

The Lived Experience of Fanfiction Writers: Its Implications to Language Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT: *Fanfiction writers have their own stories to tell as to why they were hooked into this form of writing. These stories are relevant to the teaching of skills in writing. Limited studies were found about the writing experiences of fanfiction writers. This study explored the experiences with the overarching question: What is fanfiction writing as a lived experience among fanfiction writers? A transcendental phenomenology design was used to explore these experiences. A three-phase phenomenological face-to-face interviews was conducted to collect the data. Informal conversations and observations were also held. Each interview was transcribed and sent back to each writer for checking and validation. Actual fanfiction works were also observed. From the data that were manually coded and categorized, three themes emerged from the eight categories such as outpouring and relief, transformation and connection, and development and motivation. Fanfiction writers write to express themselves as who they are including their feelings, their opinions, and their social interactions. Fanfiction writing also enables them to develop their skill and passion for writing. These experiences may help in skill-based teaching and learning especially in language classes.*

KEYWORDS: fanfiction writing, lived experiences, transcendental phenomenology, language writing skills, fanfiction

INTRODUCTION

Youngsters tend to idolize a character seen in a television program, movie, comics, or novels. They follow through the drama of life of this character. Idolizing this character results to the way they dress up, follow certain hairstyles, or buy equipment that would make themselves closer to this character. Moreover, some of these youngsters join a fandom where people of the same interest over a story or character gather and share

their ideas, opinions, and thoughts. Many of these youngsters who belong to a fandom create through writing their own version of the original story or a canon which is called a fanfiction (Gabriel and Bruch, 2018).

Fanfiction writing is a kind of writing based from the “world” of another writer (Stoker, 2020). In this writing, the writer uses the setting and persona of the canon and put them together to create a fanfiction (Stoker, 2020). In addition, fanfiction writing can be of any topic that can be talked about, wherein the narrative elements of a “canon” may stay the same with minor changes or can be shifted into different direction in the fan community (Gabriel and Bruch, 2018). In this manner, it allows fans, who ventures on writing, to explore and develop their writing skills on the different issues they want to tackle about their respective fandoms. Unlike other fiction writing, writers for fanfiction must be a fan first of that literary work.

Fanfiction writing becomes a popular internet hobby today (Pellegrini, 2021). In fact, there is a growing number of sites dedicated to this form of writing such as *fanfiction.net* and *archives of our own*. According to (Pellegrini, 2021), in 2018, *fanfiction.net* has already reached “10 million users and stories posted” in this site. This is an incredible rise in the number of fanfiction writings and its users. Because of this prominence of fanfiction writing, scholars have already conducted investigations about the “the social, emotional, and aesthetic goals that fanfic, and sometimes only fanfic, can meet” (Burt, 2017).

On the other hand, there is also a need to investigate into the writer’s own experience of writing fanfiction. Unfortunately, limited number of studies are dedicated into this inquiry. It is very difficult to look for these studies. For example, there was a study conducted by Diltz (2007) entitled *Writing as Threshold: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Writing of Twelve College Women*. This study focuses on the spiritual dimensions in writing. Diltz (2007) found out that the writing experiences of women “provides instances of grace, awe, and gratitude” (p. ii). In terms of their beliefs and feelings, writing allowed them to “understand how life experiences shape them” (p. ii). They also use writing “as a place of privacy.... where they can express themselves without worry... to escape painful experiences.” (p ii). Taking into consideration all of these findings, it strengthens the conviction to pursue this investigation to address the knowledge gap of the experiences of writing fanfiction as knowledge may not exist in the in the “literature from related research domains” (Miles, 2017, p.3) as reviewed from the different data-bases. This study describes the lived experiences of writing fanfiction among the writers especially those who are already publishing their works through the sites devoted to fanfiction.

Though some of the scholars in the field of qualitative argued that theories are not necessary for studies such as phenomenology, there are also scholars like Merriam (2009) that say that it is impossible to have a research without a theory. Guided by this principle, this study uses the Transformational Learning Theory developed by Jack

Mezirow. This is a constructivist type of theory. It argues that “the way the learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is, central to making meaning hence learning” (Mezirow, 1991 as quoted by Colatta (2020)). Colatta (2020) presents two basic kinds of learning, the instrumental and the other one is communicative. The focus of instrumental learning is “task-oriented problem solving...(Colatta, 2020) while communicative learning focuses on the way individuals speak about their desires, feelings, and needs (Colatta, 2020).

