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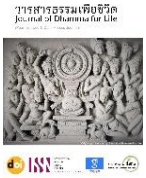

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The Mental Health of New Thai Male Y-Genre Actors Who Has Less Than 3 Years Experience

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the mental heath of the new Thai male "Y" genre actors who has less than 3 years acting experience. This qualitative research was conducted in 7 Thai male Y-genre actors based on literature reviews using semi-structured in-depth interviews, data analysis was performed through content analysis. The results shown positively, 100% seeing it as self worth, gaining more followers on social media or fame is the new generations needed. Only 14% is afraid of negative evaluation from society. In terms of mental health, challenges were evident: 71% faced family disputes in gender identity issue, while 61% encountered family objections to their career choice. 29% plan to continue working in entertainment industry while 71% began planning alternative career paths. This research underscores that the family dispute, fear of criticism, stress management, role transition becoming superstar and adaptive behavior significantly impact their mental health, self-perception, and overall well-being in both positive and negative impacts on their mental.

Introduction

In contemporary Thai society, there is greater acceptance and encouragement of individual preferences and self-expression. With an idea that people are free to be able to be yourself, the emergence of LGBTQ+ content, known locally and in Asia market as "Y-genre series" (where 'Y' originates from the Japanese term 'Yaoi' depicting homoerotic relationships in media primarily created by and for women), has a significant cultural impact.

In Thailand, LGBTQ+ content began appearing in the film industry during the 1990s, initially featuring in supporting characters in satirical comedies that often subtly challenged or mocked negative stereotypes associated with male characters who openly expressed their sexual orientation (Singhakowinta, 2013)

The turning point came in 2016, "Sotus the Series, the famous Y-genre fiction was developed to series platform, the fame from both fiction and series society had made the view count more than 100 million view in Line TV. Due to the popularity of Y-genre fiction, this allows “Y” genre fiction novels to be published and distributed openly in various leading bookstores(Wongphudee, 2020)

The pinnacle arrived in 2020 with the airing of "2gether The Series" by GMMTV, a 13-episode series was success locally and globally for both two lead actors. The success of Y-genre series had made the producer launch the “Still 2gether The Series” and “2gether The Movie” which won the “Most Popular Thai Film of 2021” of 30th Thailand National Film Association Awards, based entirely on public fan voting. This surge in popularity not only boosted the Y-genre series but also propelled Thai Y-genre actors into the spotlight (3). (Tanawan, 2022)

Another outburst international success of Y-genre series was in 2022, “Kinnporsche The Series” was ranked in Iquiyi’s top steaming chart for 191 areas, was in number 1 global Twitter’s ranking and was ranked in China’s Weibo all episodes. International press such as The Straits Times, Teen Vouge, Rolling Stones India published the article of actors and the success of the series. All the main actors were famous enough to have World tour in Bangkok, Taipei, Singapore, Soul, Manila and Hongkong which can be acknowledge that Thai Y-genre series and actors had become the new key of exported industry of Thailand(Ajkumanus, 2022)

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The article by Panadda Wongphudee discusses the stress of being a public figure, highlighting the transition from an ordinary person to a famous individual who is constantly observed and whose private life is of great interest. Research on the pressures faced by actors reveals that fans' expectations create stress, compelling actors to behave well, maintain a good-natured demeanour, and consistently please fans and investors for future projects. High competition and sleep deprivation, along with the pressure to maintain an online reputation, exacerbate this stress (Patitanon, 2020; Wongphudee, 2020)

Actors must exhibit specific behaviours and maintain character portrayals in series to satisfy fan clubs. Research conducted in Bangkok shows that fans value appearance, personality, private behaviours, character roles, and acting skills. Fans support actors by boosting online trends, endorsing various brands, and driving sales of favoured products through endorsements(Rungrojruerong, 2021; รุ่งโรจน์เรืองรอง, 2564)

In a master's thesis from Yonsei University exploring depression and suicide attempts among prominent South Korean actor Park Jin-hee, it was noted that 40% of South Korean celebrities have experienced suicidal thoughts at least once. The overall stress level among artists was calculated at 53.12%, attributed to a lack of privacy, cyberbullying, uncertain income,

and fear of disapproval from fans and industry figures. This accumulated stress leads some celebrities to contemplate suicide as a way out (Dae-O, 2020)

