

## **“I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it”: An Audience Study on How Netflix LGBTQ+ Series Expand Perspectives and Cultivate Awareness**

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**Citation:** Trisnawati, R.K., Sutikno, E.U., Agustina, M.F., Difayana, A.G., Amanda, N.F., & Noorsahid, N. (2025). “I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it”: An Audience Study on How Netflix LGBTQ+ Series Expand Perspectives and Cultivate Awareness. *Notion: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Culture*, 7(1), 144-167. <https://doi.org/10.12928/notion.v7i1.12909>

### **ARTICLE INFO**

#### **Article History:**

Received: 13-03-2025

Accepted: 20-05-2025

#### **Keywords:**

LGBTQ+

Netflix-Originals

Audience Studies

Knowledge

Awareness

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines how Indonesian audiences respond to LGBTQ+ narratives in Netflix series such as *Feel Good* (2020), *Heartstopper* (2022), and *Glamorous* (2023) through Stuart Hall's Audience Reception Theory. Employing a qualitative approach with 29 participants, it explores how these series influence viewers' knowledge, and awareness, particularly in relation to cultural and societal norms. The findings indicate that these narratives contribute to audience understanding across five key areas: LGBTQ+ identity and experiences, cultural and societal insights, moral lessons, challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, and critical perspectives on representation. Additionally, the study identifies four distinct awareness categories: recognizing LGBTQ+ individuals as human beings, understanding their experiences, acknowledging diverse gender identities, and recognizing the media's role in shaping perceptions. These results suggest that exposure to LGBTQ+ content in streaming media can promote empathy, broaden perspectives, and challenge existing biases. By highlighting the informative and awareness-raising potential of these series, the study underscores the role of media in shaping public discourse and social attitudes toward gender and sexuality, ultimately contributing to a growing recognition of diverse identities within Indonesian society.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Media has evolved beyond mere information dissemination to actively shaping attitudes, values, and cultural identity (Sutrisno, 2023; Kubrak, 2020; Bryant & Finklea, 2022). Movies, TV shows, and other media not only entertain but also shape how audiences understand the world around them (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018; Rubin et al., 2022). As audiences engage with diverse media, they experience cognitive engagement, exposing them to new ideas, cultures, and perspectives (Occa & Morgan, 2021). Media exposure can be evaluated in frequency and extent (Li, 2008). Frequent exposure reinforces attitudes and fosters acceptance, while broader exposure expands understanding (Vincent & Dunlop, 2015). The examination of how particular films and television programs influence their audiences' attitudes and perspectives subsequently serves as the focal point of this study.

The influence of media exposure frequency and extent is evident in Netflix's LGBTQ+ series, where social and religious values shape audience reception. As Stuart Hall's Audience Reception Theory (1973) suggests, viewers actively interpret media messages based on their cultural and personal context. Prior studies on LGBTQ+ media reception highlight varying audience responses. Gillig and Murphy (2016) found that portrayals of gay adolescents in *The Fosters* fostered hope among LGBTQ youth but drew negative reactions from some heterosexual viewers. Gonta et al. (2017) linked greater media exposure to increased acceptance of homosexuality, particularly among younger audiences. Yan (2018) described a "rippled perceptions" effect, where LGBTQ-inclusive TV modestly improved attitudes toward lesbians and gays. Boisvert (2020) explored how online communities interpret gender-diverse TV, showing that audiences, rather than content creators, shape perceptions. In Indonesia, Trisnawati et al. (2023) found that responses to LGBTQ+ themes in Netflix series were heavily influenced by religiosity and cultural beliefs.

While these studies offer valuable insights, most focus on Western audiences, leaving a gap in understanding how traditional values influence LGBTQ+ media interpretations in Indonesia. The current study addresses that gap by examining how heterosexual Indonesians with strong religious beliefs engage with LGBTQ+ portrayals in *Feel Good* (2020), *Heartstopper* (2022), and *Glamorous* (2023).

By analyzing responses from twenty-nine Indonesian viewers, the current research explores how exposure to LGBTQ+ content intersects with deeply ingrained cultural and religious beliefs. In a society where discussions on gender and sexuality are often restricted, media visibility plays a crucial role in shaping awareness and perceptions. This study consequently contributes to broader discussions on media representation and social acceptance, offering insights into how audiences negotiate modern LGBTQ+ portrayals within a conservative framework.

## II. METHOD

This research was analyzed within film audience studies, particularly Stuart Hall's Audience Reception Theory. Following this notion, viewers do not merely take in information from the media; instead, they actively interpret these messages by applying their own cultural, social, and personal lenses. As a result, the level of engagement, comprehension, and reaction to content presented in the media has a substantial amount of variation among persons, which is influenced by the background of each viewer. This method is especially pertinent when evaluating the various responses to LGBTQ+ content in the media, particularly within the social setting of Indonesia. A total of 29 participants from Indonesia took part in the study. Each subject was chosen due to their unique cultural and social backgrounds. The selection of these individuals was based on the fact that they had previously viewed programs on Netflix that deal with LGBTQ+ topics, notably *Feel Good* (2020), *Heartstopper* (2022), and *Glamorous* (2023). Through informed consent, each individual's involvement was validated, ensuring that every ethical principle was adhered to. It was ensured that the participants remained anonymous for the entirety of the research project; personal information was not included, and the analysis consisted solely of anonymized quotations from the participants' responses.

While this study provides valuable insights into audience reception, the findings are based on a limited sample of 29 participants. This specific demographic focus may not fully represent Indonesia's diverse population. However, the study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of audience perceptions rather than broad generalizations.

The data for this study were collected through written interviews conducted via a Google Forms questionnaire. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they met the research criteria: Indonesian citizens aged around 17–20 years old residing in Central Java, especially in Purwokerto and Banten. This method was selected to explore how traditional values influence the reception of LGBTQ+ media while also allowing for seamless follow-up interviews with participants if further clarification or deeper insights are required. Recruitment was carried out through social media platforms and personal networks.

