Research Article

Beyond Canon: How X Platform's AU Fanfiction Engagement Influences Filipino Gen Z Self-Concept and Well-being

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ABSTRACT

Fanfiction has emerged as a significant digital reading and storytelling platform, particularly Alternate Universe (AU) fanfiction on X. This study examined the relationship between AU fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being among Filipino Gen Z readers. Using a quantitative-correlational design, data were collected from 150 participants aged 18-27 (M =Enga 21.3, SD = 2.4) through an online survey. Respondents were selected using purposive non-probability sampling to identify active fanfiction community members. Standardized instruments included the Reading Flow Short Scale, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, and BBC Well-Being Scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the data. Findings revealed high engagement with AU fanfiction, particularly in time spent and emotional immersion (Mdn = 5.5, IQR = 1.2). Self-concept scores were strongest in moral (Mdn = 4.25, IQR = 0.75) and social dimensions (Mdn = 4.0, IQR = 0.83), while personal self-concept, including self-satisfaction and confidence, were comparatively lower (Mdn = 3.2, IQR = 1.1). Well-being assessment highlighted strengths in social (Mdn = 3.83, IQR = 0.92) and psychological aspects (Mdn = 3.88, IQR = 0.76) but weaknesses in physical health (Mdn = 3.25, IQR = 1.05), particularly sleep quality. The Spearman Rho correlation results indicated minimal direct relationships between fanfiction engagement and self-concept (r = 0.053, p = .519, 95% CI [-0.107, 0.211]) and well-being (r = -0.038, p = .644, 95% CI [-0.197, 0.123]), suggesting that engagement alone does not significantly shape these aspects. Regression analysis further supported these findings, showing a minimal positive impact on self-concept (β = 0.039) and a minimal negative impact on well-being (β = -0.038). These results highlight the complexity of fanfiction's influence on self-concept and well-being, demonstrating the need for more

nuanced research examining potential mediating and moderating variables within this relationship.

Background

In the digital age, fanfiction has emerged as a prominent form of fan-created storytelling that draws inspiration from existing characters and storylines, expanding on the original plot through imaginative reinterpretation. Among its subgenres, Alternate Universe (AU) is the most prominent as it often features celebrities, artists, athletes, and public figures (Agustine et al., 2022). AU fanfiction fosters interactive engagement on social media X compared to other major fanfiction platforms, allowing readers to comment, share, and influence storylines through polls (Bangun et al., 2022).

AU fanfiction is increasingly popular in the Philippines, especially on X. Stories on this platform are condensed due to character limits, leading to shorter, snapshot-style narratives. This format allows Filipino youth to engage with their fandom communities by sharing their writing and gaining cultural capital (Trinidad, 2018). Similarly, Bermudez et al. (2020) state that members of the Filipino Generation Z exhibit heightened creativity and artistry in expressing their admiration for various media figures online through fanfiction. Among Gen Z readers, Gepila et al. (2021) found that nowadays, they prefer digital reading with straightforward, surface-level, and plot-driven reading materials. Ubaldo and Dy (2021) also discovered that more than half of their respondents aged 16-22 said that reading fiction is a hobby, claiming that as students, they are more inclined to view reading as a leisure activity beyond academic purposes. However, despite its evident prominence in the country, there is a noticeable scarcity of in-depth exploration of how it influences Filipino Gen Z readers cognitively and emotionally.

Multiple studies have shed light on fanfiction's popularity and its broader impact on its readers in the international context. Nornoi (2022) highlights that since fanfiction is primarily connected to universes where their favorite fictional characters exist, members of Gen Z emphasize that enjoyment and affection after reading fanfiction are evident, highlighting how crucial it is for them to choose engaging stories that evoke these emotions. This emotional connection to fanfiction suggests that its influence extends beyond entertainment, potentially influencing the readers' self-concept and well-being.

