

# Textual Poachers and Fandom Dynamics: A Study of Filipino College Students

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**ABSTRACT.** In the realm of contemporary culture, fandom, particularly among the youth, has become a focal point due to its participatory nature, fostering active engagement and creative expression. Coined by Henry Jenkins in 1992, fan culture, or “Textual Poaching,” highlights fans’ dual roles as consumers and creators within various media landscapes. This research investigates the engagement patterns of Filipino college students within their respective fandoms, employing Jenkins’ framework of participatory culture as a theoretical scaffold. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the study scrutinized 175 student artifacts to elucidate how members of fandoms articulate their affiliations and negotiate communal dynamics. Findings suggest students’ decisions to affiliate with particular fandoms depend on their immediate needs, interests, and social standing. Fandoms centered around online gaming, entertainment media, and cinematic or televisual narratives are deemed valuable by students, providing inclusive spaces for social interaction, and constructing personal identity.

## 1.0. Introduction

For the past few decades, the existence and growth of fan culture or fandoms have been remarkable, especially with the introduction of the Internet and social media. It is now an influential global phenomenon (Booth & Kelly, 2013). Back in the day, during the conception of modern fan culture, the Star Trek fandom could only express and spread their creations through attending conventions (Helleckson & Busse, 2006). Additionally, before the Internet came, communication between fans was constantly faced with problems, namely the long distances and the inconveniences of schedules (Jia et al., 2021). The Internet has allowed fans to become more connected and widespread.

Members of modern fandoms enjoy an easier way to share their creative works through online posting. They also have platforms and forms of communication where they can do forums and discussions about the artists, sports personalities, film series, or fictional characters they support. The Internet, specifically social media, facilitates fan activities that encourage participation from the members of the fandoms. This is introduced by Jenkins (1992) as “participatory culture.”

Fan cultures or fandoms are examples of participatory culture as they encourage creative expression and artistic production of texts by their

participants (Jenkins, 2018). Participatory culture suggests that fans consume, produce, and create meaning. This means fans actively participate in their fandom by creating fan fiction, fan art, fan videos, more recently, Facebook or Instagram reels and stories.

Jenkins (2006) has formulated characteristics of a participatory culture. Firstly, participatory culture has a relatively low level of barriers to expressing artistic ideas and civic engagement. Secondly, the desire to create and share one’s creations with others is strongly supported. Thirdly, in a participatory culture, the most competent individuals pass on their knowledge to less experienced others through informal mentoring. Also, members feel that their contributions are significant. Finally, members have some social engagement with one another or are curious about what others think about what they have created. He said that not all group members should contribute, but everyone should know they have the freedom to contribute when they are ready and that their efforts matter.

Other types of participatory culture besides creative expressions include affiliations, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations (Jenkins, 2006). Affiliations are memberships focusing on various media types, such as Facebook. On the other hand, collaborative problem-solving refers to teams working together to accomplish new tasks so that new knowledge emerges. Lastly, circulations shape the flow of media, such as podcasting and blogging.

Jenkins (2020) asserts that the notion of the media audience is evolving from “consumers” to

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“prosumers” and that participatory media is now a commonly accepted concept. He first proposed the idea in 1992, referring to fans who develop and create some sort of creative media in addition to simply consuming it as textual poachers (Jenkins, 1992).

Jenkins (1992) introduced the term “textual poachers” to describe how certain fans read texts like their favorite television shows and interact with the portions they are interested in, instead of viewers who watch the show more passively and move on to the next item. He proposes that fans “poach” from popular media by reinterpreting elements from the text in novel ways to achieve their objectives.

According to Pearson (2010), there is a blurring of the lines between producers and consumers in the contemporary social media era, leading to a symbiotic relationship between powerful businesses and individual fans and the emergence of new kinds of cultural production. Jia et al. (2021) argued that this shift in the roles of fans or members of fandoms may be seen in two ways: from passive to active and from receiver to producer. While fans are considered producers and consumers of popular culture capital, according to Fiske (2002), fan cultures have two cores: chatting and derivative creation. This makes fans and fandom participants into more than just information consumers. They are also producers.

With the emergence of social media, fans’ attitudes shift from passive to active. It encourages creative expression and provides platforms for communication, which, according to Jia et al. (2021, p. 2176), “makes fans braver to share their ideas, and the mindset changes from passive to active.” Jenkins (1992, p. 23) called media fans “active producers and manipulators of meaning.” The continual advancement of social media has resulted in an unprecedented explosion in fan culture worldwide. All efforts made by social media to boost user stickiness and activity objectively aid in the growth of fan culture (Jia et al., 2021).

In recent years, there has been a surge in fan creation, such as fan novels, fan movies, fan paintings, and fan edits. Jenkins (2018) stated that more and more people are participating in this production because the network gives them a safe space to experiment with new passions or pursuits. Jenol and Pazil’s (2020) study of K-pop fan identity supports this, stating that being a true K-pop fan can be derived from how they speak and interact with others, their purchase purpose and behavior, and how they dress. Another study by Smutradontri and Gadavani (2020) explored “fan talk,” or the shared language of fans, focused on how they position themselves as family and friends of the source texts.

Another notable change that the advent of social media brought to fan culture is that it affects group

dynamics and interactions, leading to what Sjöberg (2002) calls “The Geek Hierarchy.” It implies the existence of social hierarchies between and within fan cultures. Fandom members generally agree on which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. Sjöberg’s geek hierarchy captures this dynamic effectively.

Sjöberg’s (2002) popular hierarchy, according to Busse (2013), exhibits the dynamic of internal fan preconceptions by repeating popular culture’s stereotypes about fans that there is definitely a fandom even more extreme than one’s own. One can feel confident in not being a part of that group, regardless of where one is located, in terms of mockable fannish conduct. This means that a Star Trek fan who attends a fan convention may consider herself geekier than someone whose participation with the show is limited to viewing it but less geeky than another fan who speaks Klingon, one of the show’s alien races’ languages (Fandom and Participatory Culture, n.d.).

According to McCudden (2011), hierarchy and concepts of authority are unavoidable in establishing any community, including fan communities. She went on to discuss how self-described fans and people who identify with fandoms or communities distinguish between, among other things, “the authentic,” “the big fan,” “the true fan,” and “the casual fan” (McCudden, 2011, p. 59). She emphasizes the existence of “a sliding scale of the continuum of fandom” (p. 59). According to her, this scale spans from “non/casual-fan” to “too big fan” at the opposite end of the scale (McCudden, 2011, p. 59). As previously noted, another name for a “too big fan” is a “Stan” who brings their fanniness to the extreme.

The presence of fandoms in the Philippines has been widely documented, beginning with the Noranians of Nora Aunor and the Vilmanians of Vilma Santos’ in the 1970s (Trinidad, 2018). It is also said that during that time, the star-fan relationships in the industry were initiated, making fan culture deeply ingrained in Philippine pop culture until now (Bermudez et al., 2020).

Nowadays, Filipino fandoms are mostly international, such as fans of K-Pop artists and American artists. Philippines’ K-pop craze has been a mainstay since the late 2000s (Alanzalon, 2011). These common practices of K-pop fandoms in the Philippines include attending fan gatherings, K-pop conventions, fan meets, concerts, and fan clubs, utilizing online groups and text clans (Capili, 2014). According to Alanzalon (2011), Filipino fans are drawn to K-pop cultural offerings, particularly visual features such as the physical look of the musicians and the visual characteristics of music videos. When it comes to Western artists, one notable fandom that Filipinos are also part of is the “Swifties” of singer Taylor Swift. Filipino “Swifties” searched for Taylor

Swift the most, according to 2023 data from Google (Madarang, 2023).

Locally, Original Pinoy Music (OPM) has also thrived, with artists creating relatable music to connect with their audience and even love teams gaining a large following (Bermudez et al., 2020). Other notable fandoms are the ALDUB Nation and KathNiel fans. These Alden Richards-Main Mendoza and Kathryn Bernardo-Daniel Padilla love teams captured the hearts of many in no time.

With the advent of social media, not only artists or singers have fandoms. Fandoms are no longer exclusive to musicians and singers, as internet celebrities, vloggers, and YouTubers have amassed their communities of followers and fans (Trinidad, 2018). Team Payaman of CongTV and Viy Cortez fans and Zeinab Harake fans are two of the biggest fandoms in the country.

Previous studies on fandom practices and experiences have provided valuable insights into the dynamics of participatory culture within these communities. However, there remains a gap in understanding specific in understanding the nuanced motivations behind individuals' decisions to join specific fandoms. A deeper exploration into the specific factors driving these decisions is warranted. Moreover, further investigation is needed to uncover the underlying mechanisms and their impact on group dynamics and individual experiences. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the active efforts to study and understand fandoms. This research examined college students' outputs on their Philippine Popular Culture lesson about Participatory Culture, asking them to answer, "How poachy is your fandom?/how can your fandom be textual poachers?" Specifically, the study aims to discover the fandoms that college students are part of, the levels of commitment and engagement, and the group dynamics within their respective fandoms. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of fandom practices and experiences among Filipino college students.

**2.0. Methodology**

The research utilized a qualitative descriptive methodology to systematically investigate the affiliations of college students within various fandoms, examining their textual poaching behaviors alongside analyzing group dynamics. This method is appropriate for uncovering the underlying meanings, perspectives, and patterns inherent in social phenomena. In a qualitative research design, data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis are utilized to gather in-depth insights into the studied phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Overall, qualitative research designs are

characterized by their holistic, contextually embedded approach, which enables researchers to explore the complexities and nuances of human behavior, culture, and social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

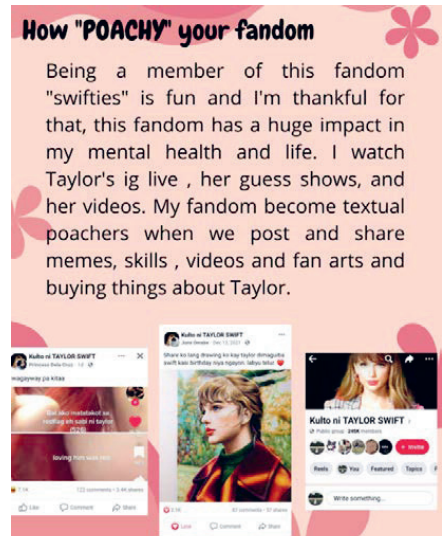
Drawing upon the frameworks of Henry Jenkins's Participatory Culture and Kurt Lewin's Group Dynamics Theory, the study aimed to elucidate the fan experiences and practices within participatory culture forms such as affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations. Additionally, the discussion delved into the norms, roles, and relations within the examined fandoms' group dynamics.

Jenkins's "participatory culture" concept delineates a societal shift wherein individuals actively engage as consumers and creators within cultural domains. This paradigm underscores the democratizing potential of new media, fostering a more inclusive mode of cultural production and dissemination, as elucidated by Mueller (2014). In line with this perspective, this study sought to extend the exploration of participatory cultures' capacity for civic engagement and creative expression.

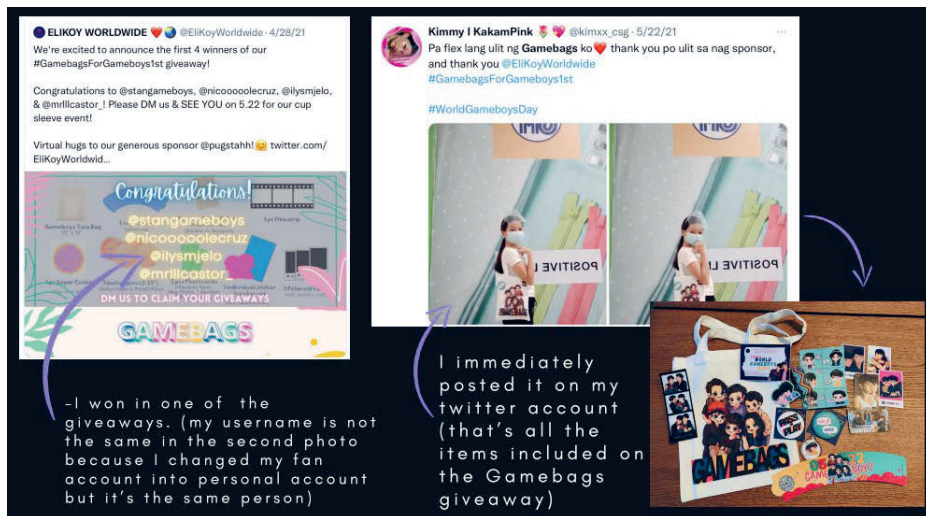
Complementing this theoretical framework, Lewin's Group Dynamics Theory illuminates the interplay of internal and external factors shaping group behavior, as outlined by Gençer (2019) and O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2008). Understanding groups as open, complex systems, Lewin's theory provides valuable insights into the mechanisms driving behaviors and responses within fandom communities.

To operationalize these concepts, data were gathered from students enrolled in Philippine Popular Culture classes, who responded to prompts

**Figure 1**  
Example Student Output 1



**Figure 2**  
Example Student Output 2



regarding the textual poaching activities within their respective fandoms. Employing a simple sampling method developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a representative sample of 175 outputs was selected from a pool of 320 collected over two academic years. This approach aimed to achieve a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of five percentage points. Figures 1 and 2 are samples of these student outputs.

The analysis proceeded through four distinct stages: firstly, identifying the diversity of fandoms represented among the student cohort; secondly, categorizing these fandoms into distinct thematic clusters, encompassing sports, film/TV series, gaming, show business/entertainment, anime, and self-improvement-related domains; thirdly, assessing the degree of textual poaching within each fandom, guided by participatory culture frameworks; and finally, scrutinizing the group dynamics inherent within these communities, focusing on norms, roles, and relational dynamics.

