THE DEPICTION OF TOXIC MASCULINITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON CHILDREN IN HIROKAZU KOREEDA'S *MONSTER* (2023)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana *toxic masculinity* digambarkan serta dampaknya dalam film *Monster* (2023) karya Hirokazu Koreeda, dengan menggunakan teori maskulinitas dari Michael Kimmel (1997). Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan data diperoleh dari adegan dan dialog dalam film, serta sumber-sumber seperti buku, jurnal, dan situs web relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film ini menggambarkan berbagai bentuk *toxic masculinity*, seperti tuntutan menjadi "laki-laki sejati," menolak semua hal yang dianggap feminine, dan homophobia. Hal ini berdampak pada kondisi psikologis tokoh Minato dan Yori, yang mengalami tekanan mental, perundungan, hingga kekerasan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana *toxic masculinity* mempengaruhi interaksi sosial dan memperkuat norma gender yang kaku, terutama pada anak-anak. Penelitian ini juga diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi mengenai penggambaran *toxic masculinity* dalam film dan menjadi landasan bagi penelitian-penelitian selanjutnya di bidang kajian gender.

Kata Kunci: Toxic masculinity; gender; femininitas; homophobia; monster; Hirokazu Koreeda

Abstract

This study aims to analyze how toxic masculinity is depicted and its impact in the film *Monster* (2023) by Hirokazu Koreeda, using Michael Kimmel's theory of masculinity (1997). The method used is qualitative descriptive, with data obtained from scenes and dialogues in the movie, as well as sources such as books, journals, and relevant websites. The results of this study show that this movie depicts various forms of toxic masculinity, such as the demand to be a "real man," the rejection of anything considered feminine, and homophobia. This has an impact on the psychological condition of the characters Minato and Yori, who experience mental pressure, bullying, and even violence. This study shows how toxic masculinity affects social interactions and reinforces rigid gender norms, especially in children. This study is also expected to contribute to the depiction of toxic masculinity in films and serve as a foundation for further research in the field of gender studies.

Keywords: Toxic masculinity; gender; femininity; homophobia; monster; Hirokazu Oreeda

INTRODUCTION

Traditional gender roles that have become common in society are that girls are feminine, while boys are masculine. These traditional roles reinforce expectations of masculinity and femininity (Akpan, K., 2021). Recently, significant changes in gender roles have opened up opportunities for women that were once exclusively available to men. Women can now display behaviors traditionally viewed as masculine. On the other hand, men are still pressured to adhere to conventional masculine norms. Those who exhibit behaviors that do not align with their assigned gender are often perceived as unusual and may face discrimination or social exclusion (Akpan, K., 2021).

Masculinity refers to the societally constructed expectations placed on men regarding their behavior, values, and attitudes (Merdeka & Kumporo, 2018). These standards are culturally specific and change throughout time. Men frequently feel pressured to conform, in search of social recognition and validation. Characteristics like dominance, physical strength, and assertiveness are frequently linked to being masculine. From childhood, boys are taught to suppress vulnerability and emotions that are considered weak (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018). Constant societal pressure makes men feel like they have to live up to certain expectations, often at odds with who they are. This concept of masculinity led to the issue of toxic masculinity.

According to Sculos (2017), toxic masculinity refers to a traditional form of masculinity that promotes a narrow understanding of gender roles and male traits (Jufanny & Girsang, 2020). Men are expected to restrain their emotions to uphold an image of aggression, dominance, and authority (Martinez, 2021). According to Kimmel (1997), men often express masculinity as a way to earn approval from other men. He explains that society has long shaped certain rules and expectations about what

it means to be a "real man," typically involving emotional restraint, dominance, toughness, and sexual success. These rigid ideals can pressure men to hide vulnerability or avoid seeking help, which contributes to emotional repression and, over time, can lead to serious mental health issues. (O'Neil, 2015).

According to Michael Kimmel, boys are frequently taught to repress their feelings and project tough exteriors to live up to social norms surrounding masculinity. This expectation is reinforced by various socializing agents, including the media, parents, and other influential figures. For instance, men might feel pressured to suppress emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or fear due to concerns about being viewed as weak or lacking masculinity (Kimmel, M., 2008).