All participants were later provided informed consent before participating in the study. Their responses were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and the data were stored securely. Ethical guidelines were followed in accordance with research best practices to ensure participant well-being. Further, the participants were given questions to investigate how Indonesian viewers interact with LGBTQ+ narratives that are featured in Netflix shows. To be more specific, the participants were questioned on two things: (1) What are the benefits of watching LGBTQ+ series/films for you? (2) Write down any lessons learned after watching Netflix series with LGBTQ+ issues in them. Specifically, the questionnaires focused on the influence of LGBTQ+ exposure in popular media within a society where questions of gender and sexual orientation are frequently complicated. This was done to gain insight into what Indonesian viewers took away from engaging with these narratives.

Table 1. Indonesian Participants Demographic

No	Initial Name	Age	Religion	Sexual Orientation	Viewing Habits of LGBTQ+ Series	Domicile
1.	P1	24	Catholic	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
2.	P2	22	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
3.	P3	22	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
4.	P4	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
5.	P5	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
6.	P6	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Central Java
7.	P7	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
8.	P8	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Central Java
9.	P9	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
10.	P10	19	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
11.	P11	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
12.	P12	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
13.	P13	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
14.	P14	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
15.	P15	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Banten
16.	P16	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Central Java
17.	P17	21	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
18.	P18	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
19.	P19	19	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
20.	P20	18	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
21.	P21	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
22.	P22	18	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
23.	P23	23	Islam	Heterosexual	Have Watched Before	Central Java
24.	P24	18	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
25.	P25	19	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten
26.	P26	20	Islam	Heterosexual	Never Watched Before	Banten

Subsequent to the collection of all responses, the researchers meticulously reviewed and categorized the data in order to facilitate the analytical process easier. It was determined that the responses were sorted into main themes that developed from the participants' responses. This procedure identified two key themes: the knowledge and awareness gained from engaging with LGBTQ+ content. A further division of these themes into distinct clusters was carried out, and these clusters were subsequently evaluated based on the factors that influenced each participant's responses. In a conservative sociocultural setting, the study aimed to identify how audiences interpret and react to LGBTQ+ narratives. The analysis focused on how exposure to these narratives might alter knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ+ issues.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals the considerable impact of Netflix's LGBTQ+ series on audiences in fostering knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ+ issues. These series, by portraying a range of personal and social experiences related to LGBTQ+ identities, offer audiences insights into diverse perspectives often overlooked in mainstream media. Engaging with these narratives encourages viewers to explore complex themes surrounding identity, acceptance, and the challenges LGBTQ+ individuals encounter. Such content broadens the audiences' understanding and prompts reflection on societal norms and personal beliefs. By offering an authentic look into LGBTQ+ lives, Netflix's LGBTQ+ series contributes to greater social awareness, promoting empathy and inclusivity. The following findings outline how these series influence audience perceptions, highlight cultural responses, and reflect the transformative role of media in shaping public awareness and attitudes.

#### **"I've learned about the different experiences of LGBTQ people": Gaining Knowledge**

By examining the answers of the Indonesian audience regarding their experiences with LGBTQ+ content on Netflix, the researchers can acquire a more in-depth understanding of how these series contribute to audiences' knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues. This section will be divided into five types of knowledge gathered based on audience responses: Understanding LGBTQ+ Experiences and Identity, Cultural and Societal Insights, Moral and Broader Lessons, Challenges and Struggles of LGBTQ+ Individuals, and Critical or Skeptical Views.

##### *Understanding LGBTQ+ Experiences and Identity*

This category captures how audiences have gained insights into self-discovery, identity formation, and the everyday lives of LGBTQ+ individuals.

I can get to know how LGBTQ+ tried to figure it out about their identity and how they live as LGBTQ+ in heterosexual society. How they try to learn and know themselves before trying to love someone (P1).

*"I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it": ...*

After watching these 2 series, I realized that their existence really wants to be acknowledged. they want the world to know that they exist (P2).

I came to know how the lives of LGBT people and their efforts to be accepted in their environment (P3).

The benefit might be that i get to know the love views of LGBTQ+ people, how they deal with other people's perceptions of their decisions. in this world, there are still many people who certainly do not agree with LGBTQ+ people. And many teenagers are easily influenced by these people, so we need to understand teenagers' perceptions of these people. There are many lessons to be learned, about gender equality, how LGBTQ+ people deal with the perceptions of those who oppose them (P4).

I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it. I've learned about the different experiences of LGBTQ people, and I've learned about the challenges that they face. I've also learned about the importance of acceptance and tolerance (P5).

LGBTQ+ series are like a new world to me, so it's kind of fascinating to see how their days and minds work (P6).

It provides new perspective of how to see the LGBTQ+ community. At least, it gives understanding about what they feel, whether it was fake because maybe it was expressed in series/film or actually genuine (P7).

Most respondents are undergraduates from Jawa Tengah and Banten although they come from a wide range of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Muslim Javanese and Sundanese. In a country where discussions about LGBTQ+ issues are frequently stigmatized, their thoughts offer a complex view of how LGBTQ+ content on Netflix affects viewpoints.

From the audience responses above, they find LGBTQ+ content to reflect their own struggles with coming to terms with who they are and accepting themselves. The complexity of identity creation is brought to light in these series by depicting the problems of LGBTQ+ individuals in navigating heterosexual society. Many respondents highlighted the internal challenges that are often central to the LGBTQ+ experience and how these series show the efforts of LGBTQ+ individuals to understand themselves before they can love others. Because of this realization, audiences are more able to understand the struggles that LGBTQ+ people have on their path to self-acceptance.

