outright first-person narration. The approach allowed readers to direct attention to the protagonist's internal struggles and self-acceptance journey, although seemingly simple and trivial in context. Through words and illustration, the narrative choice unveils the character's personal experiences, describing the queerness in identity. In this regard, Lanser (2018) claimed that narrative voice can be "queered" to better reflect diverse identities through first-person narration, which effectively conveys the nuances of queer experiences.

When viewed by an external eye, conflicts like coming out or confronting bullying may be reduced to mere stories observed rather than experienced, thus broadening the possible relatability of a queer child reader (Keyser & Whitford, 2024).

Worse, the use of a narrative style external to the agency of the queer character may reinforce stereotypes when compared with people of the binary gender. For one, Capuzza (2020) claimed that many children's books with stories focused on transgender or queer characters miss the opportunity to narrate queer experiences authentically because elements of binary constructs limit representation.

Therefore, it can be argued that the comprehensiveness of narration using the third-person does not guarantee an authentic portrayal of queer characters' self-exploration and agency. Instead, the use of narration from the queer characters themselves can provide readers with more intimate and diverse representations of queer experiences, which authentically challenge prevailing stereotypes and mainstream greater understanding towards inclusivity. In essence, the reliance on third-person narrators, especially those positioned as non-queer observers, shows how queerness is articulated through heteronormative lenses, meaning that queer identity is performed for the reader rather than embodied by the character's own voice.

#### *Narrative Coherence in Audience*

The analyzed children's storybooks employed language, narrative approaches, and illustrations that are initially for young readers. This approach aligns with the concept of literature serving as both mirrors and windows reflecting readers' own experiences and offering insights into others' lives (Bishop, 1990). Then again, the narratives also target adult readers as common guides for children in browsing stories during their formative years.

When read by a child audience, the narratives may serve as an opportunity to understand queerness, both for a child who may feel different in terms of gender expression and for those who find interest in traditionally perceived gender identities. In stories like *Ang Bonggang Bonggang Batang Beki*, *One of the Boys*, and *Si Chowchow*, the characters express their authentic selves despite societal challenges through confidence in their skin and empowerment in their individual expressions. This inclusion, as well, may empower young readers to embrace their identities confidently and understand that what they may be feeling is something that happens normally, which does not make them anything less than others. In this regard, Gaskill (2021) pointed out that empowerment through representation can greatly affect a child's self-esteem and identity formation.

Another aspect that the child audience may realize is in narratives like *What's My Power Gear* which tell the story of self-discovery and the process of accepting and understanding one's individuality. Since these stories resonate with queer children, they may also educate non-queer peers about the value of empathy and inclusivity, focused not on gender categorization or segregation but on actual acceptance of a fellow child.

To illustrate, characters like Adel's brother can help readers, both children and adults, to reflect on their understanding of queerness and the role of supportive relationships in the acceptance and empowerment. These portrayals and perspectives towards the narrative can help dismantle stereotypes and promote a more inclusive mindset among audiences (Crawley, 2019; Lester, 2014).

For adult readers, these narratives allow understanding of the experiences of queer individuals, especially of children who may still be navigating their understanding of themselves. Literature demonstrates how adult characters develop understanding through their journey, which shows how stories transform societal views about queerness (Lapinski, 2021). The narratives work to celebrate

queerness, but they sometimes maintain stereotypes by showing gay identities mostly as hyperfeminine. The observation matches previous critiques, which state that queer-themed children's literature presents characters through traditional gender roles instead of showcasing diverse representations (Lester, 2014). The storybooks successfully advance inclusivity but require additional diverse queer identity representations to properly depict the wide range of queer community experiences.

The presence of these narratives for audiences of different age groups is becoming more prominent due to sparked debates and, in some cases, book bans in schools and libraries (Meehan, 2024). Instances like censorship and actual bans shed light on the ongoing struggle for acceptance of queer identities in mainstream narratives, which calls for more literature that affirms diverse identities and expressions (Crawley, 2019). As the narratives revolve around reinforcing stereotypical performances and offering subversive reimaginations of gender, they reflect Butler's claim that representation has the power to both reproduce and disrupt dominant gender norms. Ultimately, these storybooks can mainstream inclusivity in children's literature for young readers as the target audience to understand and engage with the world around them.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Analysis through Fisher's Narrative Coherence, anchored on the notions of Butler's Gender Performativity, revealed that the mainstreaming of queerness within children's literature challenged social conventions on gender, particularly subscribing to the binary categories of male and female. Then again, the analysis also revealed that the approach in mainstreaming is founded on a characterization that is resonant with existing stereotypes of queer personalities.

More particularly, the analyzed elements underscored how the queer characters realize their queer expression amid both supportive and critical environments. The settings served as a backdrop to navigating facets of queerness influenced by external elements through both imaginative and realistic approaches. The characters, meanwhile, derived representation of both fully-realized characters and still-discovering characters. Although aimed at shedding light on queer experiences, the predominant use of third-person narration limited authentic representation. Despite these limitations, these stories provide opportunities for young and adult readers alike, as the audience of the narratives, to reflect on biases and foster inclusivity.

Meanwhile, the study is limited to queer central child characters and the corresponding narrative that mainstreams their queerness. As such, further studies may explore additional elements and narrative choices to determine how inclusivity and nondiscrimination can be further mainstreamed. Since the analyzed storybooks revealed the existence of counterproductive elements to queer mainstreaming, it is essential to challenge existing stereotypes actively in the further development of similar storybooks. This involves portraying queer characters in a variety of roles that go beyond traditional or stereotypical depictions.

In a more pedagogical sense, developing gender-sensitive materials for educational purposes should involve a thorough review of existing content to identify and address gender biases. Educational materials should include diverse representations of gender and sexuality, ensuring that queer identities are depicted positively and affirmatively. Additionally, incorporating feedback from teachers and students can help tailor these materials to be more effective and relatable. While there are already existing policies on gender sensitivity within educational institutions, the focus is still limited to heteronormative views of gender. Hence, there is a need to strengthen the implementation of policies

that specifically address discrimination based not only on traditional gender classifications but also on the mere existence of queer individuals living their queer identities.

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