

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: BL (BOYS' LOVE) *FANFICTION* CONTENT IN THE *GAME LOVE AND DEEPSPACE FANDOM*

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Abstract

In its development, the 3D otome game *Love and Deepspace* has been deemed successful in attracting the attention of both women and men, but BL (Boys Love) *fanfiction* content created by fans of the otome game is often found. This discussion has caused debate among fans, due to the country's regulations regulate censorship of homosexual content. This study aims to analyze how *Boys Love fanfiction* in the *Love and Deepspace* fandom is reconstructed as discourse, how cognitive and social cognition in the fandom shapes its meaning and acceptance, and how such *fanfiction* represents negotiation and resistance against dominant norms. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach according to Van Dijk, supplemented with analysis of the textual, cognitive, and social dimensions. The research data consists of five screenshots of *Boys Love fanfiction* taken from the X platform and Archive of Our Own (AO3). The results show that *Boys Love fanfiction* utilizes lexical and narrative strategies to normalize romance between men, including themes within the realm of fantasy and alternative cultural contexts. In addition, the social cognition of fandom acts as a mechanism that allows for the separation between the real world and fantasy, so that *Boys Love fanfiction* is not only a means of entertainment, but also a discourse practice that represents symbolic negotiation and resistance to restrictions on sexual expression.

Keywords: *Boys Love, fanfiction, Love and Deepspace, Critical Discourse Analysis, fandom.*

INTRODUCTION

Love and Deepspace is a sci-fi based otome game (a romantic game for girls) that also features RPG elements and a gacha system. Produced by Papergames (with distribution outside China handled by Infold Games), it was released for Android and iOS on January 18, 2024, establishing it as a 3D otome game that has received positive reviews and achieved commercial success. The game's storyline follows a female protagonist (the player's POV), a deepspace hunter tasked with protecting Linkon City from attacks by wanderers from other planets triggered by a massive explosion that created a huge hole in space. Set in the year 2034, humanity receives its first message from "Deepspace" sparking space exploration and the arrival of alien beings known as wanderers. Technological advancements are undeniable, in fact, humanity is developing technology to create a new Earth, as the one we currently inhabit is already very old. Not only that, but the main character (MC) and a select few possess a power known as "Evol" The MC has "Evol Resonance," which can be combined to enhance the potential of others' Evol

powers. On his journey as a hunter, the MC isn't alone, she is accompanied by other characters who help him combat the evil of the Wanderers namely, his love interests, currently numbering five, including Xavier, a deep-space hunter possesses the Evol Light, Rafayel, an artist, possesses the Evol Fire, Zayne, a heart surgeon, possesses the Evol Ice, Sylus, a mafia boss, possesses the Evol Energy Manipulation, and Caleb, a colonel and the MC's stepbrother, possesses the Evol Gravity Manipulation. Not only does it tell the story of the struggle between humanity and monsters, but Love and Deepspace also features reincarnation storylines and the futures of the MC and their love interest. Additionally, the game features 3D inteactions between love interest, romantic 3D interactions that can be enjoyed from various perspectives with an open ending, intimacy features such as sleeping, alarms, and a realistic photo booth, adventure and combat features with love interest, customization options, a menstrual cycle tracker, and even a shared living space. With its 3D design and features that enhance players' daily experiences, Love and Deepspace offers a sense of togetherness and love that transcends dimensions.



Photo 1.1 *The love interest in the game Love and Deepspace (from left to right) include Xavier, Zayne, Rafayel, Sylus, dan Caleb.*

With the popularity of dating games featuring fan service that satisfies players, unfortunately, behind the popularity of Love and Deepspace another phenomenon has emerged that has become a hot topic of discussion among players one of which is the proliferation of BL (Boys' Love) fanfiction content. Upon closer inspection, Love and Deepspace a game originating from China has several restritions, including a ban on copywighting fan art, fan fiction, or fan animations. Deriving personal profit from game character and creating fan works with BL (Boys Love) content. These rules are in place to preserve the game's originality and ensure compliance with the law. Howeve, this phenomenon has grown increasingly widespread over time, leading the game's developers to issue a warning regarding the creation of fanfiction.

