

## KINŌ NANI TABETA? DEFYING THE COMPLEXITY OF LOVE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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### ABSTRACT

*The research aims to understand the concept of love represented in the Japanese movie Kinō Nani Tabeta? The movie, released in 2021, tells the story of a middle-aged homosexual couple in Tokyo, Shiro and Kenji, who are the main characters of the movie. This movie was chosen as an object of analysis because, unlike love relationships, which are typically recognized as romantic relationships between individuals of opposite sexes, the love relationships of the main characters are between individuals of the same sex. The method used in this research is phenomenology, which looks at the movie as a subject; as a world that is experienced by the viewer. In the world of Kinō Nani Tabeta?, love is a philosophical insight that is contemplated when the viewer is in the world of the movie. Love in Kinō Nani Tabeta? can be interpreted through the approaches of Irigaray and Bell Hooks, who understand love in terms of the existence of difference and the awareness of mutuality. The love expressed in this film is a relationship that transcends gender and fosters a familial bond, one based not only on biological ties but also on a commitment that prioritizes equality. Kinō Nani Tabeta? shows that the love of homosexual couples is also a love that is the basis of a familial relationship that is not limited to biological ties.*

**Keywords:** boys' love, commitment, difference, love

### INTRODUCTION

Love is an abstract concept that is often discussed in everyday life. Teenagers often discuss dating, and as they mature, they also start talking about marriage. It is not unusual for people to talk about love within their families or among friends. Nowadays, with the rise of the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media, many people have started to question the boundaries that exist when it comes to love. With all this talk, love often becomes something abstract, difficult to understand, and complex. These complexities are often explored in various media, including the movie.

A movie, also known as cinema, is undeniably a work of art. This art form of movie has the specificity of being a moving image that presents a narrative and the actions of the actors as ambassadors of the narrative. The actions of the actors and the narrative of the film provide us, the viewers, with an experience

through the appearance of phenomena that can be found in our lives in this world. The sense of the world's meaningfulness will influence our acceptance of the movie's impact. How a movie impacts the viewer depends on our sense of meaningfulness of the world we live in. Moving images allow the viewer to experience and connect with the perception conveyed, even if not physically. (Weichert, 2021)

The most common theme in movies, and a phenomenon that is always present in our lives, is love. In the book *All About Love*, Bell Hooks (2018) also states that the dictionary definition of love is often identified with romantic relationships based on sexual attraction. The literary work *Romeo and Juliet*, both in the form of drama and a movie, is a universally accepted stereotype of love-themed works. Movies about love are generally identified by the presence of a romantic relationship between two male and female characters. Therefore, love relationships are often interpreted as romantic relationships between two

individuals of different sexes. Since the invention of filmmaking techniques to the present day, the theme of love has remained timeless. Movies, in the form of television dramas, have often explored the theme of love and have consistently maintained a loyal fan base.

The movie analyzed in this paper is *Kinō Nani Tabeta?*, released in 2021. *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* was originally a manga work released in 2007. In 2019, the manga was adapted into a television drama series titled the same. In 2021, *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* was released as a live-action movie. This movie is a sequel to the first season of the television series and the 2020 New Year Special mini-series, which tells the story of a middle-aged homosexual couple in Tokyo. The couple Kakei Shiro and Yabuki Kenji are the main characters of the story. Although the analysis will focus on the events in the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?*, the causal relationship between the movie's plot and the plot in the first season of the series is worth exploring.