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Several studies around have already been conducted about fanfiction. Studies about fanfiction revolve around literacy (Magnifico, Curwood, and Lammers, 2015); collaborative writing (Lammers and Marsh, 2015); comparison to activities with psychological bearing (Barnes, 2015); fandom and practices in learning a language (Vasquez-Calvo, Zhang, Pascual and Casanny, 2019); and an ethnographic study about the community of fanfiction writers (Evans, Davis, Evans, Campbell, Randall, Yin, and Aragon, 2017). These studies provide a significant backdrop of the scholarship of the phenomenon of fanfiction. However, these studies are oriented to the application of fanfiction to the learning environment especially writing. While these studies are significant to understand fanfiction, there is a greater need to explore a gap and that is, the experiences of writers behind fanfiction writing. This study was conducted with the purpose of adding scholarship to this unexplored phenomenon of fanfiction writing. This investigation attempted to describe why write fanfiction. The overarching question is: What is fan fiction writing as a lived experience among fanfiction writers? This study described the lived experience of fanfiction writers about fanfiction writing through the overarching question: What is fanfiction writing as a lived experience of fanfiction writers? Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions: 1) What is it like for the writers who are writing fanfiction? and 2) What are the context of the lived experiences of the writers who are writing fanfiction?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This is a qualitative research anchored on phenomenological research design. Qualitative research used in-depth analysis of the perspectives of phenomenon from numerous data that were collected from observations, interviews, and self-reflection (Newman, 2018; Feehily, 2017; Queiros, Fabria, and Almeida, 2017; Rutberg and Boudikis, 2018). Specifically, it employed phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, as an approach to explore the individual lived experiences of the phenomenon of fanfiction writing.

Phenomenology describes the meaning of the lived experience of the participants about the concept of the phenomenon and uncover the meaning of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007; Rutberg & Boudikis, 2018). Phenomenology provides emphasis on the lived experiences of a person and not the world or reality as something that would separate from the person (Van Manen, 1997; Valle et.al.,1989 as cited by Laverty,

2003). Moustakas (1994) explained that phenomenology attempts to eliminate discussions that represent prejudgment or presupposition. Thus, meaning is created when object appears in one's consciousness and mingles with the object in nature.

Transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was anchored on Edmund Husserl's philosophy that is "rooted in subjective openness" (p.30). Transcendental phenomenology was conceptualized by Husserl and applied by Moustakas (1994) in human science research. It is bound to the concept of Intentionality (Husserl, 1931, pp 243-244; Kockelmans, 1967, p.32 as cited by Moustakas, 1994) wherein it indicates that the object exists through the mind, and the understanding of consciousness depends on how the participants experience it. It also refers to the internal experience of an individual towards something, or a certain phenomenon. With this mental framework, Moustakas (1994), in his research, focused on the description of the experiences of the participants than the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Moustakas (1994) advanced the idea that any investigation in phenomenology must begin with the phenomenon and moving forward to the process of arriving at new knowledge in the forms of "epoche, transcendental – phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation" (p.35). He further explained that phenomenology attempts to eliminate discussions that represent prejudgment or presupposition. Thus, meaning is created when object appears in one's consciousness and mingles with the object in nature.

The transcendental phenomenological design was further employed to focus on the description of experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007) regarding writing of fanfiction. Transcendental phenomenology begins with the process of *epoche*, wherein the researcher set aside his/her prejudices and biases, and acknowledge the views of the participants towards the phenomenon. The new perspectives the researcher would gain would show how the participants sees the phenomenon in their perspectives. Next is the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, wherein it refers to the experience being described in its totality or the textural description or the 'what' the experience of the phenomenon was by the participants. Lastly is the imaginative variation which refers to the structural essences of the experiences or the "hows" of the phenomenon experienced by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Sample and Sampling Procedure. This study involved six participants whose ages ranges from fourteen to thirty years old and either male or female. Five of the participants were students in the different educational institutions in the city, and one was already working. All of the participants have experiences in writing fanfiction and are members of the online writing communities.

This study employed purposeful or criterion-based sampling. Purposeful sampling involves identifying individuals or group of individuals that are knowledgeable and have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark, 2011; Etikan and

Bala, 2017; Sharma, 2017). The participants were chosen based from the selection criteria. These criteria were: 1) He or she must be a resident of Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines; 2) He or she must be writing fan fiction for two years or more.; 4) He or she must be a member of an online writing community dedicated for fanfiction writers.; and 4) He or she must have at least one published fanfiction work.

Data Collection Method. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main data-gathering instrument (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). The researcher used a semi-structured interview questionnaire to guide the entire three phases of the phenomenological interviews. The phenomenological interview questions were adapted and modified from Patton (2002). Through these, the researcher is able to explore thoroughly the participants' lived experiences and perspectives (Nunan, 1992; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973 as cited by Jones, 2016; Queiros, Fabria and Almeida, 2017; Feehily, 2017; Rutberg and Boudikis 2018).