However, even after the regulation was introduced, it did not stop fans from being creative with game characters. Since such content is considered a violation, some fans agree with

the game developers' stance and argue that the presence of boys-love content could have severe consequences for the game's development (such as a ban by local authorities, leading to the shutdown of game servers). However, fans of other otome games also contend that Love Interests (LI) in games will always be "shipped" (paired up) because it has long been an established part of the culture, so this phenomenon is simply commonplace and frequently occurs among otome game fans. Meanwhile, in 2021, China enacted a law regulating the display of Boys Love through general content censorship rules, as such content is deemed incompatible with traditional Chinese culture, where masculinity can only be expressed by men, and femininity by women. Any deviation from these cultural norms could have a negative impact on the younger generation, as young people at that age are looking to role models to help them find their identity (Provision on Government, 2025).

In addition, statements regarding gender have also surfaced, because according to Butler's perspective, gender is not determined by what is assigned at birth (female or male), but rather is part of a social and cultural construction, even if it is unrelated to one's biological sex. Furthermore, gender is something that is enacted or performed through actions, behaviors, and expressions in daily life; in other words, gender is a performative aspect of human existence and can constantly change depending on social and cultural contexts. Beyond this performative aspect, gender is also closely tied to how an individual positions themselves and how they interact within social contexts. Consequently, Butler has argued that gender is a construction that lacks any ontological origin or foundation; it exists solely as the effect of continuous actions and expressions (Butler, 1999). Furthermore, still regarding China's regulations on restrictions on Boys' Love—which have been in place for four years—there is a power dynamic exercised by the Chinese government over its people. As a socialist republic, the state's leaders wield significant influence over the populace, to the extent that laws are enacted to regulate even appearance and gender. The existence of such gender regulations is closely linked to theories of power relations, specifically the concept of biopower, whereby the state can regulate the body, sexuality, reproduction, and what constitutes a "normal" gender identity. Furthermore, the concept of "power/knowledge" posits that the state defines the gender discourse it deems acceptable, thereby treating deviant behavior as a means of shaping which identities are permitted to be expressed (Foucault, 1990).

In writing this article, the Critical Discourse Analysis model developed by Van Dijk was employed. Teun A. Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model has proven suitable for examining popular culture practices and fandom texts, both of which are often considered

outside the scope of critical discourse analysis. Therefore, by integrating textual analysis, cognitive analysis, and social cognition, this study affirms that fanfiction can serve not only as entertainment but also as a discursive practice tied to specific power relations and ideologies. Meanwhile, amid the rapid development of the game **Love and Deepspace**, the Boys' Love fandom within the game serves as a creative outlet, and the Boys' Love fanfiction produced within it becomes a medium for expressing desires, fantasies, and even dedication as fans toward the characters that appear. Through fanfiction, writers and readers are able to fulfill their desires without having to violate real-life norms, while simultaneously offering a form of resistance against the norms that have long been established within their social environment.

While there has been extensive research on Boys Love fanfiction, no study has yet examined Boys Love fanfiction centered on the game **Love and Deepspace** from a literary perspective. However, the following studies are cited as references, beginning with the study titled “The Construction of Gender Identity in K-Pop Fanfiction with a Boys Love Theme” (Natyakalyana & Tambunan, 2024), which employs textual analysis and focuses on the construction of gender identity through the “top/bottom” labels. Next, there is a study titled “Women’s Acceptance of Boys Love in Alternative Universes (AU) on Twitter” (Devi & Syafrida, 2025), which employed a qualitative method—specifically, in-depth interviews with readers of Boys Love AUs on Twitter—and found that readers’ acceptance varies due to factors such as background, culture, personal values, and beliefs. Finally, a study titled “Boys Love Texts as a Medium for Negotiating Gender and Sexuality Among Female Fans” (Ade, 2023), which employed cyber-ethnography, Spradley’s taxonomy, and theoretical internalization, found that the consumption of K-pop Boys Love serves as a virtual space that influences the reception of Boys Love texts and the negotiation of social values regarding sexuality; however, this does not always align with the acceptance of gay individuals in the real world. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that Boys Love fanfiction serves as a form of entertainment and a means of expressive exploration between writers and readers within the fandom, but also as a form of resistance to real-life norms. The findings of this study have theoretical and cultural implications for the study of digital discourse and fandom.

This study seeks to address three main research problems. First, it examines how the discourse of Boys Love (BL) fanfiction within the Love and Deepspace fandom is constructed at the textual level. Second, it investigates how the fandom’s social cognition shapes the representation, interpretation, and acceptance of Boys Love discourse in Love and Deepspace

fanfiction. Third, it explores how Boys Love fanfiction represents forms of negotiation and resistance toward dominant norms within cultural and regulatory contexts that constrain the expression of sexuality.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the Critical Discourse Analysis method as proposed by Van Dijk. This approach aims to explain the meaning of a given discourse, thereby revealing the implicit meanings it seeks to convey without relying on statistical methods. Data collection was accomplished as follows: 1) Collecting various forms of discourse from two major platforms—X (Twitter) and AO3 (Archive for Our Own)—which predominantly host boys' love fanfiction. 2) Analyzing the collected discourse, consisting of five screenshots from both platforms, namely X (Twitter) and AO3 (Archive of Our Own). 3) Providing responses and analysis results for the four pieces of discourse that were analyzed (Van Dijk, 2006).

Results and Discussions

After the data to be included was collected and identified, here are the results of the data collection and analysis, along with supporting data to help understand the terms that appear in the collected data, starting with the glossary of terms for the game *Love and Deepspace* and the glossary of terms for fan fiction.

Boys Love Fanfiction Glossary

As fan fiction has evolved, many new terms have emerged, particularly in fan fiction featuring homosexual content. The following are some terms that commonly appear in Boys Love fanfiction.

Table 1. Glossary of Boys Love Fanfiction Terminology

Term	Definition
AU (Alternative Universe)	A fanfiction story set in an alternative universe. It also refers to fan-created stories that reinterpret existing characters or settings, often published on social media or fanfiction platforms.
BL (Boys Love)	A genre depicting romantic relationships between male characters.

GL (Girls Love)	A genre depicting romantic relationships between female characters.
Top/Bottom	Terms referring to roles within sexual relationships or relationship power dynamics.
Trope	A recognizable narrative pattern, theme, or storytelling element commonly used in fiction.
Threesome, Foursome, Fivesome, etc.	A relationship or interaction involving three or more individuals, regardless of gender.
Fanbase	A group of people who share admiration for a particular work, character, or creator.
Fandom	A community of fans who actively participate in and engage with a shared interest or creative work.
Non-con (Non-consensual)	A scenario involving sexual activity that occurs without the consent of one party.
Death Dove / Deathfic	A fanfiction genre primarily centered on character death or tragic events.
Mpreg (Male Pregnancy)	A fictional trope in which a male character becomes pregnant.
Pussy Boy	A trope depicting a male character as feminine, passive, or physically and emotionally vulnerable.
Alpha/Omega	A social and biological hierarchy found in the Omegaverse genre, adapted from fictionalized wolf pack dynamics.
Pheromones/Scenting	Biological scents or pheromones that trigger attraction, bonding, or instinctive responses between characters.
Fluff	A genre emphasizing lighthearted, wholesome, romantic, and emotionally uplifting moments.
Angst	A genre characterized by emotional suffering, conflict, trauma, drama, grief, or heartbreak.
Hurt/Comfort	A trope in which a character experiences physical or emotional pain and subsequently receives comfort or care from another