The audiences above also highlight that many people who identified as LGBTQ+ expressed a strong desire for the public to acknowledge their existence and celebrate their identities. This desire for visibility reflects how media portrayals of oppressed communities help to legitimize their own existence. In a society that frequently disregards or marginalizes LGBTQ+ identities, these series are vital in elevating LGBTQ+ narratives and urging audiences to acknowledge the compassion and hardships faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

A significant theme of contemplation was the need to accept one's surroundings. Several participants brought up the fact that LGBTQ+ people have a hard time getting acceptance from

everyone, even those closest to them. The LGBTQ+ protagonists in the show navigate complex social dynamics, particularly in places where they encounter prejudice, and their fight for inclusion is shown via their stories. This portrayal helps audiences from largely conservative cultural backgrounds comprehend the LGBTQ+ experience and get significant insights into the resiliency of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Additionally, the thoughts discussed the larger social dynamics and difficulties that LGBTQ+ people encounter. According to the respondents, LGBTQ+ content helped them comprehend how LGBTQ+ individuals cope with discrimination and other people's perspectives. Part of this process involved learning how anti-LGBTQ+ emotions spread in society and how it affects teens. The focus on gender equality and how LGBTQ+ people deal with resistance demonstrates the power of LGBTQ+ narratives as a teaching tool to foster understanding and compassion for social justice concerns.

Many respondents appreciated that LGBTQ+ content provided a fresh viewpoint on the community; they called it a "new world" that shed light on the thoughts and experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Humanizing a group that is frequently viewed through a prism of assumptions and preconceptions, this depiction of the mundane lives of LGBTQ+ people offered viewers a glimpse into their struggles, relationships, and experiences. The series promotes acceptance and understanding by shedding light on the everyday experiences of LGBTQ+ people.

Some viewers also saw LGBTQ+ content as a chance to examine how LGBTQ+ experiences were portrayed critically. Although many valued the new perspectives, a few respondents raised concerns about the veracity of the depictions, acknowledging that media portrayals might be inflated for dramatic effect. These critical engagements show that viewers are not just taking in the content; they're thinking critically about it, which can spark more in-depth discussions about how LGBTQ+ experiences are portrayed in media and how they compare to reality.

To promote a more inclusive society, these insights have significant broader consequences. The LGBTQ+ community's journeys of self-discovery, acceptance, challenges, and resilience are vividly illustrated in these shows, allowing viewers to relate to stories that may be very different from their own. These young Indonesian viewers' reactions show how media can help break down barriers, dispel myths, and foster empathy. These stories have the power to challenge viewers to examine their prejudices and foster a more complex understanding of varied identities, even in settings where discussions about LGBTQ+ people are frequently discouraged. Tolerance, acceptance, and the value of every person, regardless of their identity, can only be built in a society that shares this outlook.

#### *Cultural and Societal Insights*

The second kind of knowledge refers to how audiences comprehend various cultural and societal situations about LGBTQ+ communities.

***"I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it": ...***

Because both of the series that I watch are from Europe (Barat), I get a lot of information about their daily life at school, home, and in a society. I also know that European parents also always support and respect their kids' decisions (P8).

Broaden my view about other country's culture and development. "All I can say is when you're in Rome do what Romans do. I learned that in America and I guess England (the setting of glamorous and heartstopper) LGBTQ+ is well-supported at least on the facade. A lot of campaign about it including pride months and many more are an action to support it (even though I guess companies use it to gain more benefits), people are expected to accept them and be an "ally" to them, be open of yourself if you happen to be one of them, and do not ever comment about them if you're not. But, as a religious person I think it doesn't mean that you have to be an "ally" to LGBTQ+ community if you happened to be in their environment. It's as simple as mutual respect and mind your own business and play safe (P9).

The benefits I get from watching the LGBTQ+ movie Heartstopper are that I can know and understand what the LGBT social environment is like, how to communicate with LGBT, the impact of LGBT in the education environment and I can know the description of schools and school activities abroad. The lesson I learned from watching the movie Heartstopper is to never give up and not be afraid of being ostracized by others, always try to be better and always help others regardless of status (P10).

In my opinion, my advantage of watching LGBT-themed Netflix series is that I can see the point of view presented by western people to the LGBT community. I took a little lesson in it that sometimes media like Netflix definitely raises LGBT not just support it, they know that LGBT is a big money field because this community is considered a minority and it is as if their human rights are lost among the people, so it would be very profitable if the community began to be seen by this world, series or films were made (P11).

According to the participants, there are variations in how LGBTQ+ individuals are welcomed and treated in different nations, notably in Western societies, and how these cultural practices influence the participants' actual experiences. When it comes to the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, one point that was made repeatedly by viewers was the discrepancy between the cultural backgrounds of the West and Indonesia. For many participants, LGBTQ+ content offered insights into how LGBTQ+ individuals are regarded in countries such as the United States and England, as represented in television programs such as *Heartstopper* and *Glamorous*. The level of support that LGBTQ+ individuals receive was brought to light through this series. This support includes acceptance from families and communities and public campaigns such as Pride Month initiatives. It was brought to the viewers' attention that European parents, for example, were portrayed as supportive and appreciative of their children's decisions. This was a striking contrast to the experiences that viewers had in Indonesian settings that were more conservative.

The significance of cultural and societal aspects is particularly evident given that the participants come from Central Java and Banten, two regions in Indonesia with distinct yet predominantly conservative cultural and religious values (Britannica, 2025; Joshua Project, 2025). These backgrounds shape how participants interpret LGBTQ+ representation in



Western media, as seen in their reflections on the societal acceptance portrayed in *Heartstopper* and *Glamorous*. The exposure to LGBTQ+ narratives from Western perspectives gave participants a comparative lens, allowing them to recognize the contrast between Indonesia's social norms and those in countries where LGBTQ+ rights are more publicly acknowledged. Many participants noted how Western societies emphasize public advocacy, such as Pride Month, while in Indonesia, discussions around LGBTQ+ issues are often met with hesitation or even opposition. This contrast deepened their understanding of global LGBTQ+ discourse, reinforcing how cultural context shapes the visibility and treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals. Additionally, the participants' cultural and societal backgrounds influenced their personal stances toward LGBTQ+ representation.

Furthermore, the participants' cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds affected their own perspectives on LGBTQ+ portrayal. While several viewers acknowledged the significance of respecting individual decisions, many also emphasized how religious and cultural norms continue to influence their perspectives. For example, several respondents declared a posture of "mutual respect" rather than full-fledged allyship, demonstrating the careful balance they strike between personal convictions and global ideas. This suggests that, while Western LGBTQ+ narratives offer useful insights into inclusion and representation, their reception in Indonesia is moderated by deeply rooted cultural standards. The replies of participants emphasize cultural interchange in media consumption, where exposure to diverse worldviews does not necessarily result in quick acceptance but rather prompts considerations about identity and morality.