The trustworthiness of the qualitative research methodology outlined in this study is underpinned by several key factors. Firstly, the study adopts a clear methodological framework grounded in established theories, such as Henry Jenkins's Participatory Culture and Kurt Lewin's Group Dynamics Theory, which lends credibility to the research. Secondly, the transparent sampling procedure, employing a systematic method developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and randomly selecting 175 outputs out of 320, ensures the rigor and replicability of the

sample selection process. Thirdly, the thorough data collection from students in Philippine Popular Culture classes provides a rich and contextually relevant dataset for analysis. Moreover, the multi-step data analysis approach, encompassing categorization of fandoms, assessment of textual poaching activities, and exploration of group dynamics, enhances the reliability of the findings. Additionally, the triangulation of data by examining phenomena from multiple perspectives and using different theoretical lenses strengthens the validity of the results. Furthermore, including sample outputs offers transparency into the research process, allowing for better comprehension of data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the study's clear objective of exploring the potential of participatory cultures for civic participation and creative expression underscores its relevance and commitment to addressing socially significant issues. Together, these elements contribute to the trustworthiness of the qualitative research methodology employed in this study.

Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics shaping contemporary fandom cultures, bridging theoretical insights with empirical analysis.

### 3.0. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the examination of the Filipino college students' outputs, unveiling answers to the three specific problems of the study. The fandoms that the college

students are part of are discovered. The fan experiences and practices within these fandoms, as well as the norms, roles, and relations of the groups and the members, are also found.

**Fandoms of the Filipino College Students.** As evident in Table 1, the variety of fandoms that college students are part of are diverse. For easier recognition, the fandoms are grouped into more specific categories: Game (fandoms), Showbusiness/Entertainment, Sports, Anime, Film/TV Series, and Self-Improvement.

The Showbusiness/Entertainment category includes music, YouTube/social media influencer, and artists fandoms. Furthermore, the Self-improvement category includes personal interests like make-up hobbies, church-related activities, and Wattpad readers.

Out of 60-plus fandoms, the Mobile Legends fandom is the biggest, with 22 members. They are followed by the K-drama fandom with 15 and the Call of Duty fandom with 14. Korean groups BlackPink and BTS noticeably have significant followings, with 13 and 12 members, respectively. This affirms the study of Alanzalon (2011) that Filipino teens are highly exposed to Korean popular music.

There are a lot of fandoms that only have one representation, like the Liwanag fandoms of Ben & Ben, the Directioners of One Direction, Aldub Nation, and KathNiel Fans, to name a few. This is a surprise, as love teams usually have massive fandoms, and the pairings of Alden Richards-Main Mendoza and Kathryn Bernardo-Daniel Padilla have been considered a craze (Bermudez et al., 2020).

Table 2 shows the total number of members per fandom category. All in all, 190 total memberships are recorded across all fandoms.

**Table 1**  
List of Categorized Fandoms of Filipino College Students from Most to Least

Fandom	Category	Frequency
Mobile Legends	Game	22
K-drama (in general)	Film/TV Series	15
Call of Duty	Game	14
BlackPink	Showbusiness/Entertainment	13
K-pop (in general)	Showbusiness/Entertainment	12
BTS	Showbusiness/Entertainment	12
Anime (in general)	Anime	8
Taylor Swift	Showbusiness/Entertainment	5
Wattpad	Self-improvement	5
Basketball (in general)	Sports	5
One Piece	Anime	4
Gaming (in general)	Game	4
Team Payaman	Showbusiness/Entertainment	3
Marvel Movies	Film/TV Series	3
Volleyball (in general)	Sports	3
Minecraft	Game	3
Valorant	Game	3
Alyssa Valdez	Sports	2
SB19	Showbusiness/Entertainment	2
DOTA 2	Game	2
CrossFire	Game	2
Make Up (Vlogs)	Self-improvement	2
Original Pinoy Music	Showbusiness/Entertainment	2
Pokemon Games	Game	2
BL Series	Film/TV Series	2
Genshin Impact	Game	2
Rules of Survival	Game	1
KKB Squad	Self-improvement	1
Ranz and Niana	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Exo	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Urassaya Sperbund	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Self-help book	Self-improvement	1
Chicken Feet Gang	Game	1
DonBelle	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Inuyasha	Anime	1
Twice	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
SEVENTEEN	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Hunter X Hunter	Anime	1
Peaky Blinders	Film/TV Series	1
PUBG	Game	1
Emo	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Aldub	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
League of Legends	Game	1
Arknights	Game	1
Gameboys	Film/TV Series	1
Ariana Grande	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Medical Cannabis	Self-improvement	1
One Direction	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
The Boyz	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
The Last of Us	Game	1
Game of Thrones	Film/TV Series	1
Choco Mucho Volleyball Team	Sports	1
Car	Self-improvement	1
Science Fiction Films	Film/TV Series	1
MMA/UFC	Sports	1
Netflix Shows	Film/TV Series	1
Stranger Things	Film/TV Series	1
Transformers	Film/TV Series	1
Girls Generation	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
1975	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
KathNiel	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
CounterStrike	Game	1
Ben&Ben	Showbusiness/Entertainment	1
Harry Potter	Film/TV Series	1

