

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Masculinity is a socially constructed set of attributes, behaviors, and roles typically associated with boys and men. These practices and representations are not inherent or biologically determined but are constructed through social interactions and cultural expectations (Connell, 2005:67-71). Connell emphasizes that there are multiple forms of masculinity, which exist in a hierarchy, with “hegemonic masculinity” at the top, legitimizing the dominant position of men over women and other men.

Hegemonic masculinity is the gender practice configuration that embodies the currently accepted solution to the issue of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which ensures (or is assumed to ensure) the dominant position of males and the subordination of women (Connell, 2005:77). Culturally, one form of masculinity is prioritized over others at any particular moment. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the social construct that places certain masculine characteristics as superior to others, and positions dominant men within a society, such as white, heterosexual, and able-bodied men in the United States, above women and marginalized men, including gay, non-white, and feminine individuals. This concept is described by Connell (1995) and cited in Schermerhorn and Vescio (2023:251). In contemporary U.S. society, the persistence of hegemonic masculinity continues to perpetuate toxic masculinity, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and behaviors. This ongoing cycle

underscores the importance of challenging and redefining traditional masculine norms to promote healthier and more equitable gender relations.

Toxic masculinity, a concept popularized by Terry Kupers, refers to the harmful behaviors and attitudes that arise from the extreme adherence to traditional masculine norms. It includes dominance, homophobia, devaluation of women, and violence (Kupers, 2005: 714). This toxic form of masculinity can lead to various societal issues, including violence, mental health struggles, and discrimination. These behaviors are often employed to assert power and control, leading to the marginalization and harm of those who do not conform to these narrow definitions of manhood. Toxic masculinity perpetuates a cycle of emotional repression and aggression, which can have detrimental effects on mental health and relationships. These harmful behaviors and attitudes are associated with traditional masculinity but are exaggerated and detrimental to both men and society as a whole. Toxic masculinity not only describes the negative effects these demands have on men's mental health and relationships, but it also highlights the violence and prejudice they inflict on women and LGBTQ+ people (Webster, 2019:47). Media representations and societal expectations reinforce these ideals. For example, movies and advertisements often glorify men who exhibit toxic traits as embodiments of the "ideal" man.

Television series, movies, and other forms of media play a significant role in shaping and reflecting societal norms and values. "Euphoria" Season 1 (2019) with 8 episodes an American teen drama television series created by Sam Levinson, has garnered attention for its unflinching portrayal of adolescent experiences,

particularly through its complex characters. Among these characters, Nate Jacobs stands out as a quintessential representation of toxic masculinity. This thesis explores the traits and behaviors of toxic masculinity embodied by Nate Jacobs in the first season of “Euphoria” (2019), utilizing theoretical frameworks to dissect and understand his actions and their implications. Trait is a consistent pattern of behavior, thought, and emotion in many contexts. Traits’ relative stability, expression levels, and behavioral impact are most essential. (Novikova, 2013:1). On the other hand, researchers define behavior as any response to internal or external stimuli (Davis et al., 2014:5). Behavior is how people react to social and ecological situations (Uher, 2016:16).

Nate Jacobs’ character in “Euphoria” is a compelling case study for examining these traits, as his actions consistently reflect the destructive aspects of this form of masculinity. His interactions with other characters, his approach to relationships, and his internal struggles provide a fertile ground for analyzing how toxic masculinity manifests and affects both the individual and those around him. The series digs into Nate’s complicated connection with his father, peers, and love interests, demonstrating how toxic masculinity perpetuates cycles of violence. By examining Nate Jacobs through the lens of hegemonic and toxic masculinity, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how such portrayals in media influence and reflect societal attitudes towards masculinity.

The portrayal of toxic masculinity in “Euphoria” caused crucial discussions about gender norms, mental health, and the need for deeper representations of masculinity in the media. By analyzing people like Nate Jacobs, scholars and

audiences can gain a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between individual behavior and societal expectations. This understanding is critical for creating interventions that promote healthy forms of masculinity and reduce the incidence of harmful behaviors.

In conclusion, masculinity, especially hegemonic and toxic masculinity, exhibits deep-rooted social norms and expectations that affect individuals and communities. Hegemonic masculinity normalizes negative actions and prejudices and reinforces gender inequality. But toxic masculinity is an extreme commitment to these ideals, leading to harmful behaviors for men and society. Media portrayals, like “Euphoria,” promote these values by promoting poisonous qualities. By studying characters like Nate Jacobs, we can learn about masculinity and how it affects behavior and society.

1.2 Research Questions

This research is conducted to answer these questions:

1. How do the intrinsic aspects depicted in “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019)?
2. How does Nate Jacobs in “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019) portray toxic masculinity traits and behaviors?
3. What caused Nate Jacobs’ toxic masculinity traits and behaviors?

1.3 Scope of the Study

The primary focus of this research will be on the character Nate Jacobs and his toxic masculinity traits and behaviors in the TV series “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019) in all episodes, from episode 1 to 8. There are total of eight episodes of Season 1. The research will specifically examine the traits and behaviors exhibited

by Nate Jacobs that align with the criteria and common characteristics associated with toxic masculinity. The characteristics include violence and domination, homophobia, and devaluation of women.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic aspects of “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019).
2. To analyze and describe the character of Nate Jacobs in the series “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019), with a particular focus on his toxic masculinity traits.
3. To identify the causes of Nate Jacobs’ toxic masculinity.

1.5 Previous Studies

Before the writer conducted this research, there were some previous studies related to the TV series “Euphoria.”

The first study is “Intimate Partner Violence and Its Impacts in Euphoria” by Resