

SEXUAL TRANSGRESSION SPACE IN FUJOSHI TEXTS ON X

ESPACIO DE TRANSGRESIÓN SEXUAL EN LOS TEXTOS FUJOSHI EN X

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of female fans of homosexual fiction stories, known as fujoshi in Japanese, is growing and spreading to several countries, including in Indonesia. The existence of fujoshi was initially linked to the resistance movement against conventional discourse on sexuality. Now, fujoshi have created a transgressive space through text and works of art on social media, especially those uploaded on X. Through the postmodernist perspective and raising gender performativity theory from Judith Butler, this research found that fujoshi in Tapal Kuda tend to camouflage when enjoying boys love content, with the majority of the population being Moslem, they have to put on performances that conform to the teachings of their religion. Among other conclusions, it has been discovered that fujoshi create a zone that better accommodates their interests in homosexual fiction.

Keywords: fujoshi, transgression space, performativity, texts

RESUMEN

La popularidad de las fans de las historias de ficción homosexual, conocidas como fujoshi en japonés, está creciendo y se está extendiendo a varios países, entre ellos Indonesia. La existencia de las fujoshi se vinculó inicialmente al movimiento de resistencia contra el discurso convencional sobre la sexualidad. Ahora, las fujoshi han creado un espacio transgresor a través de textos y obras de arte en las redes sociales, especialmente aquellas subidas a X. A través de la perspectiva posmodernista y planteando la teoría de la performatividad de género de Judith Butler, esta investigación encontró que las fujoshi en Tapal Kuda tienden a camuflarse cuando disfrutan de contenido de amor entre chicos, ya que, al ser la mayoría de la población musulmana, tienen que realizar actuaciones que se ajusten a las enseñanzas de su religión. Entre otras conclusiones, se ha encontrado que las fujoshi crean una zona que puede acoger mejor el interés por la ficción homosexual.

Palabras clave: fujoshi, espacio de transgresión, performatividad, textos

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1. Introduction

Becoming a fan is a highly popular phenomenon in the current era, especially among teenagers. Fans can consist in individuals or groups who show support, affection, and enthusiasm for something based on their interests and preferences (Moetaqin, 2020). Like the interest in sports teams, actors or actresses in movies, and international bands, this phenomenon is in line with the rapid development of internet technology, which provides convenience in everyday life, ranging from sharing information to communicating with each other. Social media is an innovative and practical communication technology that has successfully attracted a lot of attention from society. Some commonly used social media platforms include X, Instagram, and Facebook, among others. According to reports from We Are Social, the number of social media users in Indonesia reached 191 million people in January 2022, showing an increase since the highest increase in 2017 of 34.2%, or 106 million users (Mahdi, 2022). Engaging in social media seems indeed to have become addictive for its users, often causing them to lose track of time.

Social media is also utilized as a means of entertainment, allowing people to become acquainted with popular culture through images, films, music, and fashion (Ishaq & Mahanani, 2018). One of them is the popular culture from Japan, which continues to evolve and spread to various countries, namely through Anime (アニメ), known as a Japanese-produced animation that offers more captivating stories with visually appealing graphics compared to typical cartoons or animations. Additionally, there is Manga (漫画), presented in the form of illustrated stories containing several chapters or editions, typically published together with magazines before being printed in individual units (Sulaeman hadi sukmana & Satriadi, 2015).

Both forms of entertainment offer various types of compelling stories. One of them is the portrayal of same-sex romance, often abbreviated as boys love (BL)⁴. Stories in the BL genre have garnered public attention, especially among women known as fujoshi. Based on certain observations, the presence of fujoshi can also be found in Indonesia, particularly in the East Java region known as Tapal Kuda, which encompasses several eastern areas of East Java province including Banyuwangi, Bondowoso, Situbondo, Jember, Probolinggo, Pasuruan, and Lumajang.

⁴ Boys Love (BL) is the term for a type of romance story that features male-male homosexuals.