When it comes to categories, as shown in Table 2, Showbusiness/Entertainment fandoms have the most significant number of members, with 64. This is primarily because of the big K-pop fan culture in the Philippines (Capili, 2014). It is followed by Game fandoms, with only three less than the number one fandom category. Film/TV Series fandoms come in third with 28, Anime fandoms come next with 14,

**Table 2**  
Total Number of Members per Category of Fandom

Categories of Fandoms	Number of Members
Showbusiness/Entertainment	64
Game	61
Film/TV Series	28
Anime	14
Sports	12
Self-Improvement	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>190</b>

followed by Sports at five with 12 total members. Self-Improvement has the lowest membership, with just 11 out of 190.

**Textual Poaching of Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.** The mapping of participatory cultural practices and experiences of Filipino college students’ fandoms through their submitted outputs were categorized into the four forms of participatory culture: affiliations, collaborative problem-solving, expressions, and circulation.

*Affiliations in the Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.* When it comes to affiliations, each fandom category is very creative in creating and managing platforms where members can communicate. A DOTA 2 fandom member said being part of Facebook groups is a lot of fun.

I started participating in Facebook groups. Being a part of that group is great because it exposes me to tons of memes, facts, videos, and other content when I browse Facebook. I also watch streams because it is entertaining to see people play. I want to learn more about it, and I want to emulate their playing style. (A DOTA 2 fandom member)

Similarly, a Call of Duty fandom member expressed how fun it is to be a part of a social media group.

It is fun that I joined those groups because every time I scroll down my Facebook feed, there are memes, articles, and videos about Call of Duty... that only gaming players will understand. (Call of Duty fandom member)

Most students agree that it is essential to be affiliated with the fandoms you are part of, especially online. One of the reasons is for you to be updated. Like the Wattpad fandom member who said he joined groups on several social media platforms mainly to follow the authors and anticipate the subsequent releases. Likewise, an Allysa Valdez fan admitted that she joined some Facebook groups to become updated

on the life of her one and only volleyball hero. This is also true with a BlackPink fan who gets updates in her fandom’s Facebook group.

After being part of the Facebook group, every time I scroll through my social media, I’m updated for every episode, information, chitchat, meme, and more. And seeing different kinds of posts makes me laugh and brings me happiness. (BlackPink fan)

Others said they join groups to make meaningful friendships even though they have never seen each other. Another BlackPink fan confessed that because of his affiliations to this fandom, he started to form a much better bond with his girlfriend since she is also a huge fan of the group. This is in line with what Syahriyani et al. (2022) claim that fans or the civic society with the same interests are highly involved in information exchange, photos, and content.

*Collaborative Problem-Solving in the Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.* As already discussed, collaborative problem-solving pertains to a form of participatory culture characterized by existing forms of cooperative and collective efforts in a group to develop new knowledge (Syahriyani et al., 2022). A car enthusiast stressed the importance of having this dynamic in a group or fandom, saying you can gain new information about your passion.

For me, being with many people with the same interests and problems is a specific interaction that I enjoy because knowing that I experience what others experience and vice versa, and I also pick up new knowledge and solutions that I sometimes encounter. (Car enthusiast)

Aside from gaining new knowledge, collaborative problem-solving in fandoms can serve as a way to motivate each other. This is especially true for sports fandoms like volleyball. A volleyball fandom member said that being around people with the same passion will help you achieve your goals.

My Fandom became a textual poacher when I started to share motivation and lessons about volleyball, pictures of our volleyball idol, and inspirational quotes to inspire others to continue playing, pursuing, and dreaming high. (volleyball fandom member)

A KKB Squad Fandom member also had the same experience in their church-related group.

According to him, the get-together or sharing they do every Friday strengthened his faith in the Lord. Returning to the Self-Help reader's experience with her Fandom, this collaborative problem-solving form of participatory culture within her group changed her perspectives in life. This is because everyone in the group motivates and helps one another.

Meanwhile, the "Harry Potter" fandom has produced countless theories and analyses, delving into J.K. Rowling's books' hidden meanings, symbolism, and foreshadowing. Fan members engage in intense discussions and debates, expanding the narrative beyond the confines of the original text.

However, this form of culture does not always bring positive effects. According to a BTS Army, this could also bring some adverse effects. Like for example, in their fandom, some members compare BTS to other groups a little too much, too many solo stans, and as such more toxicity.

Some BTS Armies baby the members way too much, comment about BTS everywhere, have too many bandwagon fans, get triggered over the slightest bad comment, treat BTS like angels and never criticize them even for their wrongdoings/it is never BTS fault, brag about everything BTS has, hype the slightest movement a member makes." (a BTS Army)

There would be both positive and negative as each fandom is unique. Nevertheless, the vital thing about fandom is the opportunity to connect with people with the same passion as yours. The BTS Army added that they have equally bad and good sides. Overall, she thinks they are great people who love BTS a lot.

