

ANALYSIS OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF MALE STUDENTS IN THE PSYCHOLOGY STUDY PROGRAM AT NUSA CENDANA UNIVERSITY ON THE CONCEPT OF TOXIC MASCULINITY

Maria Paskalita Wea¹, Revalina Cleopatra Lema², Theresa Atmarita Wendiaty Bota³,
Indra Yohaes Killing⁴
{weamaria94@gmail.com¹, revalema30@gmail.com², botaecha@gmail.com³}

Faculty of Public Health, Psychologist Study Program, Nusa Cendana University, Jl. Adisucipto,
Penfui, Kupang, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4}

Abstract. In the midst of society, the phenomenon of toxic masculinity has spread and continues to be a concern today. This study aims to help us see how the perspectives of male students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University regarding the concept of Toxic Masculinity. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The data collection technique used semi-structured interviews. The participants in this study were 5 male students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University who were selected purposively. The results showed that there is a positive understanding of the various motives or forms of toxic masculinity behavior as a series of social norms that require men to always be strong, have life principles, have social responsibility, not show emotional expression, self-care using skincare, hang out with female friends, and have hobbies that are often associated with women. In addition, the participants also gave advice for men out there to show their feelings without worrying about being judged by the surrounding environment.

Keywords: perspectives, toxic masculinity, male students.

INTRODUCTION

According to Supriyadi & Prayoga (2022), masculinity can be understood as a sexual quality associated with male identity. Kimmel and Aronson (2003; Wisena, 2023) explain that masculinity refers to behaviors, social roles, and meanings that are understood as part of men at a certain time. Meanwhile, Connell (2005; Supriyadi & Prayoga, 2022) states that masculinity involves the physical, character, and cultural experiences that exist in men and women, called gender relations. Connell (Drianus, 2019) argues that the concept of masculinity arises because there is no comparison with the feminine, which are two conflicting concepts. Thus, there are two ways to understand masculinity: first, a positive view that sees the meaning of men psychologically in the context of a feminine or masculine scale, and second, the view of experts who define masculinity by traits such as aggressive nature, risk-taking, responsibility, and great energy strength.

Research on Toxic Masculinity has become a major concern in gender studies and the field of Psychology in recent decades. Although there have been various studies conducted, there are still many aspects that need to be studied, especially regarding how the concept of Toxic Masculinity and its implications in the perspective of male students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University. This research aims to help us see how the perspective of male students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University towards the concept of Toxic Masculinity, which can help in providing a deeper understanding, raising awareness, and making a positive contribution in overcoming mental health problems that are impacted by Toxic Masculinity.

After reading previous research on the same topic, the author decided to raise this topic of toxic masculinity in men, but on different material objects. Previous research entitled Toxic masculinity in a patriarchal system (Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis in the Film "Possessive") written by Desvira Jufanny and Lasmary RM Girsang in 2020. In this study, the researchers used the possessive

movie as the main material object, which illustrates the patriarchal system in society. The movie presents men as the sole authority behind the patriarchal system. Therefore, men have unlimited power over women and can take various actions to protect their identity, even through coercion, to the detriment of women (Jufanny & Girsang, 2020). This situation shows that toxic masculinity has spread and continues in society, especially among men. In addition, toxic masculinity encourages people to only value the most dominant gender, namely men. In addition to this research, the author also reads other research on the same topic but in different places and generally focuses more on depicting the phenomenon of toxic masculinity. The previous research was entitled Toxic masculinity and the challenges of men in modern Indonesian society written by Irfan Hermawan and Nur Hidayah in 2023. In this study, it discusses the phenomenon of toxic masculinity in Indonesia, especially among men in Yogyakarta, through a phenomenological approach based on interviews. Several forms of toxic masculinity were found, such as the taboo for men to use skincare, the prohibition to cry, the pressure to always be strong, and the assumption that men cannot experience sexual harassment. The article also highlights that the patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes in Yogyakarta reinforce traditional constructions of masculinity, which impact men's mental health (Hermawan and Hidayah, 2023).

In this study, the authors will explore the perspectives of male students in the Psychology Study Program of Nusa Cendana University. This research uses qualitative methods, with in-depth interview techniques to collect data from a purposively selected sample of male students. The data obtained will then be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to understand the patterns and implications of the toxic masculinity they experience. The author's hope regarding this research is to raise awareness and increase awareness and understanding of toxic masculinity, encourage men to change perceptions and attitudes, and reduce the negative impact of toxic masculinity on mental health.

