

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Online and Offline Experiences of Hong Kong Cosplayers: Personal Growth and Identity Development

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## **ABSTRACT**

Cosplay has become increasingly popular in Hong Kong. The emerging cosplay subculture has become ubiquitous. However, the underlying understanding of cosplay is scarce. The cosplay culture has been getting increasingly well-known and popular during the past twenty years when information technology has broadened communication and enhanced globalisation in which adolescents usually spend considerable time to develop their identities and relationships on the Internet. The Internet provides them with opportunities to search, explore, act, define, and develop aspects and constructs of their identity. The context of the Internet, for example, social networking sites, is especially a new and rich context for adolescent cosplayers to explore their identities and engage in relationships. The major findings of this study have shed light on the unique subculture of Hong Kong's cosplay community and provide suggestions for the personal growth and identity development of adolescent cosplayers. This study took a phenomenological approach in studying Hong Kong adolescent cosplayers, by studying their online and offline lived experiences, their personal growth, and identity development which have been interpreted. A phenomenological approach helped the researcher to understand adolescent cosplayers lived experience and analyse how online engagement and offline

interactions might have impacted on their personal growth and identity development. It has also given and produced comprehensive pictures of Hong Kong adolescent cosplayers lived experience, how they explore their identity, seek relationships, and develop personal skills and character, by knowing information from participants' perspectives. Eleven participants were purposefully chosen. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form. A pilot interview was conducted. Data were analysed while adopting Thomas' (2006) inductive approach in the phenomenological data analysis method. Research findings might help policy makers, health professionals, educators, social workers, researchers, and students gain a broader perspective on this issue.

Besides, the study can contribute to existing research studies on the cosplay community, adolescent development, and identity development. It provides suggestions to the public that adolescent cosplayers tend to devote themselves in a challenging and novel way of life in which they experience and explore in a completely different but meaningful community, facing fantastic enjoyment and recognition, as well as tremendous difficulties, hardship, and criticism.