In *Guyland*, Michael Kimmel explores a phase in young men's lives when they begin to navigate and internalize the expectations of masculinity imposed by society (Harms, Barrios, & Crawford, 2020). During this period, they start adopting the behaviors, values, and attitudes traditionally associated with being masculine. The traditional notion of manhood, once defined in contrast to boyhood, shifts toward a version of masculinity that prioritizes image and lifestyle over character and actions. Societal expectations around masculinity often pressure men to hide emotions such as sadness or frustration, treating emotional expression as a sign of weakness. This suppression can interfere with healthy emotional processing and limit the ability to build meaningful relationships. Moreover, the cultural focus on toughness tends to value physical strength and dominance, pushing men toward aggressive and competitive behaviors, especially in activities like sports (Kimmel, 2008). Michael Kimmel explains that men are often socialized to assert control, compete with others, and avoid vulnerability. These norms play a key role in shaping toxic masculinity, where aggression, dominance, and the objectification of others become accepted behaviors. Such standards not only sustain gender inequality but also create tension and rivalry among men, making genuine, supportive connections more difficult to maintain (Kimmel, 2008).

Michael Kimmel argues that masculinity is often constructed in opposition to femininity. He explains that men are taught to define their identity by rejecting anything considered feminine. Men and society are taught that being a man requires constant proof. This identity is threatened by anything associated with characteristics considered "feminine" or acting outside traditional gender roles (Kimmel, M., 1997).

Essentially, the societal concept of masculinity is based on homophobia. According to Mere (2017), homophobia is the term for hatred of individuals who are

attracted to same-sex partners (Mere, S., 2017). To sum it up, homophobia is used to describe fear and rejection of different forms of homosexuality. Homophobia is more than just a fear of gay men or being categorized as one; it reflects a deeper anxiety among men about being perceived as less masculine. It stems from a fear that other men might point out their weaknesses or inadequacies, ultimately questioning their status as "real men." (Kimmel, 1997).

Toxic masculinity causes deep psychological harm to men and boys by enforcing rigid, fear-based standards of behavior. Social expectations force men to hide their true selves to avoid appearing weak or unmanly, leading to insecurity and emotional suppression. Masculinity becomes a defense mechanism expressed through one's own emotions. This constant need to prove manhood results in psychological distress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Kimmel, M., 2008).

Another effect of toxic masculinity is violence. Toxic masculinity reinforces a cultural ideal that equates manhood with dominance, control, emotional repression, and violence. Kimmel (2013) explains that men are socialized to associate masculinity with strength and aggression, often leading them to suppress emotions and express frustration through violence. These societal norms not only validate aggressive behavior but also perpetuate the harmful belief that "real men" must be tough, dominant, and violent. Toxic masculinity causes bullying among boys. Bullying often becomes a tool for boys to assert masculinity, as social norms encourage aggression and dominance. Traditional masculinity emphasizes strength and emotional toughness, making bullying seem like a natural expression of control (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003).

Normative masculinity is a key factor in the development of internalized homophobia and is closely linked to broader issues such as mental health disorders (Sanford et al., 2015). A study conducted on gay men in South Africa revealed an indirect connection between depression and uncertainty around gender identity, with internalized homophobia playing a significant role in this link (Sanford et al., 2015). The findings showed that individuals who strictly adhere to traditional masculine norms are more likely to experience higher levels of depression than those who express masculinity more flexibly. The study concluded that gay men who conform rigidly to conventional masculine standards are at greater risk of facing depression, psychological distress, internalized homophobia, and related challenges.

Toxic masculinity could also be experienced by children, particularly boys, through socialization processes that emphasize strict gender roles. These roles typically discourage emotional openness while promoting

traits such as dominance, aggression, and emotional restraint. Children's growth and development are influenced by their parents' parenting methods. Patriarchal parenting practices, in particular, can negatively influence children's psychological development as they transition into adolescence (Sugeha & Nurlaily, 2023). Toxic masculinity in children is also influenced by the shows and virtual media they consume, such as games, cartoons, and movies. Biologically, children learn from what they observe in their surroundings. Interestingly, boys tend to imitate the behavior of male characters they see in movies (Rafiq, K., 2021). Consequently, boys are often taught that displaying vulnerability, empathy, or fear signifies weakness. Such socialization can result in emotional suppression, behavioral issues, and long-term mental health issues (Degue et al, 2023).