Additionally, Sonia Kil's article highlights that many well-known actors and singers in South Korea have been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) due to high expectations from fans and influential figures in the entertainment industry. They must also carefully manage past behaviours that could be socially judged, impacting their personal lives, including real-life relationships that could harm perceived on-screen pairings and affect their ability to handle stress, with some ultimately resorting to suicide.(Kil, 2019)

Fans' affection for actors can range from mere liking to passion and fanaticism, termed "idolatry," which involves admiring and idealizing the actors. Fans are eager to support actors, showing intimacy in hopes of a fulfilling relationship. To "idealize" means to expect someone to align with our ideals, where actors are seen as role models and are expected to make no mistakes. Negative news can spread rapidly through social media, potentially leading to cyberbullying. Such negative publicity can impact an actor's career, resulting in removal from presenting roles or layoffs from series. The pressure of fan expectations has become a significant concern for actors regarding their future career plans (Chavanovanich, 2021)

There is currently no study in Thailand or internationally focusing directly on the perspectives of Y-genre actors. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions and adaptive behaviours of actors dealing which included mentality factors such as family disputes, fear of criticism, stress management, the transition to superstardom, and their adaptive behaviours.

Objectives

The research aims to study the mental health of new actors in “Y” genre series, focusing on their adaptive behavior towards role transition becoming celebrities.

Research Methodology

In this qualitative study, Thai Y-genre actors were recruited through criterion sampling until data saturation was reached, with invitations sent to actor managers or agencies in Bangkok. After the interviews, actors were asked to introduce another Y-genre actor who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for Y-genre actors were male actors aged in their 20s with acting experience in movies, musicals, or short films in LGBTQ+ roles, with less than three years of acting experience. The exclusion criterion was unwillingness to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select subjects from current Y-genre actors in the market. A total of seven participants were involved in the study to reach the saturation point.

The semi-structured in-depth interview questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on literature reviews. The questionnaire contained seven questions, as shown in Table 1. Three actors participated in a pilot study to test the reliability of the questionnaire and provided feedback on its clarity and relevance. They found it reliable and clearly understood the questions and the purpose of the study.

Participants were selected according to the inclusion criteria and were given both written and verbal explanations of the study and ethical considerations. They agreed to participate, and the researcher scheduled appointments with them. All interviews were conducted in Thai, either face-to-face or via video conferencing, depending on the participants' preferences, and were audio-recorded for verbatim transcription. On average, each interview lasted about 100 minutes. All transcriptions and data analyses were performed in Thai and later translated into

English by the researcher for the purposes of this paper. The translation was reviewed for accuracy by a native Thai speaker and a native English speaker.

Table 1. Semi-structured in-depth interview questions

Theme		Questions
	1	How long has you been in the entertainment industry?
	2	The beginning of being part in Y-genre series?
	3	How does the LGBTQ+ role you are given affected your self identity?
	4	Criticism on your private life?
	5	Family relationship?
	6	Adaptive behavior for the role transition becoming celebrity?
	7	Your future's plan?

Results

After the interview, the collected data were analyzed via content analysis. The table will show the result of answers' frequency and content.

Table 2. summarized data analysis divided into each question.

Question	Keyword and quotation
1. How long has you been in the entertainment industry?	**1 year (14%), 2 years (29%), 3 years (57%)** **ID1:** I start my acting career 3 years ago, I felt so lucky that someone that I know who work in this industry asked me to cast for the Y-genre series role and I got it. It such a pressure to know good people. **ID4:** I was a university cheerleader that why I know the 2 years ago casting calls notice prior than others. I plan to work as actor along with running my own business. **ID3:** Only 1 year, I was scouted by musical school casting call. I am studying in performance arts that why I am interested in acting and would love to pursue this career path.
2. The beginning of being part in Y-genre series?	**It's an opportunity to be actor in Thai entertainment industry, never concern whether it's LGBTQ+ role or anything (100%), 17% chose to play in LGBTQ+ role for support LGBTQ+ society, 39% believed that a good actor should be able to perform any roles while 17% have famous Thai Y-series actors as role models**