The phenomenon of fujoshi was first introduced in the 1970s in Japan by comic artists named Takemiya Keiko and Hagio Moto (Dewi, Surya et al., 2020). Fujoshi (腐女子), or 'rotten girl' when translated into Indonesian, carries the meaning of 'decayed girl'. The word fujoshi consists of two parts, Fu (腐) which means 'rotten' and Joshi (女子) which means 'woman' or 'girl' (Sheva & Roosiani, 2022). This term was intentionally given by Japanese society because they consider women who enjoy same-sex fiction stories to be unusual. On the other hand, fujoshi initially were often associated with an attempt to protest against Japanese women's dissatisfaction with certain social norms that reinforce the patriarchal system. This refers to gender and sexuality issues regarding boundaries and exploitations that burden women (Ani, 2018). Therefore, a similar situation may also be experienced by fujoshi in Indonesia, where their interests may stem from dissatisfaction with traditional norms regarding sexuality in the country. Despite the prevalence of campaigns for women's emancipation spread through various media, in reality, many people still consider women less suitable for leadership roles and other areas. Additionally, cases of harassment and violence against women persist and even continue to increase. This may lead to a sense of rebellion within them.

Becoming a woman who enjoys homosexual fiction stories is not easy because, in the eyes of the public, being a fujoshi is still considered taboo. As a minority group, some of them often experience marginalization and discrimination if their interests are known to others. Consequently, in their development, many fujoshi in Indonesia choose to conceal their identities and utilize social media as a space to engage in accessing and creating boys love content. In this context, X becomes a social media platform widely used among BL fans for interacting with each other compared to other social media platforms. Additionally, Indonesia ranks fifth among the countries with the largest number of X users in the world, with 18.45 million active users in 2022, and continues to experience growth every year (Mahdi, 2022).

From the issues mentioned, the researcher then employed Judith Butler's theory of performativity to discuss gender, sex, and sexuality. Butler argues that there is no original or natural gender; instead, what exists are only "imitations". According to him, gender is a process of repetition and endless performativity (Butler, 1999). Butler expresses his disagreement with gender identity as an attribute formed by culture permanently. Identity has no connection with sex or gender, but identity can be obtained from performative actions. In this context, Butler suggests that gender emerges after individuals engage in

performative actions, which is contrary to the heteronormative view that gender precedes actions and thereby shapes human behavior. When examining the phenomenon of fujoshi in Indonesia, the theory of performativity is relevant to this research because it deconstructs heterosexual texts and involves the “performance” that fujoshi engage in with their texts on social media repeatedly, thus forming gender identities among fujoshi.

This research employs a qualitative method with a netnographic approach. In this context, the netnographic research method involves techniques that adapt various sources of information through the cyber world (online) using the internet. Kozinetz further explains that in the netnographic method, the use of computers or networks is a way to conduct communication, referred to as computer-mediated communications (CMC) (Kozinetz, 2015). Furthermore, the application of CMC in this research involves collecting fujoshi texts on X, which can clearly explain and provide insights into the online fujoshi community in Indonesia. The texts here can be in the form of writing uploaded on X with the aim of conveying fujoshi thoughts that are difficult to express in the real world; it can also be in the form of conversations between fujoshi that occur on X or in certain communities, as well as in the form of narratives in stories or literary works whose authors are fujoshi. For sociologists, understanding and reporting on research about how and why humans behave requires analysis based on reality, involving an audience that understands the meaning of the research (Marvasti, 2004).

Furthermore, a series of data and information shown in this journal were collected from October 2022 to July 2023 through participant observation. Participant observation, also called the purposive sampling technique, is a method in research in which researchers select participants based on certain characteristics relevant to the research objectives. So, in this research, the chosen sources must match the following characteristics: Women aged 17-25 years, Domicile in the Tapal Kuda area (Banyuwangi, Jember, Lumajang, Probolinggo, Pasuruan), Actively accessing boys love content, Active users of X social media, and has been a fujoshi for approximately 1 year. After that, the researcher contacted the informant's account via DM to ensure their availability to provide in-depth information by interacting directly (face to face) or via direct messages on social media (chat). Interviews were conducted with six informants under pseudonyms, namely AL (in October 2022), KS (in October 2022), ID (in May 2023), RK (in May 2023), TS (in July 2023), and DR (in July 2023)—and carried out informally or casually so that informants were more comfortable in providing information.

Then, the researcher also participated in the boys love fan community or other bases such as on X with the username @jodanspace. As for Instagram, it belongs to an informant named KS with the username @bluibie. Apart from that, Telegram belongs to an informant named RK with the channel #NOMINAREA. This research uses triangulation to test the purity of the data, such as source triangulation, which consists of checking data obtained from various related sources together with fujoshi the owner of an active account on X social media as an informant. Then the data obtained is processed and described specifically. There is also technical triangulation, namely checking data from the same source with different techniques using observation, interviews, or supporting literature.