Real events and facts about toxic masculinity in children can be interpreted in the form of literary works. One of the most literary works that is widely enjoyed by all segments of society is film. According to Effendi (1986), film is an interesting form of literature because it uses audio-visual media as means of communication to convey messages to audiences gathered in a specific location (Sugianto, Mingkid, & Kalesaran, 2017). *Monster* (2023), a film by Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda, provides a critical case study through its nuanced portrayal of masculinity and highlights the issues of toxic masculinity in children. This film has attracted a large audience and was awarded the *Queer Palm* at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival. *Monster* (2023) is a movie that tells the lives of two boys, Minato Mugino and Yori Hoshikawa, and the adults around them. Throughout the movie, the audience is presented with various points of view to see the same scenes from different perspectives.

In order to perform this research, the writer chooses several relevant previous studies to use as references. The first study conducted by Khairullah (2024) entitled *Delineating Toxic Masculinity in The Witch Elm*. This study analyzed toxic masculinity in Tana French's novel using R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory. The findings reveal that toxic masculinity leads to emotional isolation, strained relationships, and declining mental health, reinforcing gender norms.

The second study is conducted by Pramudiya et al (2023) who studied *The Representation of Toxic Masculinity in the "Do Revenge" Movie*. This study aims to identify how Max's character represents toxic masculinity using Kuper's theory. The results showed Max Broussard represents toxic masculinity through misogyny, aggression, female hatred, control, intimidation, and sexual greed.

Nabila (2024) in her study entitled Toxic Masculinity and Violence in the Nobody (2021) Film explains about toxic masculinity and the use of violence using Michael Kimmel's masculinity theory. The research shows that Hutch reflects toxic masculinity through dominance, aggression, and violence to assert his masculinity.

Those previous studies have discussed the issue of toxic masculinity in other literary works. However, no previous studies have discussed the issue of toxic masculinity in Hirokazu Koreeda's film *Monster* (2023). This study will analyze the depiction of toxic masculinity in *Monster* (2023) by focusing on how it shapes and affects the characters' behavior and social relationships. The primary objective of this study is to examine the forms of toxic masculinity to understand their psychological and social impact, particularly in children like Minato and Yori. Employing Michael Kimmel's theory, which frames masculinity as a performance rooted in dominance and emotional suppression, this study explores how adult influences and societal expectations perpetuate harmful masculine norms.

This study offers valuable insight into how toxic masculinity is not only an issue in adult life, but has also been experienced since childhood through the influence of social environments, such as family, school, and the surrounding community. Using Michael Kimmel's theory of masculinity, this study analyzed how toxic masculinity is depicted in the child characters in *Monster* (2023) and how the movie illustrates the effects of toxic masculinity through child characters in *Monster* (2023).

METHOD
This study will use descriptive qualitative methods to examine the concepts of toxic masculinity in Hirokazu Koreeda's Monster (2023) using Michael Kimmel's theory of masculinity. The study's primary data source of information is the movie Monster (2023), with data collected through close observation of its dialogues, monologues, and scenes. Supporting data is gathered from various journals, books, and reputable internet sources related to the same studies.

The data analysis process begins with watching the movie to understand the storyline, issues raised, and emotions of the characters. Then, identifying scenes, dialogues, and behaviors that depict toxic masculinity. These findings were analyzed using Michael Kimmel's theory and structured with the TEEL method to interpret how the movie portrays issues of toxic masculinity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Monster (2023) tells the story of Minato, a fifth-grade elementary school student raised by his single mother, Saori, after his father's death. Saori begins to notice a

series of suspicious behaviors in Minato, including cutting his own hair, coming home with only one shoe, and frequently complaining about earaches. Minato's increasingly uncontrollable behavior, such as exploring abandoned tunnels alone and jumping out of moving cars, only intensifies Saori's concerns. These incidents lead Saori to suspect that Minato may be experiencing bullying at school.