The participants' comprehension of cultural differences was also expanded due to the portrayal of LGBTQ+ rights and societal acceptance in Western countries. Those who participated in the survey observed that in Western countries, there is an expectation that individuals will act as allies to LGBTQ+ individuals. This expectation is accompanied by campaigns and public acts that advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. On the other hand, some viewers were critical of the campaigns since they appeared in commercials. They pointed out that businesses may use LGBTQ+ rights as a marketing tool to reap financial benefits. It is a comprehensive understanding of how LGBTQ+ issues are handled in different cultural contexts that this dual approach, which acknowledges both genuine support and economic reasons, conveys.

Not only did participants understand the greater societal acceptance shown in Western settings, but they also gained insights into the day-to-day lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in these settings. In addition to gaining knowledge about the social settings in schools, workplaces, and communities, they also understood how persons who identify as LGBTQ+ communicate and navigate their relationships. The portrayal of the social dynamics and school activities of LGBTQ+ youth in "Heartstopper," for example, offered viewers a perspective on how these environments differ from their own, thereby promoting a more comprehensive

comprehension of the opportunities and challenges that LGBTQ+ individuals encounter in various regions of the world.

Respondents did not just acknowledge the significance of mutual respect and believed they needed to match the principles portrayed in the series. Even though they did not feel forced to become allies of the LGBTQ+ community, specific viewers, particularly those from strong cultural or religious backgrounds, said that they believed in respecting the choices of others and maintaining peaceful coexistence. This statement demonstrates the potential for the media to inspire tolerance, especially among individuals who may not completely embrace identities that are associated with the LGBTQ+ community. Viewers can adopt a more open-minded approach to diversity and reflect on their own ideas when exposed to LGBTQ+ content since it gives them a glimpse into various countries' cultural norms and practices.

#### *Moral and Broader Lessons*

This section focuses on how viewers derived moral messages and broader life lessons from content focused on LGBTQ+ community members.

It only adds insight and moral messages outside of sexuality (P12).

"Glamorous" lessons that can be taken from Marco even though he is gay but he still has dreams and struggles to achieve them. The "Heartstopper" lesson that can be taken is that Charlie is aware of the impact his actions have on Nick (P13).

I think it depends on the movie, for heartstopper that movie it's just about the teenager loves and how some character finds out their sex orient (P14).

The participants pointed out that the topics discussed in this series extend beyond issues about sexuality and offer essential lessons about resiliency, empathy, self-discovery, and relationships. Some viewers showcased above found that LGBTQ+ content offered them insights into moral principles and life lessons that go beyond the characters' sexual orientation. One of the respondents remarked that the series included moral teachings that went beyond sexuality, emphasizing the more general human concerns portrayed. These underline the significance of character traits such as resiliency, empathy, and self-discovery, which apply to viewers regardless of their identity. Through the portrayal of individuals who deal with various obstacles and develop as a result of those obstacles, the LGBTQ+ series provides viewers with insightful ideas on how to manage their own lives with bravery and understanding.

The participants pointed out the *Glamorous* and *Heartstopper* series as noteworthy for their human development and empathy. In the Netflix series *Glamorous*, Marco exemplifies the qualities of resiliency and drive. He demonstrates that individuals may continue to follow their aspirations and succeed despite societal obstacles. Within the context of the story *Heartstopper*, the character Charlie exhibits a knowledge of the influence that his actions have on others, notably Nick. This highlights the significance of emotional intelligence and empathy

in interpersonal interactions. These lessons strike a chord with viewers, prompting them to reflect on the necessity of taking into account the emotions of others and providing assistance to those who are dear to them.

Another individual who participated in the study mentioned that the lessons that can be learned from LGBTQ+ content differ from one series or movie to another. In *Heartstopper*, for example, the story focuses on the love that teenagers have for one another and the process of coming to terms with one's sexual orientation. This provides a glimpse into the intricacies of youthful relationships and the difficulties of coming to terms with oneself. When it comes to younger viewers, who may be going through similar challenges, this portrayal is incredibly relatable since it provides them with direction and encouragement as they negotiate their feelings and identities.

#### *Challenges and Struggles of LGBTQ+ Individuals*

The fourth category of knowledge acquired focuses on the difficulties and problems that LGBTQ+ people experience daily. The participants who took part in the study brought attention to the depiction of identity crises, homophobia, and the emotional challenges that come with being regarded as different. Through these realizations, they could sympathize with the experiences of those who identify as LGBTQ+.

I don't take advantage of the plot of romance meant in LGBTQ+ but I take advantage of every journey they go through and every hard thing they go through and how they survive and how they find themselves and maintain and love them (P15).

I came to understand the portrait of same-sex relationships and what LGBT people go through and feel as people who are "different" from most people. (having a sexual orientation that many people may consider deviant) (P16).

Increase knowledge about what LGBT people actually feel in their lives. I think everyone is free to choose who they want to date. Even though it deviates from normal things, just let it go without being ridiculed. It would be nice if we warned them, but if they remain reluctant, so be it. Let them bear the risk. Let them be happy in their own way (P17).

Several viewers expressed how these narratives allowed them to put themselves in the position of LGBTQ+ individuals and experience the emotional difficulties that come with navigating a world that frequently marginalizes them. Stories about LGBTQ+ people help bridge the empathy gap by depicting realistic themes of resiliency and courage.

The narratives of LGBTQ+ characters, in the eyes of many viewers, transcend beyond the mechanics of romance or relationships and instead place an emphasis on personal development, strength, and the resilience that is necessary to keep one's sense of self intact in the face of adversity. They are challenged to confront their own biases and broaden their awareness of other life situations due to the focus on inner journeys, which enables audiences to grasp the emotional and psychological resilience that LGBTQ+ individuals exhibit. This aspect of personal development also emphasizes the more general human values of self-

discovery and inner strength, highlighting the difficulties associated with accepting one's identity and looking for approval from both within oneself and from the outside world.