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the problem under study, this research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the perspectives of male students in the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University regarding the concept of toxic masculinity. This study used semi-structured interviews conducted in Kupang city, East Nusa Tenggara. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling to select five participants who met certain criteria relevant to the research objectives (Supratiknya, 2015). Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns or themes that emerged from participants' views and experiences related to toxic masculinity. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives and the relationship between their experiences with the concept (Heriyanto, 2018). To ensure data validity, triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with field observations and participants' reflections, so that the data collected accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

East Nusa Tenggara is one of the provinces in Indonesia that still upholds customs as an important part of the lives of its people. The specialty of this province lies not only in its stunning natural beauty, but also in its social and cultural wealth, including the values of life that have been passed down from generation to generation. Kupang City, as the provincial capital, is the center of cultural activity and the development of modern society in NTT. Based on population projections for 2023, Kupang has a population of 468,632 people, consisting of 234,963 men and 231,669 women. The sex ratio is 101, indicating that there are slightly more men than women, with a population density of 2,558.52 people per km² (BPS 2024).

In addition, according to BPS data, Kupang's gender development index (HDI) in 2023 reached 75.22 points, the highest in NTT, reflecting the smallest gap in human development between men

and women compared to other regions in NTT province. The female HDI in Kupang City was recorded at 82.76 points, while the male HDI reached 85.12 points, with a difference of 2.3 points, which still indicates a gap in gender inequality.

Based on this data, Kupang City was chosen as a research location because of the persistence of patriarchal cultural concepts in society, which is one of the causes of gender inequality, including the phenomenon of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is a psychological concept that arises in certain traditional cultures, where the roles and characteristics of men that have been constructed in society have a negative impact, both on the men themselves and society in general. This phenomenon is characterized by adherence to traditional gender roles that limit men's emotional expression, especially those considered feminine, as well as the demand to always dominate in social life (Yudhistira, 2017).

Based on the results of interviews with 5 male students in the Psychology Study Program, Nusa Cendana University, namely (using initials) CDB, JOM, MJS, VVK, ARAU, 6 themes were obtained as follows:

1.1 Characteristics of a Real Man

The concept of a “real man” can be seen from various perspectives. In this context, real men are those who are able to show empathy, have the ability to manage emotions well, and show social and personal responsibility (Kiselica, 2020). The characteristics of a real man according to the interviewees include several key aspects, such as life principles, responsibility, courage, commitment and a strong stand. VVK emphasized the importance of assertiveness and clear life principles:

“ He has life principles, a composed demeanor, and a firm self-presentation, not weak or sluggish. ”

MJS, meanwhile, cites responsibility for one's behavior and adherence to principles as signs of a man's authenticity:

“You must be responsible and steadfast, meaning you need to hold firm to your principles. ”

In addition, courage is also considered important by CDB, who said that a real man must have authority and dare to make decisions:

“first he has authority... and a man must have great commitment. ”

Finally, JOM highlighted the importance of a strong stand and clear life goals in order to be a real man who is useful to others:

“the most important personality is to have a strong stance... he must have a purpose in life. ”

It appears that according to the interviewees, real men are measured by how they carry themselves, live their principles, and are responsible both personally and socially.

1.2 Views on Expression

The toxic concept of masculinity is often interpreted as a prohibition on showing emotion, which is perceived as weakness. This definition leads to some adverse effects received by men when they have to survive in their masculinity standards, one of which is having to cover up the weaknesses and feelings experienced by them.

In sharing their views on this, the interviewees explained that it is normal and natural for a man to be open about his feelings. MJS adds:

"...Not everyone knows what each person's burden or portion is, so if a man cries it's normal and not something to be ridiculed or bullied, but it should be something to strengthen and support each other."

In addition, ARAU also highlighted how important being open about one's emotions is to mental health:

"...humans need to be open so that they don't get stressed and can express what they feel."

Lastly, CDB emphasized that there are no restrictions on emotional openness for men:

"...there is no rule where men are restricted to express because men are free to express what they feel. So, men cannot be restricted from expressing themselves."

The interviewees gave the view that men are also human beings, so for them it is natural and normal for a man to be open about his weaknesses and feelings. This also seeks to ensure that they have good mental health.

1.3 Views on Social Responsibility

Responsibility is an attitude related to promises or demands for rights, duties, obligations in accordance with the rules, values, norms, customs adopted by community members (Mudjiono, 2012). In community life, social responsibility is often influenced by existing gender norms that trigger restrictions and pressures on social roles.

In this case, the interviewees gave their views on their social responsibilities as men. MJS emphasized that men have a responsibility related to strength and resilience:

"...in the meeting they voiced that, oh yes only men are equipped, because they are strong, so be kek yasuda want kermana le..."

Meanwhile, JOM emphasized men's social responsibility in reference to dominance and leadership:

"...but this is the encouragement from kating sisters and mom, if to lead a group it is more suitable for men, sis, not women, because men have a leadership spirit."

Finally, ARAU emphasized the assignment of each gender according to their portion:

"...men may do more physical work, while women can do more delicate work. So, I don't think so because it all goes back to the natural abilities of men and women."

The interviewees suggested that men's social responsibilities are often associated with physical strength, dominance, leadership, and the division of tasks according to gender stereotypes that are considered in accordance with their respective natures.

1.4 A Look at Self-Care

Skincare refers to a series of steps or routines taken to treat and improve skin condition (Hermawan, 2023). In recent years, the use of skincare among men has been growing rapidly. This is influenced by the number of skincare products designed specifically for men's skin as well as marketing campaigns that target pre-men as the main consumers. This trend has contributed to the rise of toxic masculinity behavior among teenagers. In today's era, skincare is often considered taboo for men, with the view that it is not in line with their image of masculinity.

The views on the use of skincare products by men showed a difference of opinion among the interviewees. VVK stated that he personally has little interest in using skincare and considers it not very important:

"I don't know what it's for, I mean it's not important for me."

On the other hand, MJS, CDB, AFU, and JOM had a more positive view towards the use of skincare. MJS considers that the use of skincare is normal as long as it does not exceed the limits such as the use of cosmetic products that are more synonymous with women:

"As long as it's still normal, as long as it's not like a woman... it's normal."

Similarly, CDB revealed that the use of skincare by men is not only natural but also supports appearance:

"men, maybe some men want their face to look attractive in front of women".

ARAU added that skincare for men can boost self-confidence, although he himself only uses sunscreen:

"So I can look more confident outside."

Meanwhile, JOM sees men's use of skincare as in line with the times and the importance of appearance:

"Nowadays I think appearance is very important... there's no rule that only women use skincare."

This illustrates that men's use of skincare is influenced by their perspectives on the importance of appearance, the times, and the need to boost self-confidence, even though there are views that consider it less relevant.

1.5 Views on socializing with female friends and interests often associated with women

Society often views men's socializing and interests based on their social expectations as detracting from their "masculine" side. Regarding this, the interviewees shared their views. In terms of socializing, JOM explained that hanging out with female friends is normal as long as it is within reasonable limits:

"In my opinion, if at the time of his friendship he still hangs out with women, still within reason, it's fine, there's no problem. But what I highlight is that if for example he has started a friendship that follows the styles of women, more than the normal limit, in my opinion it is something wrong. And he personally should change himself back to his portrait, which is a man. If he wants to hang out with women, he can, but within reasonable limits."

In addition, CDB also emphasizes the positives of hanging out with female friends:

".... Men also need, for example, female friends who are more understanding..."

Meanwhile, in sharing her views on interests associated with women, AFU explained that it goes back to each person in organizing their own principles:

"In my opinion, it goes back to each person, as long as it does not interfere with him in seeing his sexual orientation, meaning that he is still normal, still like normal like men like women and vice versa."

Finally, MJS explained that it is normal and not socially harmful:

"It's fine, I mean, it's like cooking, it's also a hobby, right?... I mean, as long as it benefits the person, it doesn't harm other people, it doesn't create a negative perspective, it's fine, because as you can

see now there are also many male chefs, there are also many male designers, I mean, everything depends on its own portion, the important thing is that you can do it as long as it still benefits the person, it doesn't make other people feel that there is something missing, it's fine."

The views of the informants provide an understanding that in socializing with women and associating the same hobbies or interests with women is normal and normal because it does not harm the social environment, but still emphasizes the importance of boundaries of self-principles as a man.

1.6 Advice for Expressing Feelings Without Worrying About Being Judged

In times like these, men have challenges and barriers that come from an environment of judgment and stereotypes. The interviewees gave their advice that might be applicable to men, such as VVK who advised men to join positive communities:

"...they must first realize the importance of being open with feelings, then they can also join positive communities that discuss issues around toxic masculinity, gender equality, etc. like PKBI for example..."

In contrast to the previous one, MJS gave advice to pay attention to the environment that can influence men's attitudes:

"...A strict environment or one that embraces toxic masculinity prevents men from keeping their feelings and emotions to themselves because if they let them out, they will be considered weak. If the environment is positive and supportive, surely when men express their emotions and feelings, they will be supported by their friends or environment."