Thus, this research becomes interesting as it examines how women present transgression and attempt to achieve justice that is free of the discrimination created by traditional norms with overly binding power. Through texts that they write as fujoshi on the social media platform X, they provide spaces of resistance. However, this often faces rejection from society due to the negative stigma attached to women who enjoy same-sex fiction stories, leading some of them to conceal their identities and interests, effectively living dual lives.

2. Fujoshi in Tapal Kuda

Since the 2000s, various media, especially in comedic shows, have begun to use the term fujoshi to describe women who are fans of pop culture such as anime, manga, and games. Thus, the meaning of the term fujoshi becomes biased, as its usage is not only for women in Japan but also for all women who have an interest in boys love (BL) content, regardless of their location. Furthermore, women who are interested in homosexual stories typically come from both teenage and adult demographics, ranging in age from around 18 to 30 years old (Uyun et al., 2021). However, it is not uncommon to find fujoshi who are younger. The majority of them are students or university students and active social media users who have experience in being part of communities such as k-pop,⁵ otaku,⁶ wota,⁷ and so on.

Furthermore, stories that revolve around the boys love theme have two main genres: shounen-ai, which focuses on the struggles of characters in discovering love and how they go about their daily lives as a same-sex couple. Meanwhile, the yaoi genre features stories that are more dominated by homoerotic scenes with minimal narrative. These two genres are further divided into various sub-genres, allowing fans to choose according to their

⁵ K-pop is a popular music subgenre originating from South Korea.

⁶ Otaku (おたく) is someone who has a strong interest in Japanese culture, especially anime and manga.

⁷ Wota (ヲタ) is the term for fans who support idols from Japan.

preferences. These include school life, office work, yakuza life (Japanese criminal organization), fantasy, etc. In BL stories, two essential roles are involved: the seme (攻め), which means ‘attacker’ or ‘top’, who holds the dominant position and is typically associated with masculinity, and the uke (受け), which means ‘receiver’ or ‘bottom’, representing a softer, more emotional side, often referred to as the feminine male (Putri et al., 2022).

Boys love (BL) stories were first known in Indonesia in 2008 (Ani, 2018). At that time, a Japanese manga publishing company in Indonesia, Elex Media Komputindo, unintentionally released a Boy’s Love manga titled *Ghost!* However, the comic had to be withdrawn from circulation due to protests from many conservative parents. Then, on January 20, 2019, one of Indonesia’s private television stations, NET TV, aired news about fujoshi, which caused a stir in society. The emergence of this news led to various speculations from the public, which were perceived to have cornered and generalized all female fans of homosexual fiction, accusing them of disturbing the harmony in dominant life (Arako, 2019). Undeniably, issues regarding gender remain sensitive and taboo in society even to this day. The depiction of explicit sexual scenes in BL manga has also sparked debate within communities. Therefore, when there are women who enjoy same-sex fiction stories, it is often perceived as something strange and abnormal.

The method of disseminating boys’ love content utilizing internet technology has facilitated the proliferation of the fujoshi phenomenon in Indonesia; a fact that is evident in the Tapal Kuda region, which encompasses several eastern areas of East Java province, including Banyuwangi, Bondowoso, Situbondo, Jember, Probolinggo, Pasuruan, and Lumajang. The people in the Tapal Kuda area represent a hybrid community, blending two dominant cultures: Javanese and Madurese. The residents in this area tend to uphold norms and life values resulting from the acculturation of traditions, history, religion, and a harmonious alignment between self, God, and the universe. However, the community in the Tapal Kuda region is also very open to the development of modern communication technology. Unlimited use of the internet has become a bridge that allows the fujoshi phenomenon to develop easily in the Tapal Kuda area.

Furthermore, fujoshi in the Tapal Kuda region have their own stories regarding their experiences as fans of same-sex fiction stories up to the present. The journey of becoming a fujoshi unfolds gradually. The first stage is the “fujoshi newbie”, who has just been introduced to boy’s love content and has a high level of curiosity. This curiosity continues to grow until they become active fujoshi, accessing various BL content (Uyun et al., 2021).

Some admitted that they accidentally stumbled upon BL content on social media, there are some that received the recommendation of school friends, and there are also those who were initially fans of Korean boy groups and became interested in moments lived by certain members. This aligns with what was conveyed by AL (informant's pseudonym):

I first learned about stories like this around the end of my 11th grade in high school. It was through my YouTube timeline. I did not know, suddenly there was a 'recent for you' and a series. At first, I thought it was not about guys with guys but about a pilot school. My first impression was surprise, but, eventually, I watched the first episode to understand the story. Eventually, it turns out that series like this are also exciting, unlike ordinary dramas, especially with handsome actors. (AL personal communication, 2022, October 11)

Some fujoshi from the Tapal Kuda region have stated that they have applied the practice of the "otome filter", which is a situation where they observe real-life events (3D) and then imagine them in their minds as if they were in a 2D context (Hidayati and Hidayat, 2021). For example, when they encounter two men walking side by side or holding hands in real life, as fujoshi, they will create a romantic fantasy world by pairing them and imagining the two men as characters in a BL story. In such situations, they say that being a fujoshi is like having a (radar) to determine who plays the role of uke or seme. It is similar to the explanation provided by AL:

Honestly, I have paired up people I know before. If it is random people, I usually glance at them because it is so obvious, like my fujoshi radar notices, especially when they are hugging, but it is just a fleeting moment. (AL personal communication, 2022, October 11)

In this context, fujoshi are aware that their imagination may not necessarily translate in the same way when entering the real world, or in other words, they have formed the understanding that the reality depicted in a film differs from the reality that occurs in everyday life (Rosa, 2017). Based on observations, women are fond of same-sex fiction stories due to their interest in several aspects. They argue that the stories depicted in the BL genre have plots that are not easily predictable and appear more sincere in conveying the main character's feelings. According to some fujoshi, this is different from heterosexual romance stories, which often still involve patriarchal cultural factors and, therefore, may not emphasize egalitarianism among the characters.

Furthermore, they also express that in some BL stories, efforts have been made to convey an implicit message that "the form of love knows no bounds". The visuals of characters portraying BL stories also attract fujoshi because they are depicted as handsome men. Additionally, some of them have joined fan communities of various popular cultures

such as k-pop, otaku, wota, etc., which can lead to feelings of jealousy towards female characters or idols close to their favorite idols. It makes them prefer their idols to interact with other men.

The rejection experienced by fujoshi in society has led them to seek alternative ways to express their interest in homosexual fiction stories. They will utilize internet technology to explore various boys love content further without fear of social expectations. X is one of the social media innovations used to share various experiences, channel aspirations, build self-image (personal branding), seek entertainment, and share grievances.

X was first launched in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, a student at New York University, to provide a platform for a small group to exchange short messages. Nowadays, X offers short messages and various features that are continually upgraded for user convenience, which explains its unique appeal. Here are some standard features and terms used on X: direct messages, retweet, like, share, follow, bookmarks, mention, trending topic, hashtag, search bar, mutual, fleets, and tweet circle.

For now, fujoshi in the Tapal Kuda region do not have an official community account, but they are always active individually on X. Some of them even use the auto base feature, which is an automatic direct messaging service with which X users send a DM (direct message) to the designated auto base account and then, the message will be automatically uploaded to the auto base tweet. It is done to find users with similar interests in the same area. They utilize the Jember base account to share their experiences in Jember and their surroundings.

In this regard, X has become a platform that brings people from various places with similar interests together, allowing them to form communities within certain groups by offering and providing comfort to their members to feel accepted and valued. Therefore, X can serve as a space of transgression for various groups within society.

3. Articulation of Transgressive Space for Fujoshi

According to Foucault, 1980 transgression is defined as a transition or violation of a rule without attempting to break a boundary. Transgression does not inherently carry a negative connotation but asserts that surpassing boundaries is acceptable even without a “limit”. The role of transgression is to measure something excessive, referring to an action that has the potential to resist rules or something powerful that is binding and overly strict.

In Foucault's thought, norms and all forms of boundaries or rules created are not inherently fixed or changeable, but rather, these rules can transform or be rectified in line with space and time. Therefore, transgression is not aimed at overthrowing the existing order, as this would inevitably lead to new forms of resistance from various parties. Transgression operates as a form of resistance to weaken the power of the dominant order, which is considered overly rigid and oppressive.

In this context, being a fujoshi can be interpreted as one form of resistance by women against certain conventional norms regarding patriarchal dominance ingrained in society. Previous qualitative surveys conducted by researchers have found that women are motivated to consume boys' love content because they have the desire to defy social taboos, experience freedom beyond gender boundaries, seek refuge from traditional gender constructs, and appreciate boys' love stories that depict gender equality (Zsila et al., 2018).

In this digital era, fujoshi are more interested in participating in creating texts through social media. The emergence of various social media platforms has provided opportunities for people from all walks of life to contribute openly to sharing information quickly and limitlessly. For example, radio is today a fusion of several social media platforms, a meeting place for several identities, and language practices, leading to the discovery of new social contexts (Wisnu & Rosa, 2021). This research utilizes X as a social media platform that is quite popular among fujoshi in their activities. The release of the Thai boy's love drama series titled *2gether: The Series* in 2021 successfully topped the trending topics on X, reaching first.

Through X, fujoshi produces and distributes content about boys' love. They can showcase their existence as fans of homosexual fiction stories in a fluid, flexible, and decentralized manner, unrestricted by specific rules or limitations (Fitriana et al., 2021). In Indonesia, fujoshi have their auto base account, namely @jodanspace, which has been active since 2019 to share content related to boys' love and serve as a platform for exchanging opinions.

For women fans of homosexual fiction stories who have critical thinking, they channel their aspirations and ideas into a work of art. In this context, fujoshi, as authors, write their version of boys' love fiction stories, with the content possibly adapted from their hidden desires. At the same time, they must comply with the social expectations built from the heteronormative norms of society.

The works created by fujoshi are forms of artistic expression packaged as to various interesting concepts becoming a thread called fan fiction (FF), which is fan-made stories with characters played by their idols, who previously interacted in existing dramas. Furthermore,

there is also a form of alternate universe (AU) which is almost similar to FF. However, the setting created in this story is mostly the creation of the author and may not exist in the real world (Komariyah & Rachmani, 2022). It could be said that FF contains story development by fans that are based on original stories, while AU contains storylines and places that can remake and different from the original story. Such as involving supernatural fantasy genre stories. In summary, all AUs are a type of fan fiction, but not all fan fiction is an AU.

The portrayal of homosexual characters adopting roles that can be found in relationships between men and women is considered as a form of outlet for confusion and emotional release for women as the party who always occupies a subordinate position to men in heteronormative life (Anjanette, 2019). Furthermore, the characters created in the boys' love series are crafted to fit the idealized depiction of desires of women who feel dissatisfied with the gender and sexuality system dominated by men in various aspects of life. The dissatisfaction experienced by these women prompts them to enter the queer reading world, where they can create same-sex male couples (Tanaka & Ishida, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that, in some BL stories, male characters have feminine traits. The concept is even taken further in stories where men are depicted as capable of giving birth. This sub-genre of storytelling is known as m-preg (male-pregnancy).

Furthermore, being a fujoshi can also be identified as a way of reimagining gender identity. When individuals are born into the world, society subconsciously "guides" their attitudes and behavior according to the social and cultural norms that previously existed in the area where they live. For women, feminine traits are expected to be cultivated, while masculine traits are emphasized for men. Therefore, the presence of women who romanticize fictional homosexual stories is seen as unusual in the context of the heteronormative principles upheld by Indonesian society.

The phenomenon is relevant to the concept of gender performativity theory by Judith Butler, which suggests that gender identity is not purely biological, like sex. Gender identity can be shaped according to the socio-cultural environment of each individual and is not a permanent attribute. Furthermore, according to Butler, the concept of heteronormativity does not provide space and tolerance for individuals' choices of gender expression. This critique is referred to as the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1999).

The performative actions of fujoshi emerge when they start participating in online community conversations. They display a performance of disobedience to the dominant heteronormative discourse regarding what is "appropriate" or "normal" for women's interests. In this context, when women who are fans of homosexual fiction begin to

acknowledge their interests and claim themselves as fujoshi, that is where their efforts to obtain gender identity lie. They have a desire to break free from the stigma created by the hegemony of heteronormative concepts in society.

The activities carried out by fujoshi represent a form of resistance against social expectations regarding relationships and sexuality, although not always explicitly related to women's political resistance. Additionally, it is important to remember that not all fujoshi are interested in expressing an act of transgression. They have different and varied perceptions depending on several aspects within each individual, such as their background or the socio-cultural values they adhere to in society. Some see being a fujoshi as a means of entertainment or encouragement in their activities (mood booster).

On the other hand, fujoshi will appear very enthusiastic when their idols interact with each other, even though they know that in reality their idols are not romantic partners and it is merely fans' imagination. They will form a fandom (fans kingdom), which is a group of people who come together because they share a common interest in a particular pop culture phenomenon and so on (Sianturi & Junaidi, 2021). The happiness they feel is often expressed through X by raising hashtags of their idol's name, reposting each other's tweets, and some of them even holding giveaways (GA) with various conditions to be fulfilled. Usually, the prizes will be items such as their idol's music albums, photo cards, or money in the form of e-money, prepaid credit, etc. inners who have met the requirements will be randomly selected by the GA organizer through a web spin and announced directly through their X account.

The nominist fandom, which is the term for fans of two Korean idols, Jeno and Jaemin, who are members of the boy group NCT,⁸ takes a similar line. This is like a complete package for fujoshi where they not only are spoiled with handsome visuals but also get to enjoy fan service because both idols are in the same group, making it easier for them to imagine. The interaction between the two members has sparked enthusiasm among fans. In moments like this, hashtags like #NominJayaJayaJaya, which is a kind of fan cheer for the idol to succeed, managed to rank third in the list of trending Indonesian topics on X.

In addition, as fans, they will create a group that serves as a platform for exchanging information about the interactions between Jeno and Jaemin. The content of the nomin group varies depending on the interests or preferences of its members. The atmosphere in the nomin chat group tends to be relaxed but still emphasizes the respect that members should show towards each other. Furthermore, in some nomin fandom groups, certain rules

⁸ NCT is an abbreviation of Neo Culture Technology, which is a boyband from South Korea that debuted in 2016 under the SM entertainment agency.

may be implemented to maintain order and safety for all members. In this context, RK (informant's pseudonym) shares his experience as a member of the nomin fan group:

I joined a nomin shipper group on WhatsApp with about 47 members, and, before joining, I was asked questions by the admin. The questions mainly revolved around nomin, like specific dates and details of when Jeno and Jaemin met. There's also a larger group on Telegram. On X, I usually read AU or follow nomin fanbases. (RK personal communication, 2023, 26 May)



Picture 1. Conversations containing fantasies of fujoshi discussing their idols, On the informant's telegram (#NOMINAREA group), 2024.

From the conversation, it is evident that fujoshi have created texts containing what they imagine to be in same-sex couples. This is a train of thought they likely would not express outside of the nomin group. The portrayal of these series of events also indicates that fujoshi have positioned the normative relationship between men and women as non-normative, and placed as normative instead the one portrayed by two men.

4. Fujoshi Tactics in Camouflage

Local values, norms, religion, and culture shape societal views on same-sex couples as something abnormal, a major sin, or even labeled as a "disease" that needs to be cured. Therefore, the existence of women fans of homosexual-themed stories will also be judged as exhibiting deviant behavior. The stigma often places fujoshi under challenging situations. Few of them openly admit their interest. To cope with such situations, they will try to conceal the fact that they have romanticized homosexual fiction by creating boundaries in their personal lives (Tariuni et al., 2022).

Fujoshi will try to display behavior that conforms to the norms expected of women according to heteronormative principles in general. They will camouflage themselves by not representing their identity as fujoshi, pretending, for example, to be surprised, as if they have never heard of boys love stories when in conversations discussing homosexual issues, to conceal the “secret” they hold or to live anonymously. Most fujoshi admit that they have fears about various things that might be thrown at them when their hobby is known by others, such as social and religious sanctions.

Based on this context, the Tapal Kuda region is an area with characteristics that are quite different from other regions. In this area, there is significant support for cultural Islam, which is driven by religious leaders and scholars, mainly from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Additionally, there are also adherents of the abangan movement, initiated by political figures and others who are affiliated with syncretic beliefs (Ilham, 2019). The social ethics and moral values in the Tapal Kuda community are formed from a combination of multicultural values closely intertwined with Islamic nuances, where religious scholars play a prominent role and exert strong influence in politics (Widiyawati, 2019).

Furthermore, viewed within the context of Islam, the phenomenon of homosexuality was practiced by the people of the Prophet Luth (Lot), peace be upon him, and it is considered a condemned act by Allah SWT (Ihsan & Thoriq, 2022). As in Surah Al-A'raf, verse 81 in Qoran, the reasons why Allah prohibits homosexuality are explained:

Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people. (Q.S Al-A'raf: 81)

Based on the observations conducted, many fujoshi actually come from women who are practicing Islam. Some of them appear like typical Muslim women. They are aware of the prevailing norms, sins, and consequences of being a fan of homosexual love stories. As fujoshi and also as a Moslem practicing, they admit to often having mixed feelings since there is a debate over the dilemma of choosing between, on the one hand, stopping consuming boys love content because they realize that romanticizing same-sex couples is forbidden by religion, while, on the other hand, their turmoil as fujoshi serves as an alternative to obtain entertainment that can provide motivation in life. Then, for neutral fujoshi, they may argue that, as long as their activity as fans of fictional homosexual stories does not harm others, it should not be problematic.

Some of them have found solutions they consider suitable to address this issue. These solutions involve self-control or self-imposed limitations on consuming boys love genre content, with the hope of gradually minimizing the consequences. Furthermore, as they

mature and become occupied with various time-consuming activities, their exposure to boys love series may naturally decrease.

Due to the opposing views and rejection from society, fujoshi choose to use social media as their primary platform for activities related to their interest in fictional stories of homosexual men. When navigating the online world, they often use anonymous accounts to access boys love content. This is primarily done to protect their personal information and to feel more comfortable, knowing that their true identities remain concealed. Additionally, by modifying their real identities, they can avoid recognition by specific individuals who may criticize or belittle them.

The attitude exhibited by fujoshi in their daily lives is not much different from that of other women; they continue to perform religious duties, work, manage household chores, and so on. This can serve as a tactic to camouflage their hobby in boys love fiction. Moreover, fujoshi employ various other methods or strategies to protect their true identities, such as using pseudonyms and fake photos. Typically, their profiles are identical to the names of characters from their favorite manga or anime. As for their profile pictures, they often use animations, their own creations, k-pop idols, or Thai actors whom they admire. That would be the case of NA's X account (the informant's pseudonym) which includes several names of his idols, such as Hua Cheng Xie Lian, EXOL (exo boy band fandom from South Korea), or *TGCF* (Chinese novel series). NA also states that it is open to fans of Hualian, 2D, Thailand, k-pop, danmei, and everyone else. NA also refers to herself as a fujoshi in her X profile bio.



Picture 2. Example of a fujoshi profile on X social media, X (informant's X account: NA), 2023.

The use of names and profile pictures on social media should be carefully considered because this information can be used to identify the owner of the social media account. Additionally, some fujoshi choose to create separate accounts, dividing their social media accounts according to their functions and purposes. For example, they may have an account dedicated to entertainment, which, in the context of fujoshi, is used to explore various information or media related to boys love. This allows them to interact freely with other users who share similar interests without fear of causing offense or other concerns.

The use of personal accounts with genuine profiles serves the purpose of sharing daily activities and building impressions or values that align with societal norms. This includes interacting with friends and family, as well as participating in official forums from different domains such as work and education. Therefore, for fujoshi, separating social media accounts is a crucial step to maintain balance in the real world. This is because, in the real world, most fujoshi actually live in environments that oppose same-sex relationships. Therefore, they refrain from displaying their identity as fans of homosexual fiction. Instead, they choose to portray themselves as women with hobbies or interests that align with societal expectations.

Furthermore, to safeguard the secrecy of their hobby as fans of same-sex fiction, they must always be cautious during communication, especially when engaged in conversations with others, mainly if the topic revolves around entertainment such as k-pop idols, anime, drama series, and so forth. Fujoshi make an effort to avoid discussing content related to the boys' love genre, even though they may believe that these stories have compelling plots worth recommending. As KS (informant's pseudonym) shared about her experience:

I stan boys love stories in private, you know. It is quite sensitive, so I try to watch my mouth. However, sometimes I slip up, like suddenly saying, "That handsome guy surely has a handsome boyfriend". However, according to my friends, I am somewhat homophobic because I am uncomfortable and don't like watching girls love stories, honestly, I can't, it feels really weird. (KS personal communication, 2022, October 12)

As fujoshi, they admit to preferring not to make direct confessions unless their conversational partner brings up boys love content first. Therefore, fujoshi will first identify the conversation to see if their interlocutor is comfortable or uneasy when discussing BL. This is also done so they feel safe and comfortable expressing their interest in BL. Likewise, another option is to utilize privacy and security features on their phones by setting passwords on various social media platforms or having hidden folders.

However, on the other hand, there are also certain types of fujoshi who do not hide or see their true identity as a problem if known by friends, or even their families. They believe that being a fan of fictional same-sex couples is not a criminal act that needs to be concealed and isolated from the public. With this mindset, they acknowledge being more accepting of their interest without denying it and still exercising self-control, meaning they are not fanatical fans.