The film also explores the story of Yori Hoshikawa, Minato's classmate—a cheerful boy, slight and delicate in appearance, who often wears clothing typically perceived as feminine. These gender non-conforming traits cause Yori to be ostracized by the other boys at school. He lives with his father, a man characterized by his alcoholism and aggressive behavior. Witnessing the bullying Yori faces, Minato eventually chooses to befriend him and stand up against the discrimination. However, this act of solidarity results in Minato becoming a target of ridicule himself. Fearing further social isolation, Minato asks Yori to keep his distance during school hours. Outside of school, however, their friendship improved. The two often spend time playing and laughing together, creating a safe space away from a world of adults who consistently fail to understand them. As their bond deepens, Minato begins to experience confusing emotions, feeling unsettled by Yori's closeness and eventually concluding that he may "like someone." The film subtly critiques the rigid norms of a masculine and heteronormative society. Throughout the narrative, Minato is repeatedly told by adults, especially teachers, to embody traditional notions of strength and masculinity. Meanwhile, Yori becomes a victim of toxic masculinity—bullied by his peers and subjected to emotional and physical abuse at home by his father.

The analysis of this study focused on two categories, the first is to analyze the depiction of toxic masculinity in the movie *Monster* (2023). The second is to analyze the effects generated by toxic masculinity illustrated through the social interaction of characters in the movie through Michael Kimmel's lens. The movie is analyzed by examining its components through images (visual), dialogues (verbal), and non-verbal such as object placement, body language, and facial expression.

The Depiction of Toxic Masculinity in *Monster* (2023)

According to Kimmel (1997), masculinity is often shaped by the need for male approval, driven by social norms that define a "real man" as tough, emotionally distant, dominant, and in control of women. These expectations not only restrict men but also reinforce harmful gender norms through hegemonic masculinity—the dominant ideal that suppresses other expressions of manhood. In *Monster* (2023), Koreeda critiques this toxic masculinity by portraying how societal pressure to conform to rigid male roles fosters emotional repression and physical toughness, fear of femininity, and homophobia.

Figure 1 Minato fell in physical exercise with Mr. Hori

[00.49.54-00.49.59]

The incident in which physical education teacher Hori humiliated Minato by saying, *"You call yourself a man?"* after Minato failed to lift his friends, illustrates the internalization of hegemonic masculinity. At that moment, Hori associated masculinity with physical strength and athletic ability, implicitly suggesting that men who fail to meet these expectations are considered less masculine. Such comments not only damage Minato's self-esteem but also reinforce the notion that physical weakness signifies failure to meet the ideal of masculinity. Such pressure can cause significant psychological stress, as boys like Minato may feel compelled to conform to rigid gender norms. This dynamic reflects Michael Kimmel's (2013) theory of toxic masculinity, which argues that men are often expected to constantly prove their masculinity, particularly through demonstrations of toughness and strength.

Figure 2 Yori refused to report the bullying to Mr. Hori
[01.33.48-01.33.57]

Minato   : *"Why not tell Mr. Hori? He's kind.*
Yori   : *"He'll just say I'm not acting like a man.*

Yori's statement, *"He'll just say I'm not acting like a man,"* implied that he often heard those words and was considered unmanly because he could not fight back against bullies as a man. He feared that Mr. Hori, would not support, but instead humiliated him just like the adults around him, because he did not meet the standards of strong and dominant masculinity. This reflects Kimmel theory, where men are considered weak if they ask for help (Kimmel, M., 1997). This dangerous standard makes boys feel vulnerable and unwilling to seek help, even when their safety is threatened. Yori believed that reported bullying would make him the subject of ridicule for being considered unmanly, as he would be seen as unable to protect himself and not fitting the image of a "real man."

Figure 3 Yori was mocked for refusing to join in mocking his female friend [01.23.43-01.24.00]

Boy   : *"Say, 'Kuroda's mole is a black bean."*
Yori   : *"I can't say what I don't think"*
Boys   : *"Why do you take the girls' side? You*

a girl?"

Yori was mocked by his male classmates after he refused to join them in making fun of Kuroda, his female friend. His decision not to participate in actions that demean women is seen as a sign of weakness. By showing concern and support for a girl, Yori is seen as different from what is normally expected of men. The statement, *"Why do you take the girls' side? You a girl?"* was a taunt directed at Yori because empathy, gentleness, and partiality toward girls are often categorized as feminine traits. Boys who are friends and defend girls are often called unmasculine and mocked for acting "feminine." This reflects the fear of femininity, where boys learn to avoid traits seen as "feminine," such as kindness or support for girls, to maintain their status as "real men." (Kimmel, 1997).

*Figure 4 Yori names the flower he saw in the forest.
[01.27.10 - 01.27.28]*

Yori   : *"Primrose! Blue star creeper!"*
Minato : *"Why do you know flower names?"*
Yori   : *"Because I like them."*
Minato : *"Mom said girls prefer boys who don't know flower names."*
Yori   : *"That boys who know flower names are creepy?"*

Minato's reaction to Yori shows that he has absorbed his mother's belief of masculinity, which is that men must behave in a certain way to be accepted by women—in a firm, unemotional manner, and by avoiding interests that are considered feminine, such as flowers. Minato's perception of Yori reflects how toxic masculinity has taught men to reject aspects of their humanity that are considered weak or feminine. This reflects the form of toxic masculinity, which is the fear of femininity (Kimmel, 1997)

*Figure 5 Yori's father called his son "pig's brain."
[00.54.51 - 00.55.21]*

Mr. Hori : *"About Yori."*
Kiyotaka: *"I'm sure he's a pain, you don't have to tell me about him. I'll take responsibility for him."*
Mr. Hori : *"He's not a pain, he's a great kid."*
Kiyotaka : *"No good. He's… a monster."*
Mr. Hori   : *"What?"*
Kiyotaka : *"His brain isn't human brain, it's a pig's brain. Which is why I plan to turn him back into human."*

Yori's father treated Yori as less than human by calling him a *"monster"* and saying he had a *"pig's brain,"* showing his strong rejection of Yori's identity. Even though Mr. Hori described Yori as a "great kid", his father's view was shaped by fear and hatred than by truth. His statement about wanting to *"turn him back into a human"* suggests a desire to make Yori fit into society's expectations of masculinity and heterosexuality, rejecting who Yori really is. This reflects what Michael Kimmel (1997) describes as masculinity as homophobia—the fear of being seen as unmanly or feminine, which often leads men to reject anything that does not match traditional male roles. Yori's father saw his son's difference as a threat to these norms, reacting with disgust and control. In this way, his rejection was not just personal, but shaped by a larger cultural pressure to enforce narrow ideas of what it means to be a "real man."

Figure 6 Minato pushed Yori away after he hugged him
[01.41.14 - 01.41.45]

Minato   : *"Wait, wait, get away! Get away!*
Yori   : *"It's okey, it happens to me, sometimes.*

The dialogue and body language in the scene revealed Minato's struggle between his affection for Yori and the fear of what that affection represented. When Yori gently responded, *"It's okey, it happens to me, sometimes,"* he not only expressed empathy but also suggested that he might have been experiencing similar emotions. Despite this reassurance, Minato was not yet ready to accept his feelings; instead, he reacted by pulling away more forcefully and defensively. This moment highlighted Minato's internal conflict and the effects of internalized homophobia. He had been conditioned to believe that same-sex affection was wrong or unnatural. Minato—pressured by rigid masculine norms—felt that expressing his affection for Yori was inappropriate for a "real" man. His fear did not stem from Yori himself, but from the fact that his emotions did not align with socially accepted ideas of masculinity. By distancing himself and pushing Yori away, Minato attempted to deny his feelings as a means of protecting himself from appearing less masculine. According to Kimmel (1997), this reaction reflected a form of homophobia shaped by patriarchal

expectations. The tension between desire and rejection in this scene underscored the societal pressures placed on men regarding gender and sexuality.

Figure 7 Minato's classmate teased him about liking Yori
[01.43.00 - 01.43.20]

Boy   : *"Are you friendly with Hoshikawa?"*
Boy   : *"Do you like Hoshikawa? Gross. You two are lovey dovey"*

The scene began with Yori being targeted by his male classmates, who deliberately smeared paint on his desk. When Yori attempted to clean it with a rag, the boys snatched it from him and tossed it around, eventually letting it fall near Minato. Instead of joining in the mockery, Minato picked up the rag and returned it to Yori. This small act of kindness was quickly met with ridicule, as the other boys accused Minato of "liking" Yori. Their remarks went beyond simple teasing—they revealed a deeper discomfort toward boys who showed empathy, especially toward someone who was perceived as not fitting traditional masculine norms. Minato's refusal to participate in the bullying challenges the group's idea of what it means to be masculine. In their view, being a "real man" means showing toughness, emotional distance, and avoiding association with boys who appear feminine or different. By showing compassion, Minato is seen as stepping outside these unwritten rules. As a result, the boys immediately mock him with a tone of disgust, implying that his actions suggest romantic interest in Yori. This response reflects underlying homophobic attitudes, specifically, a fear or rejection of behaviors associated with being gay.

