

Gender Stereotypes and Toxic Masculinity: Phenomenological Study of Pamulang University Students

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ABSTRACT: In Indonesia, which is still considered a conservative country, feminism as a gender-based emancipatory movement has become an understanding that tends to be covered by the glitter of patriarchy. Resistance to feminist thought is quite massive because the majority of people consider it to be a Western epistemology that is not in harmony with Eastern cultural values. One of the main causes of gender inequality is society's lack of understanding of the differences in definitions between sex and gender. The majority still view these two terms as merely linguistic synonyms, even though conceptually they have significant differences. In an intimate academic environment with a tradition of thinking, the phenomenon of toxic masculinity is quite widely recognized by students. Like several students at Pamulang University, South Tangerang who feel they are victims of systemic toxic masculinity. In the initial research observations, the results of interviews showed that the phenomena of gender stereotypes and toxic masculinity experienced by Pamulang University students included several things, namely regarding individual aspects such as role, character, physique and sexual orientation.

KEYWORDS: Masculinity, gender, stereotypes, toxic, patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, which is still considered a conservative country, feminism as a gender-based emancipatory movement has become an understanding that tends to be covered by the glitter of patriarchy. Resistance to feminist thought is quite massive because the majority of people consider it to be a Western epistemology that is not in harmony with Eastern cultural values. In fact, theological postulates are often used as walls that block the circulation of progressive feminist thought. According to Gaviota (2021), rejection reflects that many people study feminism within the framework of patriarchal media and thus get a wrong understanding. Therefore, the establishment of patriarchy has not been shaken due to the lack of antithesis and the absence of dialectical balance.

By definition, patriarchy is a social structure that privileges men as individuals who are superior to women. In line with the opinion of Rokhmansyah (2016:32) who says that patriarchy is a social construction built on the basis of a hierarchy of male dominance over women as. Through various mythologies of human creation, men can rule and subordinate women in various sectors, starting from romantic relationships, household, education, economics, politics and other social arenas (Nirmalawati, 2022:20).

Societies adhering to a patriarchal system usually have an ideal consensus regarding dichotomous gender roles between men and women (Rokhmansyah, 2016:32). Men and women in patriarchal construction are always seen through the lens of binary opposition. In short, men must be masculine and superior individuals, while women must be feminine and inferior individuals. If an individual tries to break this construction, there is a high possibility that they will receive discriminatory treatment, even the emasculation of their human rights. According to Gaviota (Gaviota, 2021:61), men have long been considered masculine creatures who are brave, rational and analytical, while women have been considered feminine creatures who are gentle, emotional and intuitive. This essentialist thinking ultimately has an impact on women's lives in domestic and public spaces because they are always closely guarded by masculine authority.

One of the main causes of gender inequality is society's lack of understanding of the differences in definitions between sex and gender. The majority still view these two terms as merely linguistic synonyms, even though conceptually they have significant differences. According to Fakhri (2013: 8), sex is a natural biological matter, such as men having a penis and women having a vagina. Then, Fakhri (2013: 8) also explained that gender is a social construction that is attached to men and women.

Furthermore, (Beauvoir, 2019:1) emphasizes that a person is never born as a male or female entity. Men and women exist in social society not because of biological, psychological or economic fate, but because of the cultural structures that bind them. This means that men and women can have masculine and feminine identities because from childhood they have been shaped in such a way by sociocultural and sociocognitive behavior.

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Apart from the problem of etymological definitions, gender controversy also arises from terminological definitions, especially among reactionaries who believe that men and women are destined to be unequal. According to (Hasyim, 2010:37), this group believes that biological differences between men and women are the source of psychological, behavioral and role differentiation.

Gender dichotomy is actually not a problem if it is egalitarian and non-discriminatory. However, the fact is that gender differences are hierarchical in nature and have given rise to injustice for centuries, both for men and especially for women (Fakih, 2013: 12). Women are often relegated to being subordinate creatures who are attached to weakness, tenderness and domestic activities. On the other hand, men are also disadvantaged because they have to follow traditional masculinity standards, or what is usually called "toxic masculinity".