Viewers are provided with insights into the reality of social stigma and "otherness" through the depiction of LGBTQ+ experiences that are carried out with realism and depth. This demonstrates the complications that LGBTQ+ individuals encounter when they are seen to be "different." It sheds light on the emotional weight of social rejection and the resilience required to live genuinely in a frequently merciless culture. This shared struggle resonates powerfully with audiences, putting light on the emotional weight of social rejection. Through the presentation of these difficulties, LGBTQ+ media content not only humanizes the LGBTQ+ experience but also places an emphasis on concepts such as empathy, acceptance, and the right to individual happiness. Many viewers reevaluated the standards that society upholds as a result of this exposure. Some viewers expressed a newfound respect for the choices that LGBTQ+ individuals make, and others came to the realization that the freedom to personal fulfillment is an essential right that should be free from criticism.

On top of that, LGBTQ+ narratives demonstrate the significance of self-love, acceptance, and bravery in developing a stable sense of self-worth despite the pressures that come from the outside. This road to self-acceptance is a common human topic, which enables viewers to relate to LGBTQ+ experiences even if they do not share the same identity or background as the LGBTQ+ community. A sense of solidarity and a call for inclusivity are fostered as a result of this connection. This call goes beyond simply accepting differences and actively embraces diversity as a source of strength. On the other hand, the viewers are frequently motivated to adopt a more empathetic and supportive viewpoint, realizing that the search for pleasure and self-acceptance are universal objectives.

In addition, content that is LGBTQ+ encourages audiences to reevaluate how they engage with and support other people, bringing to their attention the importance of emotional intelligence, understanding, and compassion. For instance, viewers have pointed out that these narratives emphasize the significance of empathy in personal relationships by depicting LGBTQ+ characters who must strike a balance between their requirements and the emotional realities of others around them. As a result of this portrayal, not only does it teach essential lessons about compassion, but it also portrays the intricate relationship that exists between the individual and the community. It encourages viewers to consider how their actions affect other people's emotional well-being. The LGBTQ+ media encourages viewers to create a more inclusive and emotionally aware approach to others by enabling them to reflect on their relationships and cultivate more inclusive ones.

In conclusion, LGBTQ+ narratives provide younger viewers realistic experiences of coming to terms with one's identity, discovering oneself, and the road to living an authentic life. This is especially vital for viewers going through similar personal challenges, as it gives them a sense of representation and support. This means that it is essential for them to watch. Young people who may be navigating the complexity of identity, relationships, and acceptance

require advice and inspiration, and the presence of LGBTQ+ characters who persevere despite adversity is a potent reminder of the resilience it takes to be true to oneself. This provides young people with the opportunity to receive guidance and inspiration. Not only can LGBTQ+ tales deliver these audiences a sense of comfort, but they also serve as a guide for self-acceptance and a reminder that they are not the only ones going through the experiences they are.

#### *Critical or Skeptical Views*

In the fifth category of responses, participants approached portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals with caution or questioning rather than full acceptance. These responses were centered around critical or skeptical perspectives on LGBTQ+ representation. These viewers frequently struggled with the authenticity, societal influence, and intentions behind LGBTQ+ narratives. They expressed worries about how these stories are created and the messages they intend to portray. Participants questioned whether such narratives represent actual LGBTQ+ experiences or whether they might be overblown, commodified, or even employed as instruments for social influence. This response demonstrates a suspicion about media portrayals, so participants questioned whether such narratives represent authentic LGBTQ+ experiences.

As I explained earlier, I came to know the problems when someone becomes LGBTQ+. If you want to be an LGBTQ+, you have to accept the consequences where you have to face an identity crisis and other problems such as a homophobic environment. I hope you don't become an LGBTQ+ (P18).

The benefit is that I know that the life of an LGBTQ+ that I watch on this Netflix series is indeed very bad and has a bad impact on life. The lesson I learned is that LGBTQ+ people have a bad life (P19).

To be honest, actually for me, I don't get any benefit from watching this LGBTQ+ series, but maybe I can take a little lesson from the series that I watch, like the one in the bad buddy series, that if the truth is revealed not everyone can accept it (P20).

Broaden horizons on LGBTQ+, encourage acceptance and tolerance, help with sexual education. In Indonesia, LGBT is still a taboo in society, but slowly through the media, it seems that LGBTQ+ has begun to be normalized. A theological and monolithic society certainly makes it difficult to be permissive towards this understanding of gender identity. However, the propaganda efforts of some movies that incorporate LGBT life have won awards at the movie box office. Then, skepticism arises that the success is because the depiction is in accordance with reality or deliberately made for propaganda material and new spices in the creativity of a film (P21).

It appeared to some of the participants that the LGBTQ+ content was centered on life issues that may be difficult to relate to or accept. These audiences viewed the lifestyle as unaligned with their personal or cultural values. These portrayals may overemphasize struggles for

impact or reflect media-driven agendas that push for broader social acceptability in a way that may conflict with their values. Concerns over whether or not media representations truly reflect reality were evident, with individuals feeling that these portrayals may do either of these things. It was common for these viewers to maintain a neutral stance, expressing an interest in comprehending the narratives of LGBTQ+ individuals but exhibiting reluctance to support the societal movement for normality fully.

Even though some viewers accepted that these series foster awareness and empathy for LGBTQ+ experiences, some questioned whether or not these portrayals reflect real lives or whether or not they serve as "propaganda" for mainstream LGBTQ+ themes. Several individuals, for instance, thought that favorable portrayals of LGBTQ+ identities are predominantly stressed for the sake of societal influence rather than accurate representation. This thoughtful approach frequently involves considerations of cultural differences, religious convictions, or ethical issues, demonstrating that exposure to LGBTQ+ tales broadens horizons. Still, it does not inevitably lead to unreserved acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.