3.How does the Y-character role you are given affected your perception of yourself?	**Improve self-esteem (57%), hate being labeled as Y-genre actors as it was labelled as bad acting actor (43%)** **ID2:** I graduated in acting performance, Y-genre series was well known as good looking not performing, it lacks acting skills. I want to work in the real art performing society. **ID6:** I got an offer in advertising shooting since university time. I felt grateful that I earn money before my graduation. It did improve my self value or self worth acknowledgement to myself. I am so proud.
4. Criticism on your private life?	**No worry about any criticism, they believed people made mistakes (29%), Scared of being eyes on, stress out by been judged their gender identity from their LGBTQ acting role.** **ID5:** I don't like people keep gossiping behind my back. It stresses me out like crazy. Sometimes I avoid using social media or twitter as I don't want fans to dig my previous life on public **ID7:** I am too old to care everyone, I am an grown up man, so if any fans would like to criticize my previous actions, let's them.
5.Family relationship?	**Strong family relationship (29%), Experience family dispute (71%)** **ID1:** My family and I are very close, my parent allowed me to work as actors to earn working experiences and social skills even though they prepare family business that I need to manage in the future. I will work both actors and business manager the best to makes them proud. **ID2:** I don't want anyone to know I'm facing issues; I don't want them to think I'm a loser. None of my family admired me and I don't have a friend who I can trust and rely on like that
6.Adaptive behavior for the role transition?	**Fear of losing opportunity when unable to treat fans and investors good enough (57%) Stress on previous personal life reviled (29%), Comfortable with life after fame, felt success in life (14%)**

	ID4: I'm stress as I don't know whether my behaviors will be affected to someone or not, I don't want to make any misbehave to rage fans or investors which may be affected to my acting career path. **ID2:** When I am in high school, I made a lot of mistakes, I scared anyone will dig my mistakes and will spread rumors that I even can't defend **ID7:** Being nice to all, be yourself, I think it's easy like that. I felt confident and see no complicated issues about changing from normal people to become actor.
7.Your future?	**Continue in entertainment industry (29%), Planning to / on process to create personal business (71%).** **ID5:** I want to work in acting field. Even though I graduated in marketing, but I fell for acting career. I would love to continue in this path. If I'm too old to play, I might be an acting coach. **ID6:** I'm planning to create supplement brand, expected to open it next year. I know that Y-genre actor job is a short-term job, when I'm over 35 years old, I will quit and run business only.

Discussion of Results

According to the growth of Thai Y-genre entertainment industry since 2014, The success of this industry globally had elevated the demand of the new Y-genre actors, without the preparation of the actor's mental health care who indeed facing role transition from ordinary person to a famous super star.

There was no study about the actors who specifically played the LGBTQ+ role about their role transition, their stress of negative evaluation from others in both work life and private life before. There was news informed that the Korean superstars become MDD due to the high expectation from fans and investors which cause them stress management issue, and some were committed suicide(Dae-O, 2020; Kil, 2019; Seo, 2023)

From this study on 7 new Thai Y-genre actors were male, ages ranged between 22 - 27 years old; 2 of them were male in gender identity, 5 of them were LGBTQ.

The perception on beginning of Y-genre series, all willing to be part of this industry as Thailand is the top rank of biggest Y-genre entertainment internationally, they see success and a lot of opportunity in life in the future.

LGBTQ role aspect, some concerned being labelled as Y-genre actor will reduce their future acting opportunity as Y-genre actors were well known as lack of acting skills(Songkiat Lonlarm, 2008). Not only that some actors were traumatized by filming intense roles such as sexual scenes or emotional damage from family dispute (Mander, 2022)

Being a "Y"-genre actors leads people assumed actors are LGBTQ+ which caused sexual assaults which caused their medical history as MDD or PTSD(Altshul, 2023; Kindelan, 2019; Nisachon Rattanamanee, 2019)

Actors who have family dispute in gender identity issue or occupation's choice, playing sex scene with men lead to MDD and was treated by therapist at present.(Kindelan, 2019; Nisachon Rattanamanee, 2019)

The adaptive behavior from role transition, loosing private life, unable to handle fans expectation as they only accept relationship with role partner. Live a life under spotlight cause them loosing self identity and question about their life value.

For future aspect, only 2 actors still prefer to continue in entertainment industry while 5 actors planning or on process launching their own business such as wellness clinic, restaurants, or product branding.

Conclusion

This research underscores that the family dispute, fear of criticism, stress management, role transition becoming superstar and adaptive behavior significantly impact their mental health, self-perception, and overall well-being in both positive and negative impacts on their mental.

Recommendations

For further study, given the increase in individual preferences and self-expression in current Thai society, the Y-genre industry in Thailand has expanded to include Yuri, which represents another type of homoerotic relationship (girls' love). Researching this from the girls' perspective may help clarify adaptive behavior towards role transition becoming celebrities and their mentality towards Thai entertainment industry has become more comprehensive.

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