Some of them even become influencers who showcase entertainment content and the latest information about boys love. Some openly enjoy BL content in public settings, but opt for genres considered “safe” without homoerotic scenes. On occasions when fellow fans of same-sex fiction are in public spaces, they distribute their conversations using terms or symbols with specific meanings understood only by fellow fujoshi. This is used as a form of “code” when communicating about the BL content they adore, also serving as a way to disguise their hobby. There are also fujoshi who engage in crossdressing, dressing up (cosplaying) as male characters from homosexual fiction stories.

In certain situations, there are fujoshi who are confronted with the fact that their own relatives are part of the LGBTQ community. As fans of homosexual fiction stories, fujoshi are often seen as a comfortable space for their relatives to confide about their love journey. For example, ID (informant’s pseudonym) has become a place to confide for a friend, who is homosexual themselves:

One of my friends is of the same gender. So sometimes I listen when they confide about it when we meet. I didn’t expect it at first, but signs started to show. I once saw their chats with a guy saying goodnight, and they also got close to one of our handsome straight classmates. They even told me during a gathering two years ago that they’ve been intimate with their partner since college. What surprised me was that their parents actually knew about their sexuality. They told me, “Does ID know that my dad found out I’m gay?”, “And what did you say?”, “Well, I got scolded, but what can you do? It’s love”. At that time, I was like: how did that happen?. But maybe their parents found out from their phone. They even took them to a psychiatrist, basically for outpatient care because they weren’t approved. (ID personal communication, 2023, May 23)

Besides that, there is KS (informant’s pseudonym), who shared their story about their sibling who is also gay:

Honestly, one of my cousins came out. Was I sad? Very much so. Was I surprised? You cannot even imagine. Seriously, it hit me hard. Because my family is very religious and quite strict, he never told anyone except me, probably because he knew that I’m a fujoshi who would most likely accept whatever happens. (KS personal communication, 2022, October 12)

In such situations, fujoshi position themselves within the text of boys love they have read, where their memories of the situation and emotional elaboration can generate new perspectives on gender and sexuality. Thus, boys love texts can help them address issues they have never encountered before (Syahara, 2023).

In this regard, fujoshi strive to remain neutral while still offering advice to reconsider the decisions made by their relatives. This is because, aside from religious considerations, their family strongly opposes such choices. Fundamentally, being a fujoshi does not necessarily alter one's views on their own sexual orientation. The majority of fujoshi are heterosexual women who enjoy boys love fiction because they appreciate seeing handsome men. In fact, some of them already have partners and have established families.

5. Conclusion

Fujoshi is a popular culture originating from Japan and its existence is associated with women's resistance to the conventional values of the patriarchal system. In Indonesia, which has diverse cultures and is thick with religious teachings, especially Muslims, women who are fans of homosexual fiction stories tend to hide their identity as fujoshi, they will behave as standard heterosexual women to build a good image in society. The presence of female fans of homosexual fiction is something new and controversial in a society that adheres to heteronormative principles. An example would be what AL experienced when she started telling that she liked boys love: her sister's response was that AL should repent immediately and not to overdo it so as not to become deviant behavior. This is also what makes many Indonesian fujoshi careful about presenting the topic of boys love to their conversation partners. The rejection they often face pushes fujoshi to use social media to obtain information and interact with fellow fans who have similar interests.

The social media platform X serves as a potent facilitator for conveying information and opinions from various sectors. In this regard, some fujoshi use X to express their frustration with the injustices of traditional norms. This process is referred to as transgressive action, manifesting in texts, works such as alternate universe, fan fiction, and fanart. The characterization in boys love fiction is also tailored to fit the ideal type conceived by women, and it is not uncommon to find characters exhibiting feminine traits. The creation of non-normative relationships between men serves as an outlet for women who are always in subordinate positions. The actions undertaken by fujoshi can be classified as their endeavor to attain gender identity in line with Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. When interacting on social media, many fujoshi choose to use anonymous accounts. However,

despite this, when using social media, it is important to behave wisely and responsibly when commenting or uploading content. This relates to ethics and morality as a social media user. Written comments can also have an impact on other people and disseminating accurate information is very important to minimize hoax information that can mislead other people. Anonymous accounts are not always safe at hiding personal identity because the accounts that are used can be tracked and important personal data can be shared without permission. In cyberspace, remain wise and responsible in order to maintain the reputation of your account and the comfort of other people.

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