The content of LGBTQ+ organizations was also seen by many as posing a challenge to conventional values, which sparked concerns about the impact on young people and the attitudes of society as a whole. Some of the participants believed that the portrayal of LGBTQ+ lives as "normalized" can affect young viewers. This is because the media may promote these lifestyles as more universally tolerated or even praised than they may be in their immediate cultural context. Some individuals have remarked that while these stories encourage tolerance, they also provoke critical reflection on societal developments and developing definitions of gender and identity. This sense of caution reflects the difficulties of reconciling personal convictions with a curiosity about the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals.

In conclusion, the critical viewpoints stressed the importance of exercising caution and discretion while interacting with content that pertains to LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in contexts where the subject matter continues to be controversial or sensitive. Participants acknowledged the need for mutual respect, and they said that being exposed to the LGBTQ+ series enabled them to comprehend the social milieu that surrounds LGBTQ+ individuals without necessarily condoning the lifestyles that were shown in the series.

**"They just want to be respected and appreciated for the choices they have made":  
Raising Awareness**

Another interpretation of the messages in Netflix's LGBTQ+ series is that these shows are crafted to raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues. This section will be divided into four distinct types of awareness gathered based on audience responses: awareness of LGBTQ+ as human beings, Awareness of LGBTQ+ Experiences, Awareness of Diverse Gender Identities, and Awareness of Media's Impact on Social Perceptions.

*LGBTQ+ As Human Beings*

This study found that the Netflix LGBTQ+ series could raise awareness of LGBTQ+ individuals as valued members of humanity, promoting empathy and understanding among

Indonesian audiences. The exposure to diverse LGBTQ+ narratives shifts perceptions from seeing these identities as deviations to recognizing them as natural and deserving of respect. In Indonesia's culturally and religiously traditional context, this awareness signifies a growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals as people with the same rights to love, belonging, and dignity. The analysis focuses on the category of *Awareness of LGBTQ+ as Human Beings*, highlighting its significance in cultural transformation.

What I can learn is that they are just ordinary people who are looking for love or affection, but are 'different' from other people. They just want to be respected and appreciated for the choices they have made, they just want to be treated as humans are generally treated (P22).

Strengthen faith, and take the positive side because basically they are also human beings too (P12).

These responses highlight how Netflix's LGBTQ+ series can effectively raise awareness about the shared humanity of LGBTQ+ individuals, prompting audiences to recognize that they are ordinary people in search of love and acceptance.

One response points out that LGBTQ+ individuals are not fundamentally different from others; instead, they experience the same human desires for affection, respect, and appreciation. This perspective is pivotal in fostering empathy, as it challenges preconceived notions that often frame LGBTQ+ identities as deviant or outside societal norms. By emphasizing the commonality of the human experience, the series helps dismantle barriers that have traditionally separated LGBTQ+ individuals from mainstream society.

The idea that LGBTQ+ individuals wish to be treated with the same respect as everyone else resonates deeply with audiences, suggesting a growing understanding that these identities should not be met with prejudice or discrimination. The emphasis on the need for recognition and respect reflects a significant shift in how audiences perceive LGBTQ+ individuals—not as marginalized others but as equal members of society deserving of dignity and validation. This recognition is critical in conservative contexts, where traditional beliefs may create resistance to acknowledging LGBTQ+ identities.

Another response adds a layer of complexity by linking the acknowledgment of LGBTQ+ humanity with the viewer's personal beliefs and faith. The statement about strengthening faith while also recognizing LGBTQ+ individuals as human beings suggests a balancing act between personal convictions and the need for empathy. It reflects an increasing openness to dialogue and understanding, even in environments where cultural and religious frameworks may have previously constrained such perspectives. This illustrates that while traditional beliefs are significant, there is potential for growth and transformation in how these beliefs interact with contemporary issues of identity and acceptance.

By portraying LGBTQ+ narratives through relatable characters and stories, Netflix series play a crucial role in shifting public perception. They invite viewers to engage with LGBTQ+ experiences in ways that are both accessible and emotionally resonant. The storytelling not only showcases the unique struggles faced by LGBTQ+ individuals but also reveals their aspirations, challenges, and triumphs, allowing audiences to connect with their journeys personally. This connection is essential for cultivating empathy and understanding, as it will enable viewers to see LGBTQ+ individuals not as distant or abstract concepts but as people with real emotions and experiences.

Moreover, the responses signify a broader societal shift toward acceptance and inclusivity as audiences increasingly recognize the importance of valuing diverse identities. This growing awareness encourages a culture of respect where differences are tolerated and embraced. The phrase "being treated as humans are generally treated" speaks volumes about the fundamental human rights and dignity that all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, deserve.

In summary, the analysis reveals that Netflix's LGBTQ+ series is a powerful tool for raising awareness of LGBTQ+ individuals as human beings. By highlighting their common humanity, these series facilitate a transformative dialogue that challenges stereotypes, fosters empathy, and promotes a more inclusive society. The responses demonstrate a significant shift in attitudes, suggesting that as audiences engage with these narratives, they are not only learning about LGBTQ+ experiences but are also redefining their own beliefs and values to create a more accepting environment for all.

#### *Awareness of LGBTQ+ Experiences*

Another category of awareness found in this study is the *Awareness of LGBTQ+ Experiences*, which highlights how Netflix series play a vital role in broadening audiences' understanding of the diverse realities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. In cultures where traditional beliefs can shape attitudes toward sexuality and identity, these narratives are essential for illuminating the complexities of LGBTQ+ lives. By featuring relatable characters and authentic stories, these series cultivate empathy and challenge stereotypes, enabling viewers to engage with LGBTQ+ experiences more profoundly and meaningfully. This growing awareness underscores not only the struggles and aspirations of LGBTQ+ individuals but also their shared humanity, fostering a path toward a more inclusive and accepting society. Through the examination of various audience responses, this analysis aims to demonstrate how interactions with LGBTQ+ narratives are transforming perceptions and encouraging a more profound recognition of the richness and validity of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences.

By watching the experiences of LGBT characters, viewers can develop empathy and a better understanding of the challenges and triumphs faced by individuals in LGBT community, and also can raise awareness about LGBT issues (P23).