The boys' reaction to the possibility that Minato might care for someone seen as more feminine highlights a form of homophobia. As Kimmel (2003) explains, maintaining masculine status often requires being perceived as heterosexual and avoiding any behavior that could be labeled as gay.

The Effect of Toxic Masculinity through Characters in *Monster* (2023)

In *Monster* (2023) by Hirokazu Koreeda, the film explores layered themes of identity, misunderstanding, and marginalization through the experiences of two young boys caught in the expectations and judgments of the adult world. Beyond portraying toxic masculinity in various scenes, the film also highlights how it influences the social interactions and emotional well-being of its characters. At its heart, the story questions the social norms that shape male behavior, often leading to harmful consequences. To examine these issues, this study draws on Michael Kimmel's theory of toxic masculinity, which suggests that such ideals can negatively impact mental health and often manifest in violence and bullying.

Monster (2023) illustrates Minato's internal struggle and emotional breakdown when confronted with societal and familial expectations around heteronormativity and masculinity.

Figure 8 Minato jumped out of the car while his mother was talking about marriage and having a family [00.11.23 - 00.12.07]

Minato   : *"Sorry."*
Saori   : *"Your ear hurt?"*
Minato   : *"I… can't be like dad."*
Saori   : *"Your father much worse. But I've promised your father, that I'll hang in there until you're married and have your own family. Just ordinary family you see anywhere is fine. Until you gave own family, the greatest treasure—*

Minato's mother's statement linking his future to heterosexual marriage subtly reinforces traditional gender roles, leaving little space for the complexity of Minato's own identity or emotions. His previous line, *"I… can't be like dad,"* points to a deeper internal conflict shaped by social expectations and personal identity. It reflects his struggle or refusal to conform to the heterosexual, masculine image embodied by his father. Minato's sudden leap from the moving car was not a random act, but a powerful response to the emotional pain he was experiencing. This moment clearly illustrates the psychological distress he faced, aligning with

Kimmel's (1997) argument that toxic masculinity is a key source of men's emotional suffering. The film exposes how strict gender expectations and the demand to "be a man" not only suppress self-expression but can also trigger serious mental health struggles in boys who feel they cannot live up to those ideals.

Figure 9 Minato questioning his life [01.47.28 - 01.47.39]

Minato   : *"Why was I born?"*

In the monologue above, Minato experienced deep emotional distress and began to question his own existence after going through trauma and isolation. His line, *"Why was I born?"* revealed the weight of his sadness and loneliness. Minato struggled to process and express his emotions, as he was surrounded by an environment that constantly expected him to appear strong. His school, teachers, and even his mother failed to truly see or understand him. At the same time, unspoken social expectations about masculinity discouraged him from showing vulnerability, leaving him feeling alienated and rejected. These pressures led Minato to feel worthless and uncertain about the value of his life. His silent suffering reflected how toxic masculinity could deeply and quietly harm mental well-being.

This scene reveals how society's expectations of masculinity shape behavior in ways that can deeply damage a child's sense of self-worth. It supports Kimmel's (1997) argument that the emotional restraint imposed by masculine norms can have serious psychological effects on boys, even leading to self-destructive outcomes.

Figure 10 Boys put trash on Yori's table [01.22.30 - 01.22.50]

Daito : "Stinks, stinks. Is he here yet?"
Kuroda : "Stop that, Daito."

The boys poured garbage from the trash onto Yori's desk, making his desk dirty and filled with garbage. These actions constituted bullying directed at Yori by the boys in his class. The bullying experienced by Yori reflects how toxic masculinity can encourage bullying behavior in a male social environment. In this context, the behavior of the boys demonstrated an attempt to maintain masculinity and suppress individuals who were considered different or did not conform to dominant norms of masculinity. Yori, who appeared more gentle and did not exhibit the characteristics of masculine norms, became the target of bullying.