Interviewee CBD gave advice to first build relationships with peers:

"...we have to make our peers know what kind of characteristics we have, sis. For example, we have built good relationships with our friends so that every time we express it they already know that we are like that."

Meanwhile, ARAU suggests looking at how much we trust others:

"...the man when he opens up must see the person he is telling, the person he wants to give the story or open up to is able to maintain his feelings or maybe be able to accept what he tells so that he can put trust."

Finally, JOM gave some advice such as changing old mindsets, finding friends who can be trusted, and getting used to doing the previous two things repeatedly:

"...he used to think that men should not tell, and keep things to themselves, he has to change it to, eum... that expressing feelings is a normal thing, because men are also human..."

"...start looking for friends that you can trust. So if for example he has a friend who he believes is trustworthy, can keep his secret, and he can be open to that friend, it will at least indirectly spur him on, that expressing these feelings is not wrong..."

"...not just because he is in a difficult situation, 1-2 times he does a pattern like that, but he must instill it in himself, when he experiences a big problem, and cannot be resolved alone."

It can be concluded that there are various ways for men to overcome barriers to expressing their feelings, such as joining positive communities, choosing supportive environments, building relationships with peers, putting trust in the right people, changing old mindsets, and getting used to expressing emotions consistently.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that male students of the Psychology Study Program at Nusa Cendana University understand toxic masculinity as a social construct that limits emotional expression and exerts psychological pressure, while recognizing its negative impact on mental health. They consider that the ideal male character is not based on traditional masculinity stereotypes, but on values such as responsibility, empathy, and healthy emotional management. These findings point to the importance of gender-aware education in deconstructing harmful norms of masculinity, thereby creating a more inclusive space for men's emotional development.

References

- Abdi, H. (2022, January 31). *Pengertian Tanggung Jawab Menurut Para Ahli, Aspek, dan Ciri-cirinya pada Seseorang*. Retrieved from liputan6.com: <https://www.liputan6.com/hot/read/4874533/pengertian-tanggung-jawab-menurut-para-ahli-aspek-dan-ciri-cirinya-pada-seseorang?page=2>
- Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Kupang. (2024). *Kota Kupang dalam Angka Kupang Municipality in Figures 2024*. Kupang: BPS Kota Kupang.
- Drianus, O. (2019). Hegemonic Masculinity: Wacana Relasi Gender dalam Tinjauan Psikologi Sosial. *Psychosophia Journal of Psychology, Religion, and Humanity*, 1(1), 36–50.
- Hermawan, I., & Hidayah, N. (2023). “Toxic Masculinity dan Tantangan Kaum Lelaki dalam Masyarakat Indonesia Modern,” *Dimesia: Jurnal Kajian Sosiologi*, Vol 12, No. 2, page 171-182.
- Heriyanto. (2018). “Thematic Analysis sebagai Metode Menganalisa Data untuk Penelitian Kualitatif,” *Anuva Jurnal Kajian Budaya Perpustakaan dan Informasi*, Vol. 2, No. 3, page 317-324
- Jufanny, D., & Girsang, L. R. M. (2020). “Toxic Masculinity Dalam Sistem Patriarki (Analisis Wacana Kritis Van Dijk Dalam Film “Posesif”),” *Jurnal SEMIOTIKA*, Vol. 14, No. 1, page 8-3.
- Kiselica, M. S., & Englar-Carlson, M. (2020). Identifying, affirming, and building upon male strengths: The positive psychology/positive masculinity model of psychotherapy with boys and men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol.21, No. 1, Page 3-17.
- Ramdani, M. F. F., Putri, A. V. I. C., & Wisesa, P. A. D. (2022). “Realitas Toxic Masculinity di Masyarakat”. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Ilmu Sosial (SNIIS)*, Vol 1, page 230-235.
- Supratiknya, Agustinus. (2015). *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif & Kualitatif Dalam Psikologi*. Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University Press.
- Supriyadi, & Prayoga, R. A. (2022). Pengaruh Maskulinitas dan Inovasi Konsumen Terhadap Orientasi Belanja. *Prosiding FRIMA (Festival Riset Ilmiah Manajemen Dan Akuntansi)*, 6681(3), 653–671.
- Yudhistira, F. (2017). *Toxic Masculinity Dalam Globalisasi Kontemporer: Studi Kasus Toxic Masculinity Di Indonesia*.