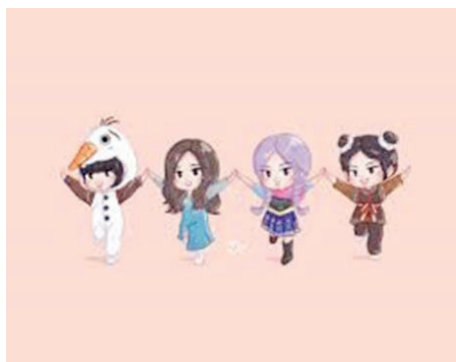
*Expressions in the Filipino College Students' Fandoms.* The college students are actively involved in their respective groups. Most notably, the members of Korean pop culture fandoms are very creative. They do fan art, collages, memes, and edited videos. Figure 3 is an example of the Korean girl group BlackPink fan art.

For a self-help book reader, according to her, her fandom is very poachy. Most of her fandom's members are very creative and transformative (see Figure 4). She, for one, is a textual poacher, as shown in her vlog (see Figure 4).

Some members made stickers in softcopies containing motivating lines from books; another example is when they made reactions and recommendations of self-help books, and lastly, when members started to design and print on T-shirts also

containing motivating lines from the book. (Self-help book reader)

Figure 3  
BlackPink Fan Art



Some fans are engaged in curative activities, especially in anime fandoms. According to an anime fan, to be able to do this brings joy to his life.

Being a fan of these shows, I participate in several groups where many fans share their thoughts on relevant topics. Additionally, they publish a variety of pictures, including cosplays, artwork, and memes. Some of them also post their fandom-related goods or collections, which piqued my attention as a fan. I have occasionally tried to purchase clothing, bags, and wallets that feature my favorite anime. Having this fandom in my life has, overall, made me happier. (Anime fan)

Figure 4  
Stickers Containing Motivational Quotes/Words



Another curative “Marvelite” fandom member (Marvel’s Universe fan) said he expresses his love and appreciation for the Marvel Universe by buying and collecting memorabilia.

My way of being poachy as a fan is collecting Marvel collectibles and getting those small memorabilia toys of my idol heroes. Through my collection, I can showcase my love and appreciation for the Marvel Universe and share my passion with others.” (Marvel fan)

These findings affirm what Halverson (2012) said: that fandom members conceive, represent, and share ideas regularly in the forms of video production, games, and critiques. Fandom members made their own culture, remixing with the mass culture. Hundreds of thousands of fan fiction stories are written by fans, creating a world for others where they benefit from the fantasy they created. Fandoms, in general, are creative when it comes to expressing their admiration.

*Circulations in the Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.* Fandom members are considered good circulators and produce activities that influence the information flow in the media to sharpen it. A vlog by the self-help book reader (Figure 5) is an example of this.

Figure 5 is a screenshot of the thumbnail of a self-help book reader’s vlog about seven books that evolved her mindset. She gives her thoughts about how these books helped her. This demonstrates that online creative spaces have distinct norms, contexts, and ethos, as well as a variety of technical affordances that may encourage creative engagement in specific

Figure 5  
Vlog of a Self-Help Book Reader



7 BOOKS THAT EVOLVED MY MINDSET (even as a TEENAGER) | Philippines

NOTE: Permission to use the image was obtained from the vlogger.

types of circulations (Syahriyani et al., 2022).

Gaming fandoms have the most circulation. Most notably, Mobile Legends and Call of Duty. Students stream while playing and share techniques to play the game properly. They watch streamers to try and adapt their techniques in playing the game. This is also true with a Minecraft player who learned much from streamers.

Minecraft is one of the most popular games in the world. Some of the most famous streamers in the world usually try it. Dream, Markiplier, Mr. Beast, SB, and Pewdiepie. I watch them every time they post new videos. It is educational for me. (Minecraft player)

Fandom members do funny and entertaining vlogs for their co-members. Their vlogs help relieve people’s stress. Their vlogs are also very inspiring and motivating when it comes to being successful.

**Group Dynamics of the Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.** Fandoms of college students have unique group dynamics. The norms, members’ roles, and relations mainly differ from one fandom category to another. These fandoms interact, influence each other, and share a common identity.

*Norms of the Filipino College Students’ Fandoms.* When it comes to norms, fandom members have created new ways of creating and being together. One noticeable and common practice among the fandoms is the freedom to express and contribute. An anime fan participates in several groups where fans share their thoughts on relevant topics. His fandom publishes a variety of pictures, including cosplays, artwork, and memes. Some of them also post their fandom-related goods or collections, which caught his attention as a fan. He added that he occasionally tried to purchase clothing, bags, and wallets that feature his favorite anime. Being with his fandom made him happier in life. The Marvel fan mentioned earlier affirms this norm, saying that he can express his fanzines in a new and innovative way inside his fandom.

Another norm that is present in most of the fandoms is the sense of belongingness within the fandom. A SONE (fandom name for Girls Generation fans) fandom member said that through their creative expression, members of the fandom become more united.



I consider our fandom to be really poachy because many of the members are active in posting content in our Facebook group, maybe because it became our way to be still united as a SONE even though years have passed since the group debuted. (SONE fandom member)

A BL or Boy's Love series fan confessed that being part of his fandom made him feel like he was not alone. He made new friends that he would have otherwise if he was not part of the fandom.

We support each other by sharing and retweeting posts on Twitter, which has made me feel like I am part of a community. We also create Facebook group chats to interact with each other. (BL series fan)

Aside from the freedom to express and contribute and a sense of belongingness, it is also evident that within their respective fandoms, the students' confidence is high, if not at an all-time high. Like a member of the "Swifties" fandom of Taylor Swift, she is thankful for her fandom as it greatly impacted her mental health and life.

Fandom members' participation and fanzines made them happier in life. An anime fandom member who bought resin (action figures) and manga (Japanese comics) felt no regret that he did because his decision genuinely changed his life and made him become a better person. Meanwhile, a Wattpad reader thinks her affiliation with other readers motivated her to go beyond what she believed was impossible.

*Roles in the Filipino College Students' Fandoms.* Each fandom member is considered to play a role. One given or automatic role once you become part of any fandom is to share. Be it through creative expressions like making fan art, fan videos, or cosplaying, among others, or by simply sharing information about the fandom or the cultural item you are supporting through social media or other means of communication.

K-pop fandoms, in particular, become textual poachers in a way that most of the members do fan art, memes, merchandise, and write fan fiction. A lot of talented and active members of the fandoms always have ideas on what to do to unite and entertain the other members.

Game fandoms like the Mobile Legends tend to share memes more than any fandoms. They usually make Mobile Legends become memes and post them online. On the other hand, a Wattpad reader also shares memes to express her emotions.

Another assumed role within fandoms is the

shared leadership practice. Most notable is the Ben&Ben fandom, which has members that not only support the band but at the same time they also get to lend a helping hand. In this sense, they do not just give enjoyment to their fandoms but also serve and assist them whenever they are in need.

There is some mentorship that is happening within fandoms. Old members guide the new members and even observers like the Wattpad fandom member who was introduced to Wattpad by her friend. She was told to try reading one and would be addicted instantly.

A Mobile Legend player stated that he learned to play the game through the efforts and mentoring of his friend. He then paid it forward by teaching his sister how to play it.

But when a friend introduced me to mobile games like Mobile Legends, I became interested. When we got fed up with ML, we discovered Call of Duty Mobile. My friend showed me how to play. I struggled at first, but once I got the hang of it, I wanted to play it every day. My sisters also learned how to play it, and it has become one of our favorite pastimes since then. (Mobile Legend player)

Aside from sharing information and having a shared leadership role, team members offer positive reinforcement and support. Specifically, in gaming fandoms, members help each other by giving information to one another with everything related to the game they are playing.

*Relations in the Filipino College Students' Fandoms.* Some fandoms are considered geekier than others because some members are "too big" of a fan. These fans are those who go overboard buying expensive or rare merchandise and those who collect memorabilia. These fans are much more invested than those whose support ends with watching or listening to their idols. These findings support the hierarchy of fan authenticity of McCudden (2011) and the "The Geek Hierarchy" of Sjöberg (2002).

The presence of hierarchy often results in discrimination within and even outside the fandom, like the BTS Army mentioned earlier, who confessed that some fandom members compare BTS to other groups too much. Another example is a BlackPink fan who received some questioning about his gender because he is a fan of such a K-pop girl group. But for him, there is no gender requirement to like a particular hobby or people.

Some of my friends ask me why I like BLACKPINK even though I'm a straight man because they think that

girls and gays are the only ones who can like such K-Pop groups.” (Male BlackPink fan)

Some fans admit that they are less active than other fans. Another K-Pop fan said he is updated about almost everything K-Pop-related, but unlike other fans, she does not usually buy merch.

The only difference I have with other K-pop fans is that I don't buy merchandise, and I'm not that very active. Most K-pop fans are super active or “very poachy”. They participate in almost everything related to the groups they stan. Yes, I'm updated about the happenings of the group and their issues or activities, but I rarely participate in online voting and streaming. (K-pop fan)

Despite such a relational set-up, what is always true about fandoms is the collaborative efforts among team members, which make members feel comfortable and belong. Even for a student with multiple fandoms, this is true.

When it comes to my friends, which I consider now as fandom because of how many we are, we always talk about them, talk about how beautiful they are, talk about how much it takes your time but is always worth it, and talk about how those games, anime, and the basketball game of your favorite team makes you addicted and not gives you boredom. (Student with multiple fandoms)

For a SEVENTEEN fan, having this collaborative environment helps members find their roles within the group and what makes a fandom solid.

I make new friends online and share the same interests with them. Fans were always asked why we buy things like merchandise. I could say that was material happiness. I joined Twitter, Weverse, and other social media platforms to support this group and learn more about them. (SEVENTEEN fan)

Integrating Jenkin's participatory culture and Lewin's Group Dynamics Theory into the discussion of Filipino college students' fandoms illuminates the active engagement and collaborative nature inherent in these communities. Through participatory culture, fans actively shape the norms and practices of their respective fandoms, contributing through activities

like fan art creation, meme-sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. Lewin's theory further elucidates how these norms and roles within fandoms influence individual behavior and group dynamics, fostering a sense of belonging and shared leadership among members. By examining these fandoms through these theoretical lenses, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between individual agency and collective identity formation within participatory cultures, shedding light on the vibrant and dynamic nature of Filipino college students' fandom experiences.

#### 4.0. Conclusion

The introduction stated that this study aimed to contribute to understanding fandoms by exploring fan practices and experiences, as well as the existing group dynamics among members. The students' outputs used as corpora brought to light the strong participatory culture within fandoms where members actively participate.

This study found out that students based their decision to join a specific fandom on their current needs, interests, passion, and the circumstances they have or are experiencing. Hence, they find fandoms related to online games, entertainment, and films/TV series worth their time and effort. Primarily, they choose fandoms because they serve as a safe environment to socialize and construct their identity, specifically through creative expressions and textual poaching.

Through Henry Jenkins' Participatory Culture, the affiliations, collaborative problem-solving, creative expressions, and circulation of information in the Filipino college students' respective fandoms are understood. Affiliations for student fandom members are vital for them to be updated and exposed to anything related to their idols and make meaningful relationships with other members. When it comes to expressions, it was evident that these students are both transformative and curative. They are participative in poaching or remixing texts by producing memes, fan art, or fan videos. Collaborative problem-solving is also present, with students saying this is important for developing new knowledge and motivating other members. Lastly, within these fandoms, there are online creative spaces that encourage members to be circulators who produce activities that shape the flow of information in the media. These activities or creative productions motivate each member.

Fandoms' norms, roles, and relations are also explored. This uncovered some group dynamics that exist inside the students' fandoms. Fandoms' common norms are freedom to express and contribute, a sense of belongingness, and members having high confidence. On the other hand, the roles present in these fandoms

are the task of sharing creative expressions, shared leadership practice, and mentorship from old members to new members. Finally, when it comes to relations, the presence of hierarchy within fandoms is also confirmed in the case of the students, which causes some discrimination even outside their fandoms. However, despite this, the collaborative efforts among the members make fandoms worth their investments. It also helped Filipino student fandom members find their unique roles within their fandoms.

Overall, this study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of fandoms among Filipino college students, revealing a vibrant participatory culture where members actively engage in creative expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and information circulation. The decision to join a fandom is influenced by individual needs, interests, and circumstances, with fandoms providing a safe space for socialization and identity construction. Drawing upon Henry Jenkins' concept of Participatory Culture, the study highlights the significance of affiliations, transformative expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulatory activities within these fandoms. Despite norms, roles, and hierarchical relations, the collaborative efforts among members foster a sense of belonging and enable individuals to find their unique roles within their respective fandoms. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of fandom practices and experiences, emphasizing their importance in the lives of Filipino college students.

### 5.0. Limitations of the Findings

The study acknowledges some limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, the outputs that have been analyzed came from one demographic. Second, the fact that the students' outputs are the sole basis of data could be another limitation of the study.

### 6.0. Practical Value of the Paper

Overall, these findings could help everyone interested in understanding how fandom works. It is hoped that this work brought light to the people who are part of fandoms and those who are not (yet). Based on the results of this study, those who are already members of fandoms should know how to balance things and know what the healthy forms of participation are. They should know their roles, the benefits they can get, and the risks or negative effects of being in a fandom. On the other hand, those who are outside looking should now be aware of the fan practices and experiences, as well as the group dynamics within a fandom, so that there would be no discrimination or negative judgment on their part.

### 7.0. Directions for Future Research

Although this research is limited in many ways, it has potentially unlocked even more potential related research topics, ideally in a phenomenological approach. As an advocate of fandom research, the researcher of this study encourages more future researchers of its kind. It recommends using another approach and diversifying the participants to get more compelling results and achieve comprehensive discussions.

### 8.0. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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