Self-concept, which refers to how individuals think about or perceive themselves (Bharathi & Sreedevi, 2016), is a multidimensional construct shaped by personal experiences and environmental interactions. Loi et al. (2023) examine how reading fiction influences self-concept, finding that it activates and transforms various aspects of one's identity. The study highlights that reading fiction frequently triggers "self-story world possible selves" (SPSs), demonstrating that emotional engagement and narrative immersion enhance the transformative impact of fiction on self-concept. Given fanfiction's ability to obtain high levels of emotional engagement, it stands to reason that this type of fiction can influence the self-concept of the readers by encouraging them to explore various aspects of their identity. Heiden (2016) suggests that one of the values of fanfiction is to empower individuals creatively and to build their identity.

Meanwhile, well-being describes an ideal state that individuals and communities experience that is characterized by positive psychological experiences and effective daily functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It includes social, emotional, and cognitive growth and the capacity to improve one's and society's quality of life (WHO, 2021). About fanfiction, Syafrina and Ramadhaniah (2023) concluded that the process of reading and writing fanfiction supports the well-being of young adults. According to Subin and Joseph (2024), fanfiction enhances readers' and writers' mental and psychological

well-being and overall life satisfaction. It provides social support, validation, and a sense of belonging through its strong community, effectively mitigating feelings of isolation and individualism (Subin & Joseph, 2024). This ultimately highlights fanfiction's role as more than just a form of entertainment but also a tool for self-discovery and emotional support.

Despite its evident popularity and increasing impact, AU fanfiction has been severely underrepresented in the literature, especially in the Philippine context. Few studies have explored its influence on readers' self-concept, and even fewer on well-being. Methodological gaps further persist where qualitative analyses of fanfiction are more prevalent. This quantitative correlational study explains the correlation and impact of AU fanfiction engagement on Filipino Gen Z readers' self-concept and well-being. In doing so, it may also address the underexplored connection between fanfiction communities and their role in creating a nurturing environment that may have an advantageous impact on their educational and developmental health.

Statement of the Problem

This explanatory study aims to determine the impact of AU fanfiction engagement among Filipino Gen Z readers from a private university in Metro Manila on their self-concept and well-being. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of AU fanfiction engagement in Filipino Gen Z readers from a private university in Metro Manila?
2. What is the extent of appreciation of their self-concept?
3. What is the state of their well-being?
4. How does AU fanfiction engagement impact their self-concept and well-being?

Methods
Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of fanfiction engagement on the self-concept and well-being of Filipino Gen Z readers. Specifically, a correlational research approach was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships between fanfiction engagement,

self-concept, and well-being. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to quantify how fanfiction engagement predicts variations in self-concept and well-being.

Respondents

This study's respondents were Filipino Gen Z readers aged 18-27 who engaged with alternate universe fanfiction. It targeted individuals from private universities and fanfiction communities on the social media platform X. The participants were selected using a purposive non-probability sampling method to ensure that the sample comprised individuals with relevant experience in fanfiction engagement.

Instruments

This study utilized the Reading Flow Short Scale (RFSS) by Thissen et al. (2018) to assess fanfiction engagement, reorganizing its dimensions to reflect AU fanfiction reading better. Given the readers' familiarity with characters and tropes, the scale included four dimensions: Reading Flow, Immersion Level, Cognitive Processing, and Challenge and mastery. This restructuring captured the engagement patterns of AU fanfiction readers while preserving the original scale's measurement integrity. While specific reliability values like Cronbach's alpha were not provided, McDonald's Omega was utilized in this context as it offered a more flexible and often more accurate measure of internal consistency for related constructs: Presence (0.79), Identification (0.90), Suspense (0.84), and Cognitive Mastery (0.89). These values indicated good to excellent internal consistency, supporting the scale's suitability for this study (Thissen et al., 2018). The RFSS assessed fanfiction engagement using a 7-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree).

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) measured self-concept across physical, moral, personal, and social dimensions. It has demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.73 to 0.91 (Purkey, 1988). Respondents rated their self-perception and identity using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

The BBC Well-Being Scale assessed psychological, physical, and social well-being, autonomy, and resources (Kinderman et al., 2011). This scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.935, and was validated through significant correlations with key demographic and psychological variables. Respondents rated their agreement with the statements using the 5-point Likert scale: 1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3=Moderately, 4=Very Much, and 5=Extremely. All instruments remained in English with minor adaptations for AU fanfiction engagement.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data was gathered through an online survey through Google Forms using a structured questionnaire.

Responses in this study were analyzed using a combination of established statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including the mean and median, summarized participant responses, while tests for normality and reliability ensured data validity. To examine the relationships between the variables, the Spearman Rho Test was conducted to determine the correlation between AU fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being. Additionally, regression analysis was performed to determine how much AU fanfiction engagement predicted variations in self-concept and well-being. Two regression models were developed— one for self-concept and another for well-being to explore these relationships further. These analyses provided more profound insights into fanfiction's role in shaping identity and emotional health.

Result and Discussion
AU Fanfiction Engagement

The data report that respondents experience a strong sense of reading flow while engaging with AU fanfiction (median=7.0) (see Table 1). The very high level of time distortion highlights the ability of AU fans to immerse themselves in the narrative, often making them lose track of time. The excellent reading fluency score implies that the content is accessible and well-suited to the respondents' abilities, allowing them to navigate the narrative smoothly and fluidly without significant cognitive strain.

Table 1. AU fanfiction engagement among Filipino Gen Z readers – (n=150)

Engagement Dimension	Median (1-7)	Interpretation
Reading Flow	**7.0**	**Very High**
Time Distortion	7.0	Very high loss of time awareness during reading
Reading Fluency	7.0	Excellent smooth and fluid reading experience
Immersion Level	**5.5**	**High**
Story Immersion	7.0	Deep engagement with the narrative context
Self-Awareness	4.0	Moderate loss of self-awareness while reading
Cognitive Processing	**6.5**	**Very High**
Story Comprehension	6.0	Strong understanding of the narrative content
Mental Imagery	7.0	Very high spontaneous visualization and emotional response
Challenge & Mastery	**4.5**	**Moderate**
Optimal Challenge	3.0	Low perceived challenge in reading content
Story Grasp	6.0	High confidence in following the narrative

Legend: 1.00–2.20: Very Low; 2.21–3.40: Low; 3.41–4.60: Moderate; 4.61–5.80: High; 5.81–7.00: Very High.

The respondents show high levels of overall immersion (median=5.5). They show deep engagement with AU fanfiction, but the moderate self-awareness score indicates that readers do not completely detach from reality while reading. Meanwhile, the overall cognitive processing shows very high levels (median=6.5), suggesting that AU fanfiction successfully evokes a strong understanding of the narrative and a vivid mental imagery experience for readers. This means the content effectively stimulates automatic cognitive responses, immersing readers in emotionally and visually rich scenarios. Finally, the respondents' challenge and mastery yielded moderate levels (median=4.5), suggesting that although they have a high narrative grasp, the low optimal challenge scores indicate that the content might be too comfortable, possibly lacking complexity.

Findings support the study of Nornoi (2022), who found that Gen Z respondents have the highest engagement with Wattpad for reading fanfiction, accounting for fifty percent of their social media screen time. However, the study's respondents strongly agree that reading English fanfiction improves their English reading comprehension. This contradicts this study's claim that fanfiction lacks complexity, which may also highlight differences between local and international contexts.

In general, this analysis suggests that while AU fanfiction is highly engaging for Filipino Gen Z readers, there is potential to optimize the challenge-skill balance while maintaining the strong positive aspects of flow and immersion. The high overall engagement score (median=5.88) indicates that AU fanfiction is a powerful medium for this demographic, with opportunities for both entertainment and educational applications.

Self-Concept

The respondents' self-concept scores vary across four domains: physical, moral, personal, and social. Moral and social self-concept received the highest ratings, while personal self-concept reflects areas for improvement (see Table 2). The overall extent of self-concept appreciation was moderate, with an overall median of 3.8 (High) out of 5.0, indicating varying levels of self-concept across dimensions.

Table 2. Self-concept appreciation among Filipino Gen Z readers – (n=150)

Dimension and Items	Median (1-5)	Level of Appreciation
Physical Self-Concept	**4.0**	**High**
Neat and attractive appearance	5.0	Very High
Perceived attractiveness	3.0	Moderate
Current self-satisfaction	4.0	High
Physical self-care	4.0	High
Moral Self-Concept	**4.25**	**High**
Well-mannered behavior	4.0	High
Honesty	4.0	High
Satisfaction with conduct	4.0	High
Willingness to change	5.0	Very High
Personal Self-Concept	**3.2**	**Moderate**
Current self-satisfaction	3.0	Moderate
Perception as a good person	4.0	High
Future self-alignment	3.0	Moderate
Problem-solving ability	3.0	Moderate
Problem avoidance	3.0	Moderate
Social Self-Concept	**4.0**	**High**
Family/friend importance	4.0	High

Dimension and Items	Median (1-5)	Level of Appreciation
Family relationships	4.0	High
Family understanding	4.0	High
Friendliness	4.0	High
Interpersonal satisfaction	4.0	High
Overall	**3.8**	**High**

Legend: 1.00–1.80 (Low), 1.81–2.60 (Good), 2.61–3.40 (Moderate), 3.41–4.20 (High), and 4.21–5.00 (Very High)

The respondents' high physical self-concept scores (median=4.0) suggest a strong emphasis on appearance, hygiene, and self-care. Appearance consciousness and willingness to change are key strengths, both with a median of 5.0. However, a discrepancy exists between their perceived attractiveness (median=3.0) and their desired appearance, which indicates potential concerns about self-image. The moral self-concept recorded the highest weighted median (median=4.25), highlighting a strong commitment to ethical behavior, honesty, and self-improvement, reinforcing the respondents' clear sense of integrity and moral values.

On the contrary, personal self-concept had the lowest score (median=3.2), reflecting moderate self-satisfaction and confidence in problem-solving abilities. Respondents exhibit lower confidence in problem-solving (median=3.0) and current self-satisfaction (median=3.0), suggesting difficulties aligning their current self with their ideal self, possibly impacting their overall personal growth and resilience. Lastly, social self-concept was rated highly (median=4.0), indicating that respondents value their relationships with family and friends significantly, demonstrating strong interpersonal connections and a sense of belonging within their social circles.

The findings support Loi et al.'s (2023) study, highlighting how fiction engagement influences self-concept, particularly in moral, social, and personal dimensions. While their study does not address physical self-concept, the research expands on this aspect by demonstrating how media impacts self-perception. In contrast, the study's findings partially contradict Heiden's (2016) study, which asserts that fanfiction fosters personal empowerment. While fanfiction may aid in identity exploration, this study's results suggest that it does not necessarily lead to increase confidence in problem-solving or personal self-satisfaction.

The analysis shows that while respondents have strong moral integrity and social awareness, they may need support in strengthening their self-concept and confidence. Their well-developed sense of morality and social connectedness aligns with societal expectations, but lower personal self-concept scores indicate self-doubt and lower problem-solving confidence. This highlights the need for interventions to boost self-efficacy and resilience. Additionally, high physical self-concept scores strongly focus on appearance and self-care, yet concerns about perceived attractiveness suggest potential self-image issues influenced by societal beauty standards.

Well-being

The well-being scores of the respondents vary across four domains: psychological, physical, social, and autonomy and resources. Psychological and social well-being received the highest ratings, while physical well-being showed areas needing improvement (see Table 3). Overall, the state of well-being was very good, with a median score of 3.69 out of 5.0, suggesting that respondents generally experience positive well-being, with strengths in psychological and social well-being; these strong points offer a good starting point for addressing physical health and autonomy issues, which need more attention.

Psychological well-being (median=3.83) indicates positive results. The findings suggest that the participants are motivated, have well-defined goals and a sense of direction, and are confident in their capacity to improve

themselves. They hold beliefs that give life meaning, experience continuous growth, perceive themselves as evolving and expanding and maintain a positive outlook. Despite facing significant challenges controlling their lives, they remain optimistic about the future.

The lowest score (median=3.25) indicates that physical well-being plays a significant role in overall well-being and highlights areas needing improvement. Respondents report adequate daily functioning and reasonable participation in physical activities. However, considerable sleep quality issues persist, and health satisfaction needs improvement.

They scored the highest in social well-being (median = 3.88). Most respondents report positive interactions, social comfort, and strong connections with family and friends. They express satisfaction with their family life and friendships and feel comfortable in their social connections. However, some are hesitant to ask for help when needed. This may be due to self-reliance, the stigma associated with asking for help, or a lack of knowledge about where to seek help.

Table 3. State of Well-being of Filipino Gen Z readers – (n=150)

Dimension and Items	Median (1-5)	Levels of Well-being
Psychological Well-being	**3.83**	**Very Good**
Life enjoyment	4.0	Very Good
Sense of purpose	4.0	Very Good
Future optimism	4.0	Very Good
Life control	3.0	Good
Self-satisfaction	4.0	Very Good
Personal growth	4.0	Very Good
Physical Well-being	**3.25**	**Good**
Physical health satisfaction	3.0	Good
Sleep Quality	2.0	Moderate
Daily activities performance	4.0	Very Good
Exercise/leisure opportunities	4.0	Very Good
Social Well-being	**3.88**	**Very Good**
Family life satisfaction	4.0	Very Good
Friendship satisfaction	4.0	Very Good
Social connection comfort	4.0	Very Good
Help-seeking ability	3.5	Very Good
Autonomy & Resources	**3.75**	**Very Good**
Life autonomy	3.0	Good
Choice implementation	4.0	Very Good
Work capability	4.0	Very Good
Financial adequacy	4.0	Very Good
Overall	**3.69**	**Good**
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Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Poor), 1.81-2.60 (Moderate), 2.61-3.40 (Good), 3.41-4.20 (Very Good), 4.21-5.00 (Outstanding)

Respondents' autonomy and resources (median=3.75) indicated good work capability and adequate financial resources. They feel secure in their decision-making, though some

experience moderate limitations on their independence. Respondents exhibit moderate life autonomy, a strong ability to make choices, and a balance between their freedom and constraints.

The results of this study align with the claims presented in Syafrina's (2023) study, which discusses how fanfiction helps build social bonds in online spaces. Many participants shared that fanfiction communities gave them a sense of belonging and provided an outlet for self-exploration and emotional expression, helping them cope with personal struggles and mental health. Likewise, Subin and Joseph (2024) found that online fanfiction communities reduce feelings of isolation by building trust, empathy, and shared emotional connections. The aforementioned literature aligns with the study's social and psychological well-being findings, wherein respondents reported strong interpersonal relationships, personal growth, and a clear sense of purpose. Both studies support the idea that fanfiction communities provide safe spaces for self-expression and support, ultimately contributing to overall well-being.

The analysis reveals a generally positive well-being profile with specific areas needing attention. The high social and psychological well-being scores provide a strong foundation for addressing physical well-being and personal autonomy challenges. The findings suggest a need for targeted interventions in sleep quality and physical health while maintaining the strong social and psychological support systems already in place.

Relationships between AU Fanfiction Engagement, Self-Concept and Well-being

Findingsngs show that fanfiction engagement has little influence on self-concept and well-being (Table 4). Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was utilized to examine the relationships between AU fanfiction engagement and the psychological outcomes of interest. The analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between fanfiction engagement and self-concept ($r = 0.053$, $p = .519$, 95% CI [-0.107, 0.211]). This negligible correlation was not statistically significant, suggesting no meaningful linear relationship between the frequency or intensity of fanfiction engagement and participants' self-perception.