Shiro is a lawyer working at a law firm. He does not want to admit that he is a homosexual because he feels that his working world is not safe enough to show his true self. He also does not look like a typical homosexual, unlike his partner, Kenji. Kenji, a hairdresser, has a charming way of speaking and behaving, and is not afraid to show that he has a male lover. Although Shiro appears to be more masculine in their relationship, he enjoys cooking and doing housework. Shiro and Kenji are said to have started their relationship without confessing their feelings to each other. After getting to know each other and going on a few dates, Shiro suddenly asks Kenji to move in with him. What is interesting about their relationship is that Shiro and Kenji have managed to maintain it for many years, despite both of them stating that neither is the type of partner they are looking for, given their differences in mindset and lifestyle. Shiro then befriends Kohinata Daisaku, a homosexual who has a much younger partner, Inoue Wataru. If Shiro seems grim and stingy with money, Daisaku always spoils Wataru in various ways, even if he sometimes looks oppressed. Other characters, who are not homosexual, also show how love relationships can be built that are not merely a matter of romantic relationships. This makes this movie unique.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the concept of love represented by the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?*. This movie is chosen as the object of analysis because, unlike the love relationship that is recognized as a romantic relationship between individuals of opposite sexes, the love relationship in the main character occurs between individuals of the same sex. Kakei Shiro and Yabuki Kenji are recognized as gay. While romantic relationships are often recognized as those between people of opposite sexes, love relationships that transcend this limitation are also worth examining. Pilão (2021) states that promiscuity is more common among gays. This suggests that the analysis of the concept of love in *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* should focus on finding the realization of love that also occurs between individuals of the same sex, and

understanding how the concept of love is constructed in this movie.

The movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* belongs to the category of BL (boys love) drama. BL drama originated in Japan in the 1970s and has become a popular genre of literature that includes manga, novels, anime, dramas, and movies. This BL drama has a lower social reputation compared to heteronormative drama works (Shimauchi, 2024). Therefore, this work needs to be analyzed: does the representation of love through homosexual characters in this movie deserve to be undervalued? Previous studies suggest that dramas that highlight romantic relationships with gay characters are likely to catalyze a reduction in discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ+ people (Amaki, 2022). Previous research has shown that the Japanese BL drama "Ossan's Love" (released in 2018 and quite phenomenal) succeeds in removing the boundaries between different sexual orientations through storytelling that both homosexual and heterosexual audiences can enjoy (Morikawa, 2022).

Love can be said to be a universal thing that has always existed in human civilization. Love is expressed as an emotion that can affect our physical body (Kuula et al., 2020). Love, however, does not stop at the abstract expression of feelings. Love is also expressed in action (Squire et al., 2022). Therefore, love is a measurable phenomenon that can be understood through the physical and verbal actions of its practitioners. Based on the view that love is action, the love expressed in *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* can be understood through the actions and relationships between the characters, which include both major and minor characters. Furthermore, as Clemente (2020) states that age does not affect the type of love, the interpretation of the concept of love in *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* does not differentiate according to the age of the characters who are the object of analysis.

When love is understood as action, it embodies the way we live and know each other. The concept of love thus refers to the quote "I love to you" by the French philosopher, Luce Irigaray (2016), which emphasizes the "difference" between couples (Candiotta & De Jaegher, 2021). According to Irigaray's thought, the concept of love involves paying attention to the differences between couples. Couples who experience a romantic relationship are two individuals who, at the very least, come from different family backgrounds, and this difference is a necessity, not something that must be eliminated during a love relationship. Irigaray emphasizes that human beings are born as autonomous beings. Therefore, any suppression of body and mind is unacceptable, even based on the argument that the body and the mind are dualisms (Thorgeirsdottir, 2022a). Love relationships need to be built on differences. Awareness of differences will foster open communication between couples, leading to a greater curiosity about getting to know each other better (Thorgeirsdottir, 2022b).

"I love you" implies that "you" permeates "I," whereas "I love to you" emphasizes the difference with

a clear distance between “you” and “I.” Thus, love is an “in-between,” a connection between two different personas, both of which are autonomous beings (Candiotto & De Jaegher, 2021). Love is a sharing activity, a sharing of differences. This sharing is not intended to equate two different things. If differences are to be eliminated, this opens up the possibility of oppression and domination of one partner. The statement “I love to you” is not a distancing of “you”, because when “love functions as a verb, it involves an attempt to reach out to “you”, which in Irigaray's thinking is a “desire” (Candiotto & De Jaegher, 2021). Desire is a one-way action to bring “you” closer to me. However, to maintain a relationship in the form of love, desire will be reciprocal and equal. Desire cannot be one-sided to build a lasting relationship. A desire for one's partner requires continual self-improvement due to the need to continue building compatibility within differences.

Love is not a feeling (Medine, 2022), love must be expressed concretely through actions. Hooks (2018) points out that actions based on trust are the cornerstone of intimate relationships. Mutual trust is established between couples when honesty becomes the mainstay of communication. Lying, whether to oneself or one's partner, is destructive to the love relationship and cannot be justified for any reason. An individual should present him/herself as he/she is, and the partner should affirm the expression of honesty as the main value for the continuity of the love relationship.

Furthermore, Hooks (2018) emphasizes the importance of commitment and mutuality in love relationships. In an intimate relationship, the occurrence of discomfort or pain due to conflict is inevitable. Commitment is important because of the tendency of individuals to break up rather than stay together. The ability to face discomfort based on commitment is the realization of love. Then, the awareness of mutuality allows individuals to act concretely in sharing both material and non-material possessions, including the openness to forgive their partners. With an awareness of mutuality, individuals are less likely to focus solely on themselves and can avoid conflicts arising from mutual blame.

## METHODS

The method used to analyze the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* is the phenomenological method. Holt (2020) states that phenomenological analysis aims to gain new insights through experiences gained from movies. This statement suggests that movies are not just objects, but can also be subjects that provide experiences for their viewers. Movies are discourses that contain various phenomena that exist in our world. The concept of phenomenology, as developed by the philosopher Martin Heidegger, relates how films (with the same meaning as movies) can function as a source of experience (Loht, 2017). The phenomenon of the world and nature, according to Heidegger's thought,

centers on the existence of *dasein* (Keane, 2020). *Dasein* and the world are inseparable entities. *Dasein* is a concept that refers to human beings, but the view of *dasein* is not as an object or organism in nature but focuses on its ontological structure, namely “its way of being” (Sandrussi, 2024). The terminology Heidegger uses to indicate this ontological structure of *dasein* is “being-in-the-world”.

In terms of film phenomenology, the film is seen as a “world” for *dasein* to be in. The existence of *dasein* is “being-in-the-film-world” (Loht, 2024), in other words, film is a world that gives *dasein* a new experience of what is seen in the film world. Then, what is referred to as *dasein* in film phenomenology is “the who that experiences meaning in film viewing” (Loht, 2024), or in other words, the viewer is what is referred to as *dasein* in the ‘film world’. In the understanding of film phenomenology, the viewer is the one who gains experience and receives messages about the events that occur in the world of film. Thus, the world of film is not an alien situation for the audience, but things that are embedded in the daily life of the audience. At the same time, the world of film can offer new understandings and meanings that differ from those experienced by the audience (Sinnerbrink, 2024).

Furthermore, according to Loht (2024), film phenomenology is to see film as philosophy. Film as a philosophy means that the experience gained from watching a film can evoke contemplation, leading to critical thinking about life. Being-in-the-film-world enables the audience to have an experience that produces insight, specifically insight gained through contemplation as guided by the film (movies), rather than the result of the audience's imagination.

One of the key concepts in Heidegger's phenomenology that highlights the human connection to the world is mood. Likewise, in the cinematic world, the mood will always be present in *dasein* (the audience), which is the subject of contemplation. Then, the concept of “love” discussed in this paper is part of the mood that immerses the audience in the world of movies (Quaranta, 2024).

In phenomenological studies, a film is seen as a “world,” and this world is reflected through the scenes in the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?*. Since the film is a romantic drama that mainly focuses on the romantic relationship between the two main characters, Shiro and Kenji, the “world” under review is their love relationship as reflected through the scenes. In addition to Shiro and Kenji's romantic relationship, the “world-of-love” is also reflected through the relationships between Daisaku and Wataru and between Tabuchi and Miiko. The existence of these characters represents “being-in-the-film-world”, and the existence of the six characters is a reference to the experience as *dasein*.

As stated above, love is not just a feeling; love equals action. Actions that represent love are actions that show ‘sharing activities’ and ‘sharing differences’. For this reason, the scenes selected for analysis show the three couples performing these actions: 1) Shiro and Kenji, 2) Daisaku and Wataru, and 3) Tabuchi

and Miiko. Furthermore, the actions that reflect love in these scenes are analyzed in light of Irigaray's and Hooks' concepts of love, which are grounded in an awareness of differences and commitment. Thus, understanding love in the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* becomes an experience that gives insight to the audience as part of the mood that binds *dasein* to the world, that is, "world-of-love".

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section provides an analysis of the movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* by elaborating on scenes that represent the concept of love. The scenes analyzed are those that express the actions of three couples: Shiro-Kenji, Daisaku-Wataru, and Tabuchi-Miiko. Shiro and Kenji have many differences in their way of thinking and behavior. The differences that exist between them start from their family conditions. Shiro is an only child whose relationship with his parents is a bit rigid. However, this does not mean that his family is not harmonious. Shiro's visits to his parents' house are often triggered by a specific reason, as in the scene at 0:58:00-1:00:29, when Shiro wants to convey his decision to no longer visit his parents' house during the new year. The decision was made because Shiro's mother asked him not to invite Kenji to come back with him. Shiro's parents had previously asked Kenji to come on *New Year's Day* as part of Shiro's family.

Meanwhile, unlike Shiro, Kenji rarely visits his mother in Saitama. One day, he returns home to pick up his dead father's ashes and hold a small funeral ceremony. The interaction between Kenji and his mother, as well as his older sisters, is evident in scenes 1:07:50-1:11:49. Although they rarely see each other, they chat casually and share jokes. Kenji even shows off to his handsome lawyer boyfriend in front of his sisters. The different atmosphere in their families has an impact on their daily lives. The family plays a crucial role in a person's life and environment, and the emotional bonds within the family have a significant impact on a person's developmental behavior and personality (Sood & Gupta, 2024). The different views and atmospheres in each family are never an issue in Shiro and Kenji's relationship. Shiro never forces Kenji to visit his family more often, and Kenji never dictates how Shiro should interact with his parents. Thus, they both acknowledge the differences without trying to negate them.

Not only do their family backgrounds differ, but Shiro and Kenji also have different ways of thinking. In the first series, Shiro is portrayed as being very frugal, even stingy, when it comes to spending. Meanwhile, Kenji is portrayed as a person who acts more in accordance with his desires and moods. Although this often leads to arguments between the two, as the story progresses, they come to understand each other and view their partner's character as something that can be accepted, rather than something that needs to be changed. Thus, this difference creates a mutual

understanding that leads to a reciprocal relationship between the two.

The desire that a person has to bring their partner closer to themselves is carried out by both Shiro and Kenji in different forms of action. At the beginning of the movie, Shiro, who is known to be stingy, suddenly invites Kenji to Kyoto for a vacation. At 0:00:35 - 0:01:34, there is a dialogue:

Shiro: Naa, Kenji, kotoshi no omae no tanjōbi purezento, raigetsu de ii ka? (Hey, Kenji, is it okay if I give you your birthday present next month this year?)

Kenji: *E? Ii kedo. Nan de?* (Huh? It's fine, but why?)

Shiro: *Ryōkō ikanai?* (How about a vacation?)

Kenji: *E?* (Huh?)

Shiro: *Kyōto. Futari de yasumi totte sa.* (Kyoto. Let's have a holiday together.)

Kenji: *Uso. Iku! Shikamo, Kyōto? Hee? Nan de? Ne, nan de, nan de? Shiro san, zutto, ryōkō wa iya datte itte ta janai?* (You're lying. Of course I'll go! Also, Kyoto? Why? Why, why? You always say that you don't want to go on a vacation, right?)