In searching for participants of the study, the researcher made a post in the social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) and online writing communities (Wattpad and Asianfanfics) for possible fanfiction writers in the city. The researcher also made contact with friends and colleagues who are fanfiction writers or have known people who are fanfiction writers. Although there were possible prospects, some others weren't available as participants due to work and study conflicts, and other circumstances. As the researcher do not need a massive number of participants, she was able to gathered six (6) participants for the study through friends and colleagues' recommendations. The researcher was able to conduct a preliminary meeting with the participants individually. They were not discussion of the study just yet as the researcher and participant just had a brief meeting as the researcher thanked the participants in doing the study. For the brief meeting, the researcher get to know the participant and discussed the schedule for the interview and study, making sure that the schedule is convenient for both the researcher and the participants.

The researcher started the data collection by meeting with the participants of the study individually. A scheduled first meeting was decided after the researcher and participant came up with a schedule that both parties were available. Each participant was scheduled under their own available time. As for the meeting place of the interview, the researcher asked the participants for their convenient area for meet-up. If such place is quite far for the other party and loud noise is present, there is a consensus agreement in meeting each other halfway. Once the date and time were already set, the first of interview will then be conducted.

For the first interview, the researcher and participants started with the Phase 1 of the interview which was PAG-ILA-ILA (Focused History of Fanfiction Writing). This includes the introduction of the Project or the Study, its timeframe and confidentiality, and the interview questions in getting to know the participants.

For the first part of the Phase 1 of the Interview, the researcher show again the permission letter addressed to the participants. The researchers also presented and gave the Informed Consent Form to the participant. In here, the researcher discussed thoroughly what the study is all about and its implications during the research study. The participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the interview process. When the participants understood the guidelines written in the consent form, they affixed their signature at the bottom end page of the paper.

An Informed Consent Form is a paper wherein the researcher laid out the guidelines and duration of the study. It includes the purpose of the research study, interview procedures, risks, benefit of the paper, extent of anonymity and confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, approval of Research, participant's responsibilities, participant's permission and researcher's contact information.

After discussing is the Informed Consent form, the next part was filling in the Basic Information Sheet. The Basic Information Sheet is a paper that includes the basic information of the participants on when, where and how they started writing fan fiction until the present. This information that also include the fan fiction community that they are affiliated, the fan fiction that they were writing and published in their community, and the number of years they were writing fan fiction stories. The Basic Information Sheet was given to the participant during the first meeting and let the participants answer and supply the necessary information truthfully and honestly. This would be one of the bases of the participant's profile.

For the second part of Phase 1, the researcher then asked the interview questions that comes in getting to know the participants. The questions asked circulated on how the participant started writing fanfiction: their earliest recollection in fanfiction writing, before they started writing, when they started writing up to the present time. They were also asked on how where they hooked in fanfiction: how they originally hear about fanfiction, and the course of events that led them into fanfiction writing. A series of probing questions were also given to fully understand their experiences. After the first phase of interview, the researcher gave a glimpse of the topic for the next meeting, and their Interview Phase 2 schedule. The researcher also informed the participants of the transcribing process of the interview and confirmation on the transcription of the said interview.

For Phase 2 interview, it was the discussion with regards of Fanfiction Writing of the participants. For this phase, the participants were asked of the recent experience about writing fanfiction that centers on their feelings and emotional outburst, and a fanfiction story that they have wrote that represent their feelings as writers. The participants shared the fanfiction stories they have written and their experiences towards it. They were also shared what were their roles as writers towards their fanfiction stories that they wrote. Like the previous interview phase, the researcher gave a glimpse of the topic for the next meeting, and discussed the schedule for the Phase 3 of the Interview.

The researcher informed the participants of the transcribing process of the interview and confirmation on the transcription of the said interview.

The Phase 3 of the Interview is the last phase. In this phase, it talks about the fanfiction experience. In here, the participants shared their writing experiences in fanfiction, how would they describe the role of writing fanfiction in their life, and the feelings and experiences impact in their writing. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participants in their cooperation with the interview and the experiences they imparted throughout the study. Like this first and second phase of the interview, the researcher also informed the participants of the transcribing process of the interview and confirmation on the transcription of the said interview.