	character.
Crack/Crackfic	A fanfiction genre featuring absurd, exaggerated, or intentionally nonsensical situations.
Ship/Shipping	The pairing of two or more characters in a romantic relationship, whether canonical or fan-created.
Canon/Canon Divergence	<i>Canon</i> refers to events officially established in the original work, whereas <i>Canon Divergence</i> describes fanfiction that departs from the original storyline while retaining the core elements of the source material.
Smut/Lemon/NSFW	NSFW (<i>Not Safe for Work</i>) is a label indicating that a work contains explicit sexual content intended for mature audiences.
Slow Burn	A romance that develops gradually, emphasizing emotional connection before the relationship reaches its climax.
Slash	A term indicating a romantic or sexual relationship between male characters.
Femslash	A term indicating a romantic or sexual relationship between female characters.
Soulmate AU	An Alternative Universe in which characters are connected by a predetermined soulmate bond or destiny.
Body Swap AU	An Alternative Universe in which characters exchange bodies.
Canon Divergence AU	A Boys Love fanfiction that follows an alternative storyline while preserving the identities and core characteristics of the original characters.

Protective Alpha/Caring Alpha	: A trope portraying an Alpha character (within the Omegaverse setting) as gentle, nurturing, and protective toward their partner.
Genderbend/Reverse AU	An Alternative Universe in which the gender of canonical characters is changed while retaining their original identities and personalities.

Data Analysis

Here are some examples of Boys' Love fanfiction in various popular formats on two platforms: X (Twitter) and AO3 (Archive of Our Own).

1. The construction of Boys' Love fanfiction discourse in the Love and Deepspace fandom at the textual level

1.1 Various Forms of Fan Fiction

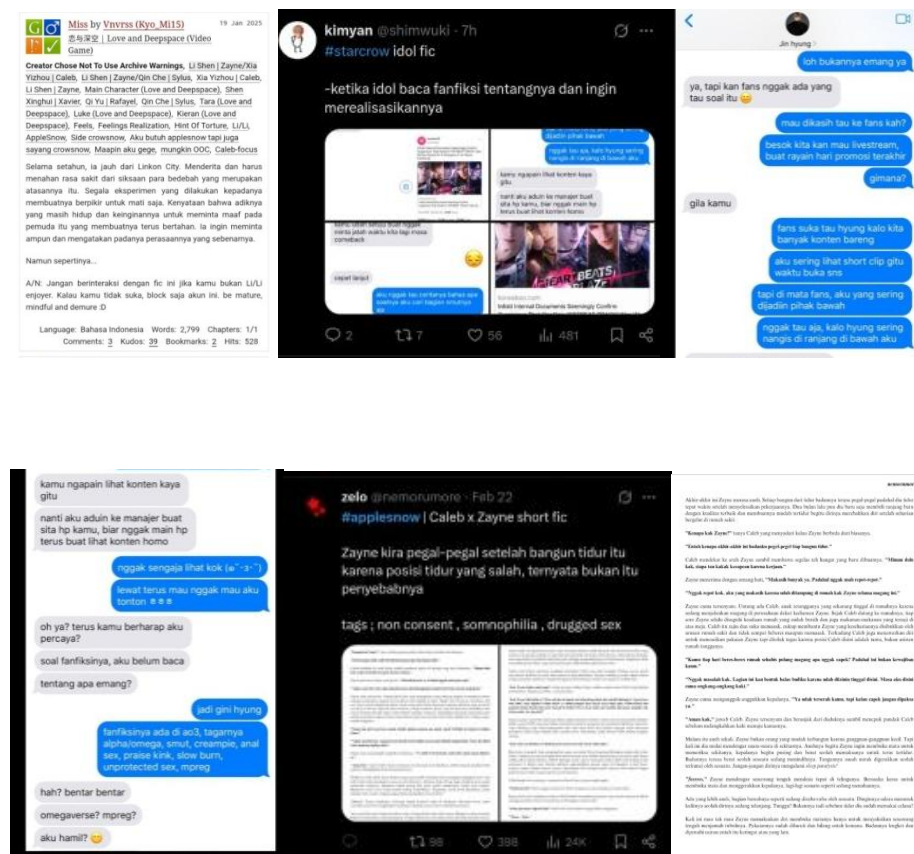


Figure 2.1 A collection of fanfiction in various formats on X and AO3

At least three types of fanfiction commonly found on both platforms were identified; all of these fanfictions share commonalities that will be analyzed using the three dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis according to Van Dijk, including:

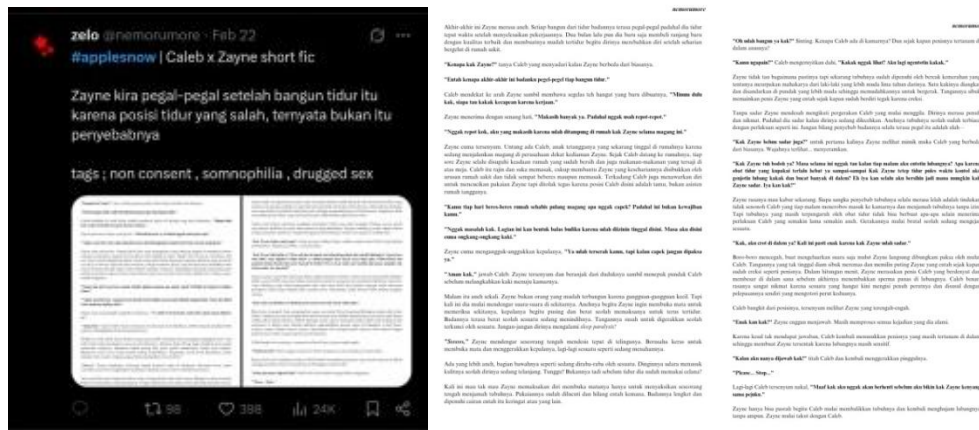
1.2 Text Analysis

In Boys Love fanfiction, the majority of authors on both platforms use the romance genre, which is typically divided into two categories: sad endings and happy endings. The “sad ending” category is usually associated with hashtags like “angst,” “dead dove,” “character died,” and “tragic.” In contrast, “happy endings” are associated with the “fluff” and “domestic” genres. There are also quite a few short stories featuring numerous plot twists, tailored to the author’s preferences or the requests of fellow community members. Furthermore, there are many ways fanfiction writers—especially on Platform X—present their work; they typically use formats such as fake chats, threads, screenshots of the manuscript, or simply a single post. It is common to find writers who decide to continue their work on platforms specifically designed for writers to focus more intensely on plot and character development, even if the content consists solely of text without supporting images. These platforms include AO3 (Archive of Our Own), Wattpad, Privatter, Medium, and Patreon.

Meanwhile, when it comes to character selection, both writers and readers often apply filters to avoid debates arising from being in the “wrong community” or crossing into communities that are into things that sometimes don’t align with the general public’s preferences. In the Love and Deepspace fanfiction, many communities have formed around their ideal Boys’ Love couples, each symbolized by a specific character (Xavier=Star, Zayne=Snow, Rafayel=Fish, Sylus=Crow, Caleb=Apple). some examples include (Starfish, Crowsnow, Applesnow, Applestar, Snowfish, Crowfish, Starcrow), where the first symbol mentioned represents the dominant partner and the last symbol represents the submissive partner. However, it’s also common for authors to swap these symbols at their discretion when creating their stories. Meanwhile, these pairings aren’t necessarily predetermined; most fans choose pairings based on appearance, rivalry, or even the personalities of each character.