Through the conversation above, Kenji clearly states that Shiro is not the type of person who likes to take vacations; however, here Shiro is inviting Kenji on a vacation as a birthday present. Shiro's initiative to do this can be seen as a desire that is then expressed as a form of action out of his love. The scene at 0:14:30 - 0:15:50 reveals that Shiro used the vacation as an attempt to apologize to Kenji, as Shiro could no longer invite Kenji to Shiro's parents' house for the new year. The reason is Shiro's mother, who said she does not want to see Kenji anymore because she got sick the last time Kenji visited her house. In the middle of the movie, at 0:47:29 - 0:51:50, Shiro expresses that he does not want to leave Kenji alone at home during the New Year, and then asks Kenji directly if his mother's statement hurts him that she no longer wants to see him. Considering that Shiro's personality tends to be cold and rarely expresses his feelings openly, this action is his attempt to prioritize honesty in communication. This conversation also shows how homosexuals are still often discriminated against, namely through Kenji's words as follows: "*Okoritakatta. Demo, ore wa okorenai. Datte, ore wa Shirō san no oyome san demo okūsan demo nai sa. Yappa, seken kara wa futsū janai tte omowareru wake da shi.*" (I wanted to get angry, but I could not. I am not your fiancée nor your wife. Also, society thinks we are not normal.). On the other hand, another reason why Kenji does not get angry is that he does not want to lose Shiro as his lover. He says, "*Ore ga okoranai no wa Shirō san to kowarechau no wa kowai kara. Ore ga nan demo 'ii yo, ii yo' to iu no wa jitsu wa jibun no tame de, Shirō san no omoi yari toka janai mon.*" (I don't get angry because I am afraid it will ruin

things with you. When I say ‘it’s okay’ to everything, it’s actually for myself and not for protecting your feelings). This scene illustrates how homosexuals, who are often stigmatized by society, are actually in a relationship and have the same feelings as heterosexual couples. Kenji’s words also emphasize Kenji’s choice to allow differences between himself and Shiro and to maintain an equal relationship. Likewise, Shiro allows Kenji to continue to act according to his choice, even though Shiro knows Kenji’s true feelings. This conversation also occurs to prioritize honesty in their communication patterns.

Regarding Shiro’s habit of visiting his parents on *New Year’s Day*, Shiro eventually decides to break the habit, but promises to visit them on other days. At the end of the movie, Shiro visits his parents because he wants to be taught how to make his mother’s meatballs, which he has always loved. While they are cooking together in the scene at 1:52:43-1:53:00, his mother says, “*Kyō wa kite kurete arigatō. Demo ne, Shirō-san, korekara wa anata wa anata no kazoku o ichiban daiji ni shite ne.*” (Thank you for coming today. But, Shiro, from now on, put your own family first.) The “family” his mother refers to is Kenji. These words seem to be an attempt by Shiro’s mother to “make up” for her mistake of rejecting Kenji. Shiro’s mother’s words reassure Shiro that his parents can accept that Kenji has become part of his family. This indicates that the couple, Shiro and Kenji, can be considered a valid family. This shows that Shiro’s mother does not try to deny the differences between her and Shiro, including the issue of Shiro’s sexuality.

Kohinata Daisaku and Inoue Wataru are also a homosexual couple who are the major characters in the movie. Daisaku was introduced to Shiro by Kayoko’s husband, Shiro’s neighbor and shopping companion. Daisaku later befriends Shiro and often contacts Shiro to tell him the story of his relationship with Wataru. Daisaku is described as a middle-aged man who is athletic and handsome. He works as a director of an entertainment company with an upper-class economic life. Wataru is Daisaku’s lover. The relationship between Daisaku and Wataru is characterized by the dominance of differences. The age difference is one of them. Another difference is the figure of Daisaku, who appears as an executive businessman, while Wataru appears as a laid-back young man with a mustache and a thin beard that is not neatly arranged.