According to Wikström (2019:28) toxic masculinity is a constellation of ideal male characteristics in social reality which functions to strengthen dominance, devalue women, and perpetuate the status quo. As a result, men often fall into an identity crisis due to demands to actualize masculinity which sometimes go against their wishes. The emergence of toxic masculinity is an indication that the main figures in the gender equality discourse should not only be women, but also men because both are victims (Hasyim, 2010: 40). But ironically, the majority of men do not realize that they are victims and perpetrators of toxic masculinity that has been institutionalized and passed down from generation to generation.

However, in an academic environment that is intimate with traditions of thought, the phenomenon of toxic masculinity is quite widely recognized by students. Like several students at Pamulang University, South Tangerang who feel they are victims of systemic toxic masculinity. Hasyim (2010:40) said that this can be understood because feminism and gender as idioms that tend to be exclusive are more aware of intellectual circles. Therefore, researchers chose Pamulang University students as the subjects of this research.

In the initial research observations, the results of interviews showed that the phenomena of gender stereotypes and toxic masculinity experienced by Pamulang University students included several things, namely regarding individual aspects such as role, character, physique and sexual orientation. As in the following opinion expressed by BF, a student of the Pamulang University English Literature Study Program:

"As a man, me, myself am often required to be firm, to make decisions, and those are decisions that require us to be a little violent. Luckily for me I have a firm personality. "My friends who are not assertive have been reprimanded like this many times, and told 'you're not a man, you're like a girl!'." (Interview on November 28, 2023).

Furthermore, AL, who is a student of the English Literature Study Program at Pamulang University, also revealed that the standards for a man in the social reality he experiences force him to be a strong, tough person, and not to cry even when under pressure. As stated by Apep below:

"In toxic masculinity, what is expected is that men, for example, are strong, they can't get emotional, they can't... What's it called? It's easy to be a crybaby, I see. So, I think, we are also under pressure to... What is it called? Feeling the pressure of the impact. Yes, humans are obliged to do so, for example, if you can cry, that's the way it is. There's no difference between men and women. From there I thought that the impact of toxic masculinity was more like... What is it called? It could kill someone's character not to act weak, like that." (Interview on November 28, 2023).

Based on the background of the problem that has been described, researchers are interested in analyzing this condition using phenomenological studies, namely science that attempts to describe what individuals feel, accept and know based on their awareness and experience. For the purposes of a sharper and more comprehensive analysis, this research will also be supported by feminist theory and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity.

RELATED STUDY

After the researchers reviewed the relevant literature as a basis, several previous studies were found that examined the phenomenon of toxic masculinity. First, research from Hendrawan (2023) entitled "Toxic Masculinity, Feminine Men and Campus Youth: Phenomenological Study of UNS Students". The results obtained from this research are that the impact of toxic masculinity received by UNS students is feeling anxious, questioning themselves, being afraid of meeting new people who look very masculine, affecting their psychological condition, and attempting suicide.

Second, research from Novalina et al (2021) entitled "Study of Toxic Masculinity Issues in the Digital Era from a Social and Theological Perspective". This research conducted by Novalina et al attempted to photograph the phenomenon of toxic masculinity, and then dissect it using the analytical knife of social science and theological science. This research concluded that toxic masculinity is a culture that must be eliminated in social life, both within the social community and the church. Novalina et al also explained that the wrong paradigm in society regarding masculinity certainly cannot be overcome by eliminating men's responsibilities as they should be, and also replacing them with feminism.

Third, research from Nur (2022) entitled "Social Construction of Positive Masculinity and Mental Health (Phenomenological Study of Toxic Masculinity in Generation Z)". Nur's research was motivated by the widespread culture of toxic masculinity which has disrupted social life, especially in generation Z, so it must be replaced with new standards of masculinity. The results of Nur's

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research show that to construct positive masculinity into a social construct in society, three stages are required, namely externalization, objectivation and internalization which are known to be based on family, friend and social environmental factors.

However, even though it has several similarities with previous research that has been conducted, this research still provides differences as a characteristic of originality. The difference lies in the research subject and also the supporting theory in carrying out data analysis. Because, in previous studies, no one has used Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity as support for analysis.

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits. From a theoretical perspective, this research can be used as a reference for future researchers who wish to conduct similar studies. Then practically, this research is expected to be able to deconstruct the concept of toxic masculinity which has harmed men and women for centuries, so that the next generation can become a society that is tolerant, egalitarian, has no gender bias, mental disorders due to toxic masculinity, and has freedom. absolute expression.

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