Although much fanfiction involves only two characters, it’s not uncommon to include more than two—such as threesomes, foursomes, or fivesomes—featuring various characters deemed compatible with the headcanon (a fan-created story resulting from fans piecing together established elements of a work, a product of their imagination) (for example, Xavier, a Deepspace Hunter, has a dominant personality in his romantic relationship with a famous, spoiled, and flirtatious artist named Rafayel) or aligning with the canon (the established facts of a work) from the plot of the game **Love and Deepspace**, for example, (Xavier and Sylus are often “shipped” because they both come from Planet Philos, plus Xavier is a prince and Sylus is a dragon; another example is the life story of two childhood friends who become rivals—Zayne, the doctor, and Caleb, the colonel—who look alike but have completely opposite personalities). The creation of male-male romance stories also involves sexual intimacy; among them are many hashtags related to sexuality and even pregnancy for one of the characters, highlighting the taboo nature of such intimacy in normative society.

1.2.1 Fanfiction Analysis



2.2 AU in platform x

One example of an AU (alternate universe) published on X is a type of fanfiction often found across various media formats. In this case, the AU published by @nemorumore is a fanfiction featuring Caleb as the dominant character—represented by an apple—and Zayne as the submissive character—represented by snow. The premise is that Zayne, as the submissive partner and the older of the two (indicated by Caleb addressing him as “Kakak”), wakes up feeling sore every morning, initially assuming it’s due to sleeping in an awkward position. In reality, however, Caleb, as the dominant figure, has raped Zayne while he was asleep. The tags included in this fanfiction are non-consent, somnophilia, and drugged sex, referring to a romantic story with explicit scenes carried out under duress (without consent from either party), in which the perpetrator is intoxicated and has a sexual attraction to someone who is asleep.

Meanwhile, in terms of lexical analysis, this fanfiction uses informal Indonesian and incorporates contemporary slang, depicting the closeness between the two characters despite their age difference—as referenced in “a masterpiece by a man five years younger than her.” Furthermore, the relationship between the two characters is one in which sexual violence is normalized—even as a means of forming a bond. At the same time, when the character Zayne is raped, he does not confront the perpetrator but instead allows Caleb to satisfy both of their biological needs; this incident has recurred and is considered habitual abuse. In addition to the closeness between the characters being marked by one-sided sexual relations, there are several signs that initially appear before the sexual assault occurs, such as “his body was already covered in marks”—this quote exemplifies the transfer of agency from the perpetrator to the victim’s body. On the other hand, the “drugged sex” tag is indicated by the quote, “Is it because the sleeping pills I took were too strong...?”—suggesting that the perpetrator, Caleb, had given Zayne sleeping pills so that he could freely use another person’s body.

Meanwhile, the narrative analysis used in the above AU employs a two-layered narrative structure, with a “layer of normality” in the first layer—which introduces the background before the secret is finally revealed, serving as a cue to the second layer, namely the “layer of hidden violence”—involving Caleb, who appears to be a kind and diligent intern at Zayne’s workplace, but at night transforms into a man who rapes Zayne using sleeping pills. On the other hand, Zayne, as the victim, feels confused and does not resist; he is overcome by fear upon realizing the abusive behavior of Caleb, the diligent intern.

Therefore, this AU with the hashtag #applesnow carries a meaning constructed by the author: the relationship between the two men, in which one character dominates the other through intimacy; violence is not emphasized as threatening behavior but rather as a means of establishing a relationship. This discourse reflects the social cognition of the Boys Love fandom, which separates fantasy from real-life norms, while also demonstrating the negotiation of the meaning of consent within an alternative cultural space.

2. Cognitive and social cognition within fandom shape the interpretation and acceptance of Boys Love discourse in the fanfiction Love and Deepspace.

2.1 Cognitive Analysis

Whether read by fellow community members or the general public, Boys Love fanfiction—as published—indirectly conveys an ideology that influences readers' subconscious minds. The ideas presented in these works stem from fantasy, normalization, or mere humor. Consequently, it is no surprise that many Boys Love readers find validation of their true selves—previously concealed in public spaces due to prevailing societal norms. Furthermore, through Boys Love fanfiction, authors aim to present romantic stories that “do not break the rules” to the general public—demonstrating that men who share intimacy with other men, just as lovers do, represent a normal aspect of humanity and should be normalized. However, readers and writers immersed in Boys Love fanfiction have developed mental models that distinguish between reality and fiction, allowing problematic narratives to be accepted and understood as part of narrative and emotional exploration—rather than as normative values to be applied in real life. This consensus arises from affective experiences with the characters, genre expectations, and fandom text consumption habits.