In this movie, there are two scenes that show the relationship between Daisaku and Wataru, which is based on striking differences as well as the foundation of commitment without trying to negate these differences. The first scene takes place at 0:32:54 when Daisaku and Wataru come to Shiro’s apartment to leave the contents of his refrigerator because the one at home is broken. Daisaku enters Shiro’s apartment looking worried, carrying a large cooler and two large bags, while Wataru walks behind him, eating potato chips and complaining that he doesn’t want to come. Later, Shiro calls Kayoko to help them cook. While Shiro, Daisaku, and Kayoko are cooking

in the kitchen, Wataru lies on the sofa, eating chips and watching on a tablet device. Wataru’s informal speaking style is also in stark contrast to Daisaku’s polite one, as seen when Kayoko excitedly states that she will have grandchildren, Wataru immediately replies sarcastically, “*Mago tte sonna ni taisetsu?*” (Is it so important to have grandchildren?), to which Daisaku gently rebukes him, “*Wataru kun, yokunai yo.*” (Wataru, that’s not good). In the scene at 0:43:23, when Kenji has returned to Shiro’s apartment and the four of them are eating dinner made from Kayoko’s recipe, Daisaku reprimands Wataru for his cynical comment on Shiro’s story to Kenji about Kayoko having grandchildren. However, after Kenji states that one can be happy if someone else is happy, Wataru confirms this opinion, “*Sōrya sō da kedo.*” (That’s right, though.) Wataru’s seemingly contrasting character with Daisaku may make the audience think that Daisaku should be intolerant of Wataru’s behavior. However, Wataru’s admission, which confirms Kenji’s opinion above, shows that he can accept thoughts different from his own, which confirms his attitude of being able to accept differences.

The scene at 1:20:05 also emphasizes that Daisaku and Wataru’s love relationship is based on a commitment that maintains differences. The scene begins with Daisaku frantically approaching Shiro, who has just left the office, and preventing him from going home. From the sequel of the television drama, it is known that Daisaku often reveals his problems with Wataru to Shiro. Daisaku, who managed to get Shiro to talk in a cafe, tells him that Wataru left home for three days. Shiro, who views Wataru as a spoiled young man who only craves attention, advises Daisaku not to concern himself with Wataru’s behavior. However, Daisaku argues by saying, “*Bokura wa hon no chotto shita kikkake de aisuru hito o eien ni ushinau kamo shiremasen.*” (We could lose our loved ones forever at the slightest provocation.) at 1:31:37. Daisaku’s words show a commitment to maintaining the continuity of the love relationship with Wataru by not allowing the possibility of third-party interference. The emotion Daisaku expresses is not a negative emotion that shows resentment, as Shiro suggests, letting Wataru go. The scene at 1:32:24 marks the end of Daisaku’s fear, as he finds Wataru at a cafe near their house. Wataru grumbles that he once said there was a cute new cafe near their house, hoping that Daisaku would immediately understand that Wataru wanted to go to the cafe. Wataru, who then continues to hope that Daisaku will find him soon, shows his commitment to the relationship with Daisaku. The miscommunication between Daisaku and Wataru that led to their disagreement highlights the differences between them. However, the seemingly insurmountable resolution of their problems reveals that their love relationship is based on commitment. As mentioned above, Wataru’s ability to accept different views shows his positive qualities.

Besides the two homosexual couples, Tabuchi and Miiko are minor characters in this movie. Tabuchi

Table 1 Comparisons between Couples in the Film

|                            | Shiro-Kenji                  | Daisaku-Wataru           | Tabuchi-Miiko               |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Type of relationships      | Homosexual                   | Homosexual               | Heterosexual                |
| Main conflicts             | Differences between them     | Differences between them | Lack of commitment          |
| How conflicts are resolved | Awareness of the differences | Committing to each other | Breaking up                 |
| Representation of Love     | Love is “in-between”         | Love is a commitment     | Love is a desire to control |