After every interview phase done by the researcher and participant, the researcher transcribed the recorded audio interview. This will take a week, and once it is done, the researcher would give a copy of the transcript to the participant for him/her to review and confirm. Once the participant confirmed the transcript, the next phase of the interview will be pushed to its original schedule, and if the participant have additional information or clarification towards the transcript, the researcher will look into it and made the necessary revisions. This will take some time and have the next phase of the interview reschedule once the revised transcript is done.

The researcher also observed the published fanfiction works of the participants on the writing community they are part in.

Data Analysis. The analysis of the data from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants follow the data analysis framework of phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). The data analysis framework of Colaizzi (1978) was used in the analysis because the researcher found its structure practical based on the review of several studies using similar approach (Morrow, 2015; Suryanim, Welch & Cox, 2016; Shosha, 2012). The Colaizzi method has employed the seven-step process namely: 1) familiarization, 2) identification of significant statements, 3) formulation of meanings, 4) theme clusters, 5) exhaustive description, 6) fundamental structure, and 7) verification.

Before taking in to the process of Colaizzi (1978), the researcher described her “personal experiences with the phenomenon under study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) as the first step of the phenomenological study. This is called *epoche* or bracketing. This full description of the researcher’s experience was done to bracket all her experiences about the fanfiction writing. Furthermore, the researcher did it to avoid her biases that may cloud the narratives of the participants. This description of the researcher’s experience of fanfiction writing can be found in Appendix G.

After bracketing the researchers’ experiences of fanfiction writing, she began transcribing the interviews of the six participants. A total of eighty-four (84) pages formed the transcribed narratives of the participants. *Familiarization.* With the

transcripts at hand, the researcher familiarized herself with the narratives by reading through all the participants' accounts several times. During this step, separated readings of the narratives were done to ensure that the researcher had full knowledge of the data. *Significant statements.* From the transcripts of the narratives, the researcher identified all significant statements in the accounts. These statements were of direct relevance to the phenomenon under investigation. During this step, the researcher had to survey the entire transcripts words to words, phrases to phrases, statements to statements, and paragraphs to paragraphs to mark the significant statements. Significant statements were highlighted for ease in retrieval. These are "non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements" (Creswell, 2007). *Formulating meanings.* After the significant statements were highlighted, they were grouped for the analysis of the meanings that each statement possesses. The researcher identified meanings relevant to the phenomenon that arose from a careful consideration of the significant statements. The researcher had reflexively "bracketed" her pre-suppositions to stick closely to the phenomenon as experienced. The result of this process is called formulated meanings. *Theme clusters.* During this step, the researcher clustered the formulated meanings into themes that were common across all accounts. Again, bracketing of pre-suppositions is crucial, especially to avoid any potential influence of existing theory. At this point, the researcher can already identify the pattern of meanings as grouped into a particular theme. *Exhaustive description.* After the theme clusters, the researcher further did the analysis to discover the emergent themes. The emergent themes guided the research to write a full and inclusive description of the phenomenon, incorporating all the themes. *Fundamental structure.* In this step, the researcher condensed the exhaustive description down to a short, dense statement that captured just those aspects deemed to be essential to the structure of the phenomenon. *Verification of the fundamental structure.* After the fundamental structure of the experience was described, the researcher validated and verified it with the participants. The findings were returned to the participants for verification. The participants were asked if the fundamental structure, indeed, captured their experience of fanfiction writing. The positive feedback from the participants prompted the researcher to continue with the process.

Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their book the *Naturalistic Inquiry* started their topic on trustworthiness with the question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p. 290). The four criteria of trustworthiness of Lincoln and Guba (1985) were employed in this study such as: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is "determined when coresearchers or readers are confronted with the experience, they can recognize it" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 as cited by Nowell, et al. 2017, p.3). Transferability means the "generalizability of inquiry. In qualitative research, this concerns only to case-to-case transfer" (Tobin & Begley, 2004 as cited by Nowell, et al., 2017, p.3). Dependability can be achieved when the "researchers can ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented" (Tobin & Begley, 2004 as cited by Nowell, et al., 2017, p.3). Confirmability means to establish "that the researcher's interpretations and findings are

clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004 as cited by Nowell, et al. 2017, p.3).

To establish credibility, the researcher has a prolonged engagement with the participants. The weekly interview allowed the researchers to know the participants deeply by engaging into informal dialogues and guided interviews. After each interview, the researchers personally transcribed the recorded conversations. The transcripts were then returned to the participants to ensure that the transcript is correct. Participants may also add if they would like to enrich what they said during the actual interview. This is called member checking. The blogs and published works of the participants were also reviewed to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

To ensure transferability, the researchers had formulated probing questions in each phase of the interview. It ensured that the researcher can gather thick description of lived experience of writing fanfiction and the thick description of the context where the phenomenon occurred. The informal dialogues after each interview allowed the researcher to gather thick descriptions about the participants themselves.