Through numerous examples of Boys' Love fanfiction—which tends to be dominated by the “angst” genre—the author depicts men who are unable to express their hidden feelings toward others of the same sex due to societal norms. With the characters in the game *Love and Deepspace*, which feature a wide range of character explorations, it is hoped that the reality that has long been prevalent can be brought to light—so that these relationships do not focus solely on men who dress up beautifully and act spoiled or men who are overly masculine, but also on the intimacy between two men who appear “normal,” particularly among young adults. Furthermore, intersecting with angst-genre Boys' Love fanfiction, the fluff genre—with its warmth—seems to evoke a reality where couples will live happily with their loved ones, especially same-sex couples, as long as they do not cause “trouble” for others. In other words, falling in love with someone of the same sex is not a fatal mistake, neither for the individual nor for the social community.

Furthermore, Boys Love fanfiction also serves as an alternative medium for authors to reveal their “true” identities to the general public and to declare their full support for the LGBT community out there, which is currently being marginalized by those around them.

2.2 Social Analysis

When it comes to social aspects, Boys Love fanfiction is closely tied to phenomena in the public sphere. Fandoms function as interpretive communities that construct shared knowledge

and norms regarding what is acceptable in fanfiction. Through the use of tags, AU genres, and content warnings, fandoms create a cognitive framework that normalizes the emergence of taboo themes, thereby establishing a collective belief system that bridges the relationship between texts, readers, and social norms.

Furthermore, the emergence of Boys Love fanfiction within fandoms with a strong interest in Boys Love—characterized by elements related to relationships constructed by social spaces—reflects authors' efforts to critique the social systems that have long been entrenched in their surrounding environments. The existence of the LGBT community is a form of voice for minorities oppressed by both written and unwritten rules in a given region. Nevertheless, it is still possible for same-sex relationships to emerge, regardless of how a country's rules and laws are formulated. Through Boys Love fanfiction, this serves as a form of protest that has yet to achieve the justice it seeks.

3. Representations of discursive negotiation and resistance to dominant norms within cultural and regulatory contexts that restrict expressions of sexuality

Within the Boys' Love fanfiction fandom *Love and Deepspace*, these works generally represent forms of discursive negotiation and resistance to dominant norms through the creation of alternative narrative spaces characterized by implicit discursive resistance within the fandom's alternative spaces. In Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse not only reflects social reality but also serves as a means to negotiate prevailing power relations and ideologies. Through fanfiction, romances between two men—often accompanied by taboo themes—can emerge without legitimization from mainstream discourse (Van Dijk, 2009).

Furthermore, according to Jenkins (2012), fandom functions as a participatory culture, where fans find a space to be creative and produce alternative meanings that are not merely aligned with the dominant narrative. Meanwhile, the negotiation of dominant norms is evident in storytelling strategies that avoid direct confrontation with moral values and cultural regulations. Fanfiction—which is often associated with fantasy, alternate universes (AU), or psychological explorations of characters—allows problematic discourses to remain acceptable within the fandom, even though they are not normatively considered representations of real life.

In a cultural context, Boys Love fanfiction is a form of symbolic resistance, where this resistance is not manifested through outright rejection of regulations, but through the production of discourse circulating within specific communities. Meanwhile, according to Foucault (1990), power operates not only through prohibition but also through the regulation of discourse. Consequently, fanfiction has emerged as an alternative discourse, demonstrating how marginalized subjects can find avenues for self-expression. Thus, Boys Love fanfiction serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a discursive practice through which the fandom strives to maintain a space for expression amidst the oppression of social norms in real life. All efforts within this practice demonstrate that resistance to norms is not always overt; yet its presence can still be felt through the implicit and collective negotiation of meaning that takes place.