Table 4. Relationships between fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being

Relationship Analysis	Statistical Measures	Interpretation
Engagement → Self-Concept	$r = 0.053$, $p = .519$, 95% CI [-0.107, 0.211]	Very weak positive correlation (not significant)
Engagement → Well-being	$r = -0.038$, $p = .644$, 95% CI [-0.197, 0.123]	Very weak negative correlation (not significant)
Regression Analysis		
Engagement → Self-Concept	$\beta = 0.039$, Intercept: 3.50	Minimal positive impact (not significant)
Engagement → Well-being	$\beta = -0.038$, Intercept: 3.71	Minimal negative impact (not significant)

Note: Correlation interpretation: 0.00-0.09 = Negligible, 0.10-0.39 = Weak, 0.40-0.69 = Moderate, 0.70-0.89 = Strong, 0.90-1.00 = Very strong

Similarly, the relationship between fanfiction engagement and well-being demonstrated a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.038$, $p = .644$, 95% CI [-0.197, 0.123]). This inverse relationship was also statistically non-significant, indicating that higher levels of fanfiction engagement were not meaningfully associated with reduced well-being in this sample.

Despite high levels of AU fanfiction engagement, the statistical analysis revealed minimal direct relationships. The weak positive correlation between engagement and self-concept and

the negative correlation with well-being suggest that the relationship between these variables is more complex and may involve external factors. These results indicate that high engagement does not automatically translate to psychological outcomes.

Regression analyses were conducted to quantify further the potential influence of fanfiction engagement on psychological outcomes. For self-concept, the regression model yielded a minimal positive regression coefficient (β = 0.039) with an intercept of 3.50. This suggests that for each one-unit increase in fanfiction engagement, self-concept increased by only 0.039 units—a negligible effect that did not reach statistical significance.

For well-being, the regression model produced a minimal negative coefficient (β = -0.038) with an intercept of 3.71. This indicates that each one-unit increase in fanfiction engagement was associated with a 0.038-unit decrease in well-being scores. Again, this effect was minimal and not statistically significant, reinforcing the conclusion that fanfiction engagement does not substantially impact well-being in this sample.

The weak correlations between fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being may be shaped by several moderating variables, which affect the strength or direction of these relationships. One key moderator is the motivation for reading fanfiction. A study by Rahayu et al. (2024) found that 92% of respondents read fanfiction during their free time, and 89% did so out of personal interest—suggesting that high intrinsic interest enhances motivation, which may, in turn, strengthen the impact of engagement on well-being outcomes. Another potential moderator is the genre or type of fanfiction consumed. Varying genre preferences and cultural differences in emotional expression and narrative engagement can shape readers' emotional responses and psychological benefits (Ye, 2025). Furthermore, perceived social support from fandom spaces, such as those on X, may also moderate the relationship by fostering a sense of belonging and identity reinforcement among readers (Ezani, 2019).

Possible confounding variables may also account for the weak correlations between fanfiction engagement and outcomes related to self-concept and well-being. For instance, social isolation or limited offline peer support may drive individuals to engage with AU fanfiction as a coping mechanism rather than fanfiction directly influencing self-concept and well-being—particularly among socially isolated Filipino university students who often seek connection through online platforms (Abad Santos et al., 2023). Additionally, other reading habits, such as reading physical books, may independently influence self-concept and well-being, as these have been associated with increased empathy in Filipino adolescents and young adults (Ubaldo & Dy, 2021). Finally, personal circumstances—including mental health, academic stress, and family environment—may simultaneously affect both the likelihood of engaging in fanfiction and related psychological outcomes, making it difficult to isolate the specific impact of AU fanfiction itself.

Several qualitative insights and theories can be considered to explain these weak correlations further. One helpful framework is narrative identity theory, which suggests that individuals shape their self-concept through evolving personal stories (Cho, 2020). While AU fanfiction may support brief moments of emotional reflection or self-exploration, its impact is often temporary and situational, contributing to identity development in small, indirect ways. Another factor is parasocial and fictional detachment, where readers may form emotional bonds with characters but typically maintain clear psychological boundaries. This detachment prevents deep identification, limiting fanfiction's ability to provoke lasting changes in self-concept or well-being (Mula-Márquez et al., 2024; Alavala, 2024). Moreover, fanfiction is frequently used as a short-term coping mechanism, especially during stressful periods. For instance, Sereda (2019) found that respondents used fanfiction as a form of "escape," and Rokicka (2023) noted its role in providing momentary emotional relief. However, because fanfiction does not directly address the root causes of emotional distress, its benefits tend to be situational and fleeting, contributing only subtly to long-term self-concept.

These findings contradict Samutina's (2016) argument that fanfiction engagement significantly shapes self-concept and emotional

development. While readers may deeply engage with fanfiction, the study's results suggest that this engagement alone does not directly translate to changes in one's self-concept. In a qualitative context, factors such as individual differences, offline influences, or the nature of fanfiction content itself may mediate this relationship.

In the context of well-being, the findings present a different perspective from Sereda's (2019) study, which may imply a connection between greater fanfiction engagement and higher levels of well-being. While the previous study's qualitative findings highlight fanfiction as a source of emotional support and personal growth, the study's analysis reveals a negative correlation between fanfiction engagement and well-being.

These findings suggest that while individual accounts highlight the mental health benefits of fanfiction, greater engagement does not consistently translate to improved well-being, emphasizing the need to examine broader influencing factors. Future research and interventions should consider a more holistic approach rather than focusing solely on engagement levels.

Conclusion

The study explored the extent of AU fanfiction engagement among Filipino Gen Z readers and its relationship with self-concept and well-being. Findings revealed high engagement, particularly in immersion, reading fluency, and menstrual imagery, yet lower scores in optimal challenge and self-awareness suggest that while fanfiction is deeply engaging, it may not always promote critical thinking or self-reflection. Self-concept analysis highlighted moral, physical, and social strengths but identified personal self-concept as an area for improvement. Similarly, well-being scores were generally positive, with strong social connections and life satisfaction, yet concerns about sleep quality and physical health were noted.

Statistical analysis indicated that while fanfiction engagement was high, its direct influence on self-concept and well-being was minimal. This suggests that other factors shape these aspects. Fanfiction engagement may interact with personal and social influences

rather than being the sole factor in psychological outcomes. This research provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being among Filipino Gen Z readers. It highlights the need for comprehensive approaches to supporting their development and well-being.

Recommendations

To enhance self-concept, incorporating more challenging content in fanfiction can encourage critical thinking and self-reflection, allowing readers to engage with complex themes that foster personal growth. Loi et al. (2023) support this idea, emphasizing that exposure to thought-provoking narratives can enhance one's self-concept. Developing programs focused on personal effectiveness can also help individuals improve self-satisfaction and problem-solving skills. Establishing support systems can provide guidance and encouragement in overcoming challenges. Confidence-building activities can further strengthen self-perception and self-assurance. Christison (2013) suggests that these activities help individuals develop a more balanced and positive self-concept.

The researchers recommend implementing sleep management practices to address sleep quality concerns. Based on the findings of Iwon et al. (2021), which suggest that physical activity is associated with improved well-being, joining physical health programs that promote regular exercise and general well-being is also encouraged. The enhancement of financial literacy should also be incorporated to help individuals manage their finances efficiently. Strategies should focus on developing decision-making skills and supporting individual growth to enhance personal autonomy further. Filipino Gen Z readers are encouraged to participate in group activities, community programs, or events to meet people with similar interests, build social connections, and form meaningful relationships. Additionally, catching up and communicating openly with family and friends will help improve their overall well-being.

Future research can explore mediating variables to identify factors like social support or

character identification that influence the relationship between fanfiction engagement, self-concept, and well-being. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews or thematic analysis, could provide deeper insights into readers' experiences beyond numerical data, as demonstrated in studies on the lived experiences of fanfiction writers. Longitudinal studies may also help determine whether the effects are temporary or contribute to long-term personal development. Additionally, examining specific engagement patterns, such as differences between passive readers and active participants, could offer a clearer understanding of how varying levels of engagement impact self-concept and well-being.

Acknowledgment

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