*"I've learned a lot from watching Netflix series with LGBTQ issues in it": ...*

I can learn how the situation is in other people's countries and their lives and what is allowed and not, I also learn how to respect people's decisions and other people's choices even though we don't agree with their decisions but we usually respect that I also get knowledge and learn life their society and the environment in which they live (P15).

The responses highlight the series' significant role in raising awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences, illuminating the community's challenges and realities in contemporary society. The first response encapsulates this awareness, noting that engaging with the stories of LGBTQ+ characters help viewers grasp the hurdles and triumphs individuals within this community encounter. This exposure is vital, as it explores the accurate representation of LGBTQ+, moving beyond stereotypes and allowing audiences to perceive them as real people with genuine emotions and experiences. By learning about the struggles and successes of LGBTQ+ characters, viewers can develop a more profound sense of empathy, fostering a more nuanced understanding of their lives.

The second response further emphasizes the educational awareness of watching LGBTQ+ narratives. This audience reflects on gaining insights into how LGBTQ+ individuals navigate their lives across different countries, highlighting the diverse societal norms and legal frameworks that shape their experiences. This perspective not only broadens their awareness of LGBTQ+ issues but also promotes respect for the choices made by individuals, even when they differ from personal beliefs. It signifies a growing recognition that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Together, these responses illustrate how media representation of LGBTQ+ experiences can raise awareness of the LGBTQ+ community, especially in today's society. The responses underscore that the series can give audiences the views of LGBTQ+ individuals as multifaceted human beings rather than mere stereotypes. The series encourages audiences to engage with the diverse experiences of the LGBTQ+ community; these narratives pave the way for a more inclusive society. This increasing awareness of the LGBTQ+ community in current society marks a significant step toward acceptance as audiences begin to recognize the shared humanity among all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Ultimately, such insights can lead to a more compassionate understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and promote a culture of respect and inclusion.

Help to increase understanding and acceptance of LGBT People and also can help to challenge negative stereotypes (P5).

I think the benefit is that it can help reduce my preconceptions that may exist against lgbt people, and see the lives or experiences that lgbt people have (P13).

The lesson I learned is that LGBTQ people want validation to be free from intimidation (P24).

The responses underscore the series' impact on promoting awareness of authentic LGBTQ+ experiences, prioritizing genuine representation over stereotypical portrayals. One response emphasizes that the series promotes understanding and acceptance and actively challenges harmful stereotypes. It suggests that genuine representation allows viewers to see LGBTQ+ individuals as complex, multifaceted people rather than through the lens of outdated or negative clichés. The series encourages viewers to look beyond preconceived notions and foster a more inclusive, empathetic mindset by confronting these stereotypes.

Another response reflects on the personal benefits of the series, stating that it has helped the viewer to question and reduce their preconceptions. This insight speaks to the series' ability to humanize LGBTQ+ experiences by portraying them in an accessible and relatable way, bridging the gap between audiences and LGBTQ+ communities. By allowing viewers to witness the unique and everyday realities of LGBTQ+ lives, the series diminishes the "otherness" often associated with marginalized groups and instead promotes an understanding of their shared humanity.

The final response speaks to the series' emotional impact, noting the importance of LGBTQ+ individuals' desire for validation and freedom from intimidation. This perspective highlights how authentic representation can provide visibility to the challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face, illustrating their need for acceptance and respect in a society where they are often marginalized. Together, these responses emphasize the series' critical role in not only raising awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences but also fostering an environment of empathy, understanding, and support for their rights and dignity.

In conclusion, these responses illustrate the series' profound impact in promoting understanding, empathy, and acceptance toward LGBTQ+ individuals by emphasizing genuine representation. By refusing to rely on stereotypes, the series enables viewers to see LGBTQ+ people in their full complexity, fostering a deeper sense of shared humanity and challenging existing biases.

Through *Heartstopper*, I came to know that LGBTQ people are not just born and grow up fully aware that they are LGBTQ, but there are doubts and crises that they feel when going through the process of "realizing" that they are truly LGBT. Through *Glamorous*, I came to know that there are gays who prefer partners who look normal, like ordinary men, not feminine. I also came to know that LGBT relationships can also do things that I thought only heterosexual or different-sex relationships could do, like having sex (P16).

The lesson is don't stop to find out who you are like in the movie *Heartstopper* (P25).

The responses highlight the series' influential role in raising awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences, especially in self-discovery and identity formation. The first response reflects how *Heartstopper* unveils the emotional complexity LGBTQ+ individuals often navigate, including

feelings of uncertainty, doubt, and self-realization. This sheds light on the journey of becoming aware of one's identity, challenging the misconception that LGBTQ+ individuals are always sure of who they are from a young age. The audience's insights from *Glamorous* add another layer to this understanding, highlighting that LGBTQ+ relationships and preferences are diverse and multifaceted. By showing that LGBTQ+ individuals seek various qualities in their partners and experience relationships with as much depth and intimacy as heterosexual couples, the series broadens the audience's perspective on what LGBTQ+ relationships can entail, reducing stereotypes and preconceived notions.

The second response further emphasizes the theme of self-discovery, as *Heartstopper* encourages audiences not to limit their search for identity, even amid societal pressures or personal doubts. This aligns with the broader impact of these series in showing that discovering one's true self is a dynamic, ongoing process.

In conclusion, these responses underscore the series' influential role in raising awareness of LGBTQ+ experiences by showcasing genuine and diverse journeys of identity formation. Through authentic narratives, the series broadens understanding, challenges stereotypes, and fosters a more empathetic and inclusive cultural perspective on LGBTQ+ lives and relationships.

#### *Awareness of Diverse Gender Identities*

This subsection explores how Netflix's LGBTQ+ series helps raise awareness around diverse gender identities, using relatable stories to expand audiences' understanding of gender beyond traditional definitions. By showcasing a range of LGBTQ+ characters and their experiences, these series highlight gender as a unique, personal journey beyond fixed categories. With these stories reaching a global audience, Netflix allows audiences to see past stereotypes, build empathy, and appreciate the richness of gender diversity. This analysis examines how this representation can encourage a more inclusive and open-minded perspective on gender and identity.