The researchers had established dependability by ensuring that methodological procedures are strictly observed in the entire study and also the data-gathering procedures were discussed in great details. Frameworks specific to the design were objectively employed to ensure that scholarly procedure of the study was observed.

Confirmability was established through an audit trail where the researchers noted the process especially the data-collection phase. The research also prepared an *epoche* before the actual data gathering started. Bracketing ensures that the data speak the *lifeworld* or the truth of the participants and not of the researcher.

Ethical Considerations. The researchers sought the participants consent through an Informed Consent Form. The contents and parts of the Informed Consent were read and thoroughly explained to the participants in both English and Cebuano languages. The participants were further informed and clarified that their participation in the research is voluntary and they can opt to withdraw their participation in any part of the research. Furthermore, confidentiality was thoroughly explained to them. They were told that their personal identity will be hidden especially during the reporting of the data. They were also informed that findings and their disclosure during the interview will be in public except for information that will lead to identifying them. The data that will be obtained from the interview will only be read and analyzed by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are six (6) participants in the study. Presented here using the pseudonyms that was assigned by the researcher.

Bianca is a 15-year old female student and a wattpad writer. She is currently a Grade 9 student of a Public High School in the city. Bianca had been writing stories for six (6) years, and ventured to writing fanfiction three years ago. She wrote fanfiction under the genres of Drama, Romance and Fantasy.

John is a 15-year old male student and wattpad writer. He was a Grade 9 student of a Public High School in Cagayan de Oro City. He loved watching anime when he was young, thus, having the thought of writing fanfiction using anime characters. John had been writing stories for three (3) years under the genre of fantasy, anime, cartoon, sci-fi and *animamorphic*.

Nicole is a 14-year old female student and wattpad writer. She was a Grade 8 student of a Public High School in in the city. Nicole had been writing fanfiction for three (3) years, having teen fiction and romance as story genres.

Isabel is an 18-year old female student and a writer on Wattpad and Archiveofourown. She was a Grade 12 Senior High School Student in one of the universities in the city. Isabel had been writing for four (4) years, and had ventured in writing fanfiction for one and a half year ago. She wrote under Romance, Teen Fiction, and Alternate Universe and Mature genres.

Sarah is a 27-year old female professional. She has bachelor's degree and worked online as a Content Writer for a website, and a Fiction Editor of a publishing company. She had been writing stories for more than three years and started venturing on fanfiction writing for two years. Her story genres focused on mystery, fantasy and dystopian.

Giana was a 17-year old female student and wattpad writer. She was a Grade 12 student in one of the universities in the city. She had been writing for more than a year, and had been venturing in fan fiction for quite some time already. She wrote under futuristic genres, having *vocaloids* as her inspiration.

The narratives of fanfiction writers revealed three themes and eight theme clusters or categories. The themes are: outpouring and relief, transformation and connection, and development and motivation. The categories are: outburst, sense of release, safety, understanding social issue, connecting with people of common interest making friends, seeing themselves better, improving writing skills and abilities, and inspiring other writers.

Theme 1. Outpouring and relief. This theme reveals the intensity of the participants' emotions and ideas about fanfiction writing. As narrated by the participants, these emotions and ideas are not ends in themselves but rather they become means of relief. According to Cherry (2021), emotional release has a connection to a certain need in relieving the conflicts that happen in the unconscious. This is true to the experiences of fanfiction writing. It made sense to the writer because it does only allow them to write but also to acknowledge their emotion and feelings. The following categories support the theme: outburst, sense of release, and safety.

Category 1. Outburst. Fanfiction writing is a means for the writers to express outburst of strong feelings and emotions. Say for example, Nicole said: *...fan fiction writing ... is anything that you want to let out anything in mind (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No. 48, Statement No. 2)*. It means that as writers, they possess ideas and opinions which can be easily expressed through fanfiction writing. In similar manner, Sarah's experience supported this as she said that: *gigamit nalang nako ang characters to express that ideas and emotion (I just used the characters as means to express my ideas and emotion) (Transcript No. 2, Paragraph No. 6, Statement No. 10)*. Nicole and Isabel saw fan fiction writing as their diary, where they can write what is in their mind. For Nicole: *'it's like a diary... through writing, gawrite napud ko og akoa na diary' (it's like a diary... through writing, it is also like writing in my own diary) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.92, Statements Nos.1 and 3)*. Isabel also mentioned: *...mura na siyag emotions diary na mura na siyag diary nako nga 'mao ni akong adlaw.'* (*It is like an emotion diary that talks about how I am doing for the day*) (*Transcript No.2, Paragraph No.30, Statement No.4*). Writing plays a significant role in addressing emotional problems. In a study conducted by Pennebaker & Beall (1986), they have found out those students with experience of trauma and were assigned to write about their experience went to the health center as much as those who are in the control group (Pennebaker, 2017). It means that writing enabled them to realize the importance of availing health-related help from the health center.

Category 2. Sense of Release. Fanfiction writing gives the writers an avenue to release their emotions, ideas, or even opinions. It releases them from stress mostly especially when they are in a learning environment or in a place where everyone is free to edit or say something to the work of another (Gabriel, 2018); Beck2019; & Sauro, 2019). For John, he described release in terms of developing the character's emotions and his. The character and the writing must have a common feeling during the process of writing. As John described: *"Di man pud pwede na pag masuko ang character and you're feeling sad, if the character is happy and you in real life is sad, maglisod baya jud ka... (It couldn't be that your character is angry and you feel sad, if the character is happy and you felt sad during that moment in real life, you will find it difficult...)* (*Transcript No.3, Paragraph No. 44, Statement No.4*). John added that: *"I believe that writing is one way where you express your feelings especially through fanfiction, express how you feel, mura bitaw imo siyang i-pass on na story then imo siyang i-relay na message towards your readers (I believe that writing is one way where you express your feelings*

especially through fan fiction, express how you feel that it is as if you pass and relay the messages towards your readers through the story) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No. 56, Statement No. 2). In similar manner, Bianca said that: *...it's a way for fans to express their love for, doesn't have to be literal, it could be such as bands or anything...* (Transcript 1, Paragraph 48, Statement 1). She added that fanfiction writing is: *...a way for fans expressing themselves through writing* (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No.48, Statement No.2). Feehily (2017) pointed out that emotions are part of fanfiction writing as there are writers who are emotionally involved in their stories and characters. Fanfiction writing had shown that feelings and expressions are important to fanfiction writers as shown in their affection. They had made fanfiction a haven for them to be what and who they truly are, without prejudices or judgements from others. Fanfiction writing writing enable writers to speak what they want to say, express what they want to express, and share what they want to share.

Category 3. Safety. Fanfiction writing is a safe place for writers where they felt comfort, calmness, and happiness. It is therapeutic in the sense that it made them relax. Fanfiction writing is considered as a safe haven, a safe place for them when they wanted to escape from reality. Bianca described fanfiction as a place of escape: "Fan fiction writing is like an escape from reality and then dive into something that would calm me down, or something that could comfort me through this other world or universe when I can actually make characters that I think are interesting." (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No.133, Statement No.1). Bianca added that fanfiction writing is a safe place for her because it made her concentrate. She described fanfiction writing as: "...isa na sa important aspect sa akong life na murag maconsider nako siya as safe place." (I considered fanfiction as a safe place and is an important aspect in my life) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.360, Statement No.1). The experiences of the participants are supported by literature such as Akinyemi (2021) who shared about the way she looks at writing as somebody who really writes. For her, writing gives her the feeling of being safe.

Theme 2. Transformation and connection. The second emergent theme describes how fanfiction writing enables that writers to be transformed and connected. Transformation as they described it is a social and personal process. According to Jackson-Buckley (2017), writing enables the writers to reach themselves in the inside and take out whatever is there like words, images, emotions, thoughts, and stories. This theme has three categories such as: understanding social issue, connecting people and making friends, and seeing themselves better.

Category 4. Understanding Social Issue. The writers' engagement in fan fiction writing showed their social concern as a way to make the world a better place. It touched about serious issues of life and society. Holmes (2018) stated that writers are able to examine themselves through fanfiction as its venue. This would include their life experiences and relationships that were either good or bad. Nicole pointed out how she understood her family through the persona of her female lead. She narrated: *...it happened on sa*

family background sa girl... I've mentioned before na diba my mother and father are separated... (*It happened on the family background of the girl...I've mentioned before that my mother and father are separated*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.68, Statement No.1). She continued: ...mas nasabtan na nako siya, mas na-accept na nako and mas open ko (*I understand it now, I was able to accept it and I am more open now*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.68, Statement No.2). Similarly, Sarah also shared the same experience in her fanfiction on mental health. She described it saying: "I want to write something about big, bigger than romance, something about getting rid of tyrant and freeing the people. (Transcript No.2 , Paragraph No.4 , Statement No.9)

Category 5. Connecting With People and Making Friends. Fanfiction opened a venue for the writers to find their fandom, to meet people with similar interest, and to gain friends. Nicole said: Pero now makagain kog friends through fan fiction writing, kay ang garead sa imong story kay friend sad nimo. That's one of the best parts (*I was able to gain friends through fan fiction writing, because the ones reading the stories can be one's friends. That's one of the best parts.*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.98, Statements Nos.2 and 3). For Sarah, she said: "... its also a good way to –the fanfic man jud, you'll find the fandom, you'll find people who loves the same characters as you do –they'll help you man jud to write the fanfiction that you are writing." (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.260, Statement No.2). Through shared interest and ideas within the fandom, friendship can be gain inside the fan community (Holmes, 2018; de la Fuente and Lacasa, 2020).It shows that the presence of technology, gaining friends was made easy regardless on where you are located. By knowing and sharing same interest and the likes, fanfiction writers and readers are able to interact, discuss, and relate on the different fanfiction works. This shows that through their passion in writing and works (Girardi, 2019), writers are able to encourage others to love and appreciate literature especially in its other forms.

Category 6. Seeing Themselves Better. Fanfiction writing connects the writer and the story. They write not just according to their mood or they thought of something. They were able to write stories because they can relate with them. Fanfiction became the representation of their beliefs and principle. For Sarah, she said: "...it was not just a story. It was a representation of my beliefs as a person ba, principles nako sa life" (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.211, Statements Nos.5 and 6). She also shared: "The way they interact, walay gapangaway. No one is condemning one another, or judging one another. So it was –those people who participate in that fandom, in Les Mis fandom –ga-embody bitaw japun sila sa theme sa 'Les Mis na to be selfless, to love your fellow human being, show kindness, to fight what is right. (*There were no argument when they interact. No one is condemning one another or judging one another. Those people who participate in fandom, in Les Miserables fandom – they embody the themes of Le Mis on being selfless, to love your fellow human being, show kindness and to fight what is right*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.260, Statements No.7 to 9). Meanwhile for Nicole, she mentioned that: "Every piece of the character has a part of me." (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No.242, Statement No.1). As for Bianca, she said: "Para lang sa akong

perspective, it turned out to be my creative outlet on expressing my ideas or thoughts (*On my own perspective, it turned out to be my creative outlet on expressing my ideas or thought*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.370, Statement No.1). It made them see themselves in their story, not because they dominate their own work, but that was what they see from the original work. Fanfiction writing maybe a recreational activity that writers invest themselves into, yet it is also a venue in fostering their analytical skills (Holmes, 2018). They used this medium as a tool to not only express their thoughts and opinions, but also showing their own perspectives and principles.

Theme 3. Development and motivation. The third emergent theme reveals how fan fiction becomes a tool creativity and growth as a writer. Fanfiction writing gives the opportunity for the writers to practice their creativity in writing and literary criticism while reading and analyzing the original material (Peterson – Reed, 2019; Markezini, 2021). This speaks on how writers become confident in writing their works, gain inspirations from original works and other writers, and broaden their ideas and perceptions towards the beauty of writing. There are two categories under this theme: improving writing skills and abilities and inspiring other writers.

Category 7. Improving writing skills and abilities. As the writers write every day and every time, not only they were able to make connections and love writing, their ways and styles of writing were improved as well. They were able to explore their emotions and perceptions and were able to improve them. With their openness on the comments and feedbacks of the readers about their stories, they were able to be more creative, saw it as an opportunity to practice writing fan fiction, and made them conscious and careful of the writing styles. Fanfiction writing improves their vocabulary ability as readers can (Cahyati & Abdulrahman, 2020). As the craft of writing and creativity improves, their grammar and vocabulary skills were enhanced and developed. As described his experience, he narrated: “...before kay carefree ra kaayo ko magsulat. I just write and write. Karun kay I’m more conscious on my style of writing due sa mga critics, labaw na sa grammar bitaw... I’m careful with my words.” (*I was very carefree when I write before. I just write and write. Unlike now, I’m more conscious on my style of writing due to the critics, I am very careful with my words especially when it comes to using the correct grammar structure*) (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No.37, Statements No.1 to 4). He also added that: “My point of view, my style of writing jud nagchange.” (*My point of view and style of writing changed*) (Transcript No.1, Paragraph No.7, Statement No.1). This was also the same for Sarah: “They’re really good to writing and word building.” (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.260, Statement No.19). Isabel narrated: At least you have the community or tig-critic. Di na ka maghago. It helps you na ‘ah okay, nagsulat ko diri na fanfic, okay ra diay akong story, I need to work on my characterization”. Pwede naka mag-original work, naa nakay experience lugar. So gihimo nimung stepping stone nimu ang fanfic. (*At least you have the community as your critics. Such critic on on knowing that your story is okay, yet you still need to work on your characterization. Fanfiction became your stepping stone towards writing an original story.*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.260, Statement No.10 to 14). “...pwede

puod siya learning experience nako kay pwede maimprove akong grammar, vocabularies nako, and how to write proper books kay kung magsulat kag fan fiction, you're like writing an actual book baya jud." (*This (fanfiction) became a learning experience for me as I improve my grammar skills and vocabulary, and on how to write proper book since writing fanfiction is the same as writing an actual book.*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.277, Statement No.3). And just like the other writers, it was not just about the vocabulary and grammar comprehension that were developed but their confidence as well. As Bianca had mentioned: "Ang role jud sa fan fiction writing sa ako kay ga help siya og build sa akong confidence in writing, and expressing myself." (*The role of fanfiction writing for me is to help me build my confidence in writing and expressing myself.*) (Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.334, Statement No.5).

Category 8. Inspiring other writers. As how these fanfiction writer got inspired from the other fanfiction writers, they also aspire to share their works and inspire others as they see the beauty and impact of fanfiction. Fanfiction writing promotes self – learning, and open dialogue environment for writers and readers (Holmes 2018). It gives venue for both writers and readers to be able to learn and share wisdom and viewpoints of their own. as how Sarah would point out: "Fanfiction is not something that people should not look down on. Dili siya pitchi-pitchi, kay nay ubang ingana bad sila kay they're not open to the idea that something like this is happening. They will be surprise (judgmental people) that there are many fanfiction writers na maayo jud." (*Fanfiction is not something that people should look down on as some people don't take them seriously. These (judgmental) people would be surprise to know that tere are many fanfiction writers who are really good.*)(Transcript No.3, Paragraph No.260, Statements Nos.17 and 18)

Exhaustive Description. Fanfiction writing is an outpouring of emotions and ideas which can bring relief to the writers while transforming their views internally and externally and connecting their interest to other people, thus, developing their craft and motivating them to create their own version of the canon.

The Fundamental Structure Of Fanfiction Writing. The essence of fanfiction writing is personal expression. Fanfiction writing cannot become a fanfiction writing without personal expression. Fanfiction writing is rooted in the writer's desire to approach an original work or *canon* using their own version and twist of the story based from the writer's own daily experiences in life as they try to connect with themselves, to understand the society where they live, and to mingle with friends and even enemies and persons with similar interest in the *canon*.

IMPLICATIONS TO THE LANGUAGE WRITING SKILLS

The findings of the study provide significant implications to the teaching and developing of language writing skills among learners. The third theme on development and motivation implies that fanfiction writing can be used as a tool or a teaching strategy

in language writing classes as materials are naturally flowing from the everyday experiences of the learners. The free writing community can also help the writers to improve their writing skills without the fear and anxiety of being criticized and stigmatized as they remained anonymous in their online community. These activities improve the writer's skills, vocabulary, and conversation culture in the online community (Cahyati & Abdulrahman, 2020). Surya (2021) argued that fanfiction writing becomes an opportunity to learn the second language skills through an environment that nurtures and puts the writers in a relaxed environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Fanfiction transcends the boundaries of space and time as it transports the writers own world to the world of fanfiction where the writers enjoy the bliss of freedom to express themselves without reservation. It becomes a safe place for writers to be themselves, and to challenge themselves with the limitless boundaries and possibilities that their imaginative and creative mindset takes them. It develops the participants' perspective of writing from a personal endeavor to a more collaborative and collegial support system. It hones their skills in writing, creativity, analysis and research through their writing experience. Furthermore, it promotes a wide, healthy, and productive implications to the participants' emotional life and skills where they can freely express themselves and relate with other people. Thus, fanfiction writing is not just a simple writing experience but a very deep and personal expression of every writer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered to the: 1) Fanfiction writers, for they may realize that their craft of writing fanfiction is not just only the expression of their love for writing and the fandom but also a way for them to express and release their emotions in a productive manner rather than in a destructive way. Understanding the experience of fanfiction writing may enable them to become subtle advocates of emotional healing, writing for a cause, and fighting for freedom and justice in the society where they live; 2) English Language and Literature Teachers. They may find the experiences of fanfiction writing as a springboard or an additional resource in language teaching and learning. Though not so many students are interested into writing, experiences of fanfiction writers may enable the teachers to reflect on the manner as to how the same experiences can be employed to encourage students to begin the craft of writing in a free a more collegial environment; and lastly, and 3) Future researchers. They may consider conducting similar study in different locations with different criteria in choosing the participants.

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