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A. Fanfiction Addresses LGBT Themes

Fanfiction often arises from fantasy, disappointment, or admiration for something that is either canon (in line with the original story) or fanon (created by fans). It takes many forms beyond just writing; it is also commonly found in other formats, such as comics, fan-made video edits, fan art, and even role-playing. Every means is employed to satisfy the audience. Furthermore, the emergence of fandoms has spurred the creation of numerous fanfiction works as a platform for free expression within a community, and these ideas are accepted by the community's members. However, sometimes fan works that challenge social norms face criticism or even widespread blocking because they are deemed inappropriate for public consumption. From these debates, prolonged conflicts have arisen; for the community, this is legitimate because they support one another, but the situation is different in anti-LGBT communities or among the general public, who in turn condemn the community. Meanwhile, the normalization of LGBT issues within a community can serve as a source of validation for people searching for their identity, fans of same-sex romance, and even “straight” people who approve of these non-normative stories—ultimately leading many people to come out or publicly declare their “true” identities.

B. Conflict Between Government Regulations and Freedom of Expression

When these otome games first emerged, Boys Love stories also began to flourish in several fandoms, growing in popularity alongside the rise of the game **Love and Deepspace**. However, it's important to note that content censorship policies regarding Boys Love are still in effect in the game's country of origin—China. This doesn't prevent international players—or even non-players—from creating more Boys Love content, whether to express their fantasies, exercise their freedom of expression, or even as a source of income, resulting in various creative works beyond just fanfiction. One example is the circulation of explicit video edits featuring two male characters, created using **The Sims** and Blender, which have appeared on platforms like X and Patreon in response to demand from both buyers of the content and the animators themselves.

There are also quite a few players and non-players of *Love and Deepspace*, as well as artists and even animators from China, who have taken advantage of this situation to benefit fans. On the other hand, other players are concerned because the massive scale of these rule violations could lead to a “server shutdown,” resulting in widespread debate. So far, the game developer has limited itself to monitoring how players use their characters by issuing a statement

prohibiting Boys Love content for anyone. The Boys Love controversy within *Love and Deepspace* shows no signs of ending. In early January 2026, the game's Chinese developers ran a promotion on Xiaohongshu (a trending app in China) using the hashtag "Gay." This promotion, seen as highly contradictory to the core principles of an otome game, sparked widespread criticism; to date, there has been no follow-up action from any parties involved.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it is concluded that Boys Love fanfiction in the Love and Deepspace game fandom is a discursive practice involving the interaction between text, cognition, and social context. In terms of textual cognition, Boys Love fanfiction is constructed through lexical choices and narrative structures that tend to portray intimacy, affection, and dynamics between characters. Within this discourse, there is a clear representation of romance between two men, accompanied by several taboo themes—a form of exploratory expression—but not as a deviation that is at odds with morality.

Meanwhile, in the dimensions of cognitive and social cognition, the fandom serves as a crucial space for shaping meaning and acceptance of Boys Love discourse. Within this space, readers and writers develop mental models—distinguishing between the real world and fantasy—which allows them to filter out certain problematic norms so that they can be accepted as part of the fantasy. Furthermore, fandom is an interpretive community that builds shared knowledge and norms, leading the community to normalize the presence of Boys Love fanfiction—which often features elements that do not align with normative real life—including genre choices, explicit tags, and content warnings.

Meanwhile, on the social front, Boys Love fanfiction represents a form of negotiation and resistance against dominant norms and cultural regulations that restrict the expression of sexuality. Although not overt, this resistance is manifested implicitly by utilizing the alternative narrative space provided by the fandom community. This means that Boys Love fanfiction serves as a platform for fans to maintain a space for expressing and creating fantasies amidst the oppression of real-life norms. In other words, Boys Love fanfiction presents an alternative discourse that can be negotiated within the context of power relations.

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