As a human being, we are all created with our different types, characteristics, and many more. LGBTQ+ is just the orientations that some people get from God. We have to respect them as any usual people. When they don't bother us, we shouldn't bother them too. Just live in peace in this society (P8).

Learning about different experiences and identities fosters a greater respect for the diversity of human lives (P26).

I think that I know more or less the characteristics of LGBT people, so it makes me more aware. I feel sad to realize that there are people out there who have differences in sexual attraction (LGBT), I just hope that I don't become one of them in the future (P23).

These responses illustrate a growing awareness and reflection on diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, aligning with the broader concept of accepting and respecting human diversity. As a whole, encouraging empathy and understanding across different identities. This reflects the positive impact of awareness on breaking down preconceived notions and fostering inclusivity by making people more aware of the realities and experiences of others.

The third response shows a more conflicted viewpoint, where awareness of LGBTQ+ identities evoke empathy but also a personal struggle with internal biases. While this response expresses sadness and a hope to avoid personal identification with LGBTQ+ identities, it reflects an increased awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. This perspective, albeit conflicted, suggests that awareness of gender diversity can lead to deeper reflection, albeit through a lens of personal reservation.

In conclusion, these responses reflect varied stages of awareness and acceptance regarding gender and sexual diversity. They illustrate how exposure to different identities can encourage empathy, promote societal tolerance, and sometimes challenge deeply held beliefs, highlighting the complexities of developing a nuanced understanding of diverse gender identities.

#### *Awareness Of Media's Impact on Social Perceptions*

This subsection explores the influential role that Netflix's LGBTQ+ series plays in shaping social perceptions and public attitudes. Through authentic storytelling and diverse representation, these series reflect societal values, challenge norms, and broaden perspectives. By portraying a wide range of LGBTQ+ identities, experiences, and viewpoints, Netflix fosters empathy, breaks down stereotypes, and encourages a more inclusive understanding of society. This analysis examines how these series affect audiences' perception of and interpret LGBTQ+ issues, highlighting Netflix's role in driving awareness and shaping cultural attitudes toward gender and sexual diversity.

Netflix really want to spread the LGBTQ to the world. Whether it is for adults or for teenagers. I believe they diligently make this kind of issues because their platform is huge and accessible. Almost every living person in this world knows Netflix, so they use it for the LGBTQ agenda. But for people who want to avoid any series with LGBTQ+ issues, they may find themselves watching it accidentally for some of them are very subtle (P6).

In the response, the audience believes that Netflix aims to promote LGBTQ+ representation globally, suggesting that they perceive the platform as intentionally shaping attitudes. This concern highlights the vast reach of Netflix, which targets adults and teenagers, underscoring its significant cultural influence across demographics. However, the audience conveys unease regarding what they interpret as an LGBTQ+ agenda, indicating that they view the integration of LGBTQ+ content into mainstream media as intrusive.

The audience's concerns extend to the accessibility of Netflix content, describing it as extensive and easily accessible, which implies that LGBTQ+ themes are nearly unavoidable. This sentiment reflects an awareness of how media can infiltrate daily life, regardless of individual intent to seek out such narratives. The audience grapples with a moral dilemma, suggesting that even those who wish to avoid LGBTQ+ stories may inadvertently encounter them. This fear indicates discomfort with the growing normalization of LGBTQ+ representation, contrasting with viewers who may tolerate or respect LGBTQ+ identities without full endorsement.

Furthermore, the response reveals a sense of skepticism toward the media's role in spreading values, indicating that LGBTQ+ themes can be subtle and possibly masked to introduce viewers to these ideas without their explicit consent. This perspective illustrates a resistance based on distrust of media intentions. Instead of viewing LGBTQ+ content as a natural representation of diverse identities, the audience perceives it as part of a broader effort to promote these values. This awareness indicates that audiences are not passive consumers; they actively engage with and critically evaluate media messages, pushing back when those messages conflict with their beliefs.

In conclusion, this response reflects the awareness of the influential role of media in shaping public perceptions. The audience's concern about accidental exposure to such themes further reveals their discomfort with the normalization of LGBTQ+ identities in mainstream media, highlighting the tension between media influence and personal values. This awareness emphasizes the complexity and diversity of audience responses. Ultimately, while platforms like Netflix possess the capacity to disseminate new values and challenge traditional norms, not all viewers are ready to accept these changes, with some actively opposing them when they feel these messages are being subtly imposed.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The research findings reveal the complex impact of LGBTQ+ media on Indonesian audiences, shaped by cultural, religious, and societal norms. Netflix LGBTQ+ series like *Heartstopper*, *Feels Good*, and *Glamorous* significantly enhance audiences' knowledge and awareness of the LGBTQ+ community. Many viewers gain crucial knowledge, including insights into LGBTQ+ experiences and identities, cultural and societal contexts, moral lessons, and the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. This knowledge allows audiences to engage with the narratives deeper and fosters a better understanding of the diverse experiences within the LGBTQ+ community.

Moreover, many viewers report increased awareness directly from watching these series. This includes recognizing LGBTQ+ individuals as human beings deserving of respect, understanding their unique experiences, and appreciating diverse gender identities.

Additionally, audiences become more aware of the impact of media on social perceptions, recognizing how such portrayals can influence attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues.

The complexity of audience responses highlights the need for a respectful balance between representation and cultural sensitivity to facilitate broader acceptance. This underscores the crucial role of media in catalyzing social awareness while considering diverse perspectives. Ultimately, these findings illustrate that while LGBTQ+ media is a powerful tool for educating audiences and promoting awareness, the reception of such content remains nuanced and varies among different segments of society.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to extend our gratitude to Kementrian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi of Indonesia has fully granted the conduct of this research under the scheme of Penelitian Fundamental-Regular 2024. Our research is under contract 054/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024 dated 11 June 2024 and 20.31/UN23.35.5/PT.01.00/VI/2024

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