Figure 11 Minato attacks Yori. [01.43.21 - 01.43.40]

According to Michael Kimmel, one of the effects of toxic masculinity is violence, which comes from cultural norms that value male dominance, aggression, and emotional control (Kimmel, M., 2008). This can be seen in a scene involving Minato, who is laughed at by his male friends after he gives Yori a rag to clean his desk. What was meant as a kind gesture is taken as a sign that Minato "likes" Yori, and their teasing suggests that showing care between boys is something strange or embarrassing. Feeling ashamed and worried that his masculinity is being questioned, Minato suddenly attacked Yori and pushed him to the ground. His reaction is not driven by hate toward Yori, but by a strong need to avoid being seen as different, something his friends link to weakness or being less masculine. This moment shows how toxic masculinity can push boys toward violence. The pressure to act "like a real man" can create feelings of anger and confusion. Minato's action is not just about being teased, it is also his way of trying to prove that he fits the idea of what society expects a boy to be.

Figure 12 Minato's heard Yori's father beating him
[01.48.39 - 01.48.43]

Kiyotaka : "Tell him"
Yori : "I'm cured of my sickness now. I worried you, but I'm all fine now."
Minato : "Cured of what?"
Yori : "I'm normal now."
Minato : "You were always normal."
Kiyotaka : "There's a girl you like near grandma's house, right?"
Yori : "She's Shindo Ayaka"
Kiyotaka : "Thank you for playing with him."
Yori : "I'm sorry. I lied."
Minato : "Hoshikawa!"
Yori : "Hurts!"
Kiyotaka : "Why can't you do what I tell you! I'll punish you again."
Yori : "Stop! It hurts."
Kiyotaka : "Shut up!"

Yori's father instructed him to tell Minato that he is *"normal"* now and that he likes girls, implying that his previous identity or behavior was seen as abnormal or unacceptable. Later, Yori privately admitted to Minato that this statement was untrue. When his father discovered the truth, he responded with anger, physically dragging Yori back into the house and beating him. This act of violence clearly illustrates the harmful consequences of toxic masculinity, particularly when individuals are pressured to conform to rigid and limiting ideas of what it means to be a man. Yori's father equates being *"normal"* with being both masculine and heterosexual, rejecting any form of emotional openness or sexual difference as signs of weakness or deviance. His violent response is an attempt to enforce gender norms through domination and control. This moment powerfully reinforces the film's depiction of toxic masculinity, showing how societal expectations around masculinity can escalate into abuse and violence (Kimmel, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall research conducted by the author on toxic masculinity in *Monster* (2023) using Michael Kimmel's theory of toxic masculinity, it can be concluded that *Monster* (2023) by Hirokazu Koreeda depicts toxic masculinity through the behavior and dynamics between characters in it. There are several aspects of toxic masculinity reflected through the main characters, Minato and Yori. They both experienced the pressures of toxic masculinity, including social demand to be a "real man," fear of femininity, and homophobia. The research also concluded that toxic masculinity has several negative effects on boys, as illustrated through the characters of Minato and Yori in the movie *Monster* (2023).

This study critiques toxic masculinity and its damaging consequences on young boys. Through the lens of Michael Kimmel's theory, the movie illustrated how society's expectations of masculinity can lead to emotional oppression, homophobia, bullying, and even domestic violence. Through this study, it can be concluded that toxic masculinity is often experienced by children as a result of the behavior and attitudes of the adults around them. This phenomenon has a significant negative impact on children's psychological aspects and growth or development, so it needs to be addressed in the context of education, family, and society at large.

SUGGESTION

The author suggests to future researchers that are interested in using *Monster* (2023) as an object of study to examine the film more closely to better grasp its narrative context and details before conducting their analysis. While this study focuses on the theme of toxic masculinity, the film also offers rich potential for analysis from other perspectives, such as queer theory or psychology, to deepen the understanding of its characters and social dynamics. Future studies may also explore toxic masculinity through different theoretical lenses to offer more varied and comprehensive insights. It is the author's hope that this research serves as a helpful starting point and encourages further studies on the film. Lastly, the author aims for this study to contribute to greater awareness and understanding of toxic masculinity and its broader impact on society.

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