is Kenji’s co-worker at the salon, who lives with his girlfriend, Miiko. They are a heterosexual couple representing a love relationship that is interrupted due to a lack of commitment. The scene at 1:04:41 introduces the character of Tabuchi as a young man who likes to talk bluntly and loudly, so Kenji reminds him to control this habit. Tabuchi’s habit becomes one of the reasons Miiko used to justify her affair. This is explained in the scene at 1:20:43. Miiko comes to see Tabuchi at the salon where he works, then scolds him by describing his bad traits, which she says include being a sleepyhead and a drinker, and that he uses bad words all the time. She compares Tabuchi to Oonishi, another man close to her, saying that Oonishi cares for her and understands her better than Tabuchi, so she chooses Oonishi. Miiko’s behavior demonstrates a lack of commitment based on a demand that her partner conform to her needs or an inability to accept how her partner’s characteristics differ from her expectations. Tabuchi’s response to Miiko’s criticism, “*Shikata nai. Wakareruka.*” (There’s nothing we can do. Should we break up? - 1:22:14), is explained by his later dialogue with Kenji, “*Daraka ni sugee suki ni naru tte aite no jiyū o ubau to onaji da mono.*” (Loving too much is the same as taking away your partner’s freedom. - 1:24:21). Tabuchi’s words show that he realizes that differences between partners are something that must remain so that excessive fondness for one partner leads to a desire for control that eliminates equality. This is why he breaks up with Miiko.

Comparing Miiko to Wataru, although Wataru complains that Daisaku does not understand him as described above, he does not force Daisaku to change his behavior, which could jeopardize the continuity of his relationship with Daisaku. This confirms that commitment must be based on an awareness of allowing differences. The relationship between Tabuchi and Miiko shows that the sustainability of love relationships does not depend on the distinction between heterosexuals and homosexuals, but rather on the awareness of differences and commitment. The following table summarizes the results of this research.

Table 1 presents comparisons between three couples in the film *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* across four aspects listed on the left. These aspects consist of the types of the couple’s relationships, the main conflict between them, the way they solve the conflict, and finally, the expression of love represented in their relationships. As mentioned before, Shiro and Kenji, and Daisaku and Wataru are homosexual couples, while Tabuchi and Miiko are heterosexual. For both

homosexual couples, their main conflicts are about the differences. Shiro and Kenji have different ways of thinking and generally behave differently, but they are aware of their differences and often engage in honest conversations to overcome those differences. They do not try to change each other; instead, they try to find a middle ground and find their “in-between.” For Daisaku and Wataru, their age gap affects how they communicate. Even though misunderstandings sometimes occur because the younger Wataru wants to be understood without directly expressing himself, they remain committed to each other and stay together. Contrasting with the homosexual couple, the main conflict in Tabuchi and Miiko’s relationship is their lack of commitment, which leads them to end their relationship. From their dialogues, love comes as a desire to control each other.

## CONCLUSIONS

The movie *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* belongs to the romance drama genre. However, the shots of romantic scenes can be said to be minimalistic in number. This suggests that the love relationship depicted in this “movie world” is a love that extends beyond romantic relationships. This analysis shows that the couples in this movie, both homosexual and heterosexual, show a relationship model based on commitment and love that does not negate differences. This is the experience gained from this movie, which suggests that love is built on relationships between individuals, and these relationships transcend traditional gender roles. *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* affirms that being homosexual or heterosexual does not affect the continuity of love relationships between individuals. Love is a relationship that transcends gender and establishes a family relationship, a relationship based not only on biological ties but also on a commitment that prioritizes equality.

Thus, *Kinō Nani Tabeta?* shows that the love of homosexual couples is also the love that forms the basis of family relationships that are not limited by biological ties. The continuity of family relationships based on love is a relationship that maintains differences and commitments, which are also realized through the actions of each individual. Therefore, like the couples in this movie, all the complexities in love relationships can be unraveled and better understood by maintaining differences, committing to each other, and taking action as an expression of each individual’s

love. Future research can explore the next storyline of this live-action movie in the second season of the television drama series and further elaborate on the elements that maintain the continuity of the love relationships between the main characters, as well as a more comprehensive comparison of the love relationships between heterosexual and homosexual character couples.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data that support the findings of the research are openly available in [figshare] at 10.6084/m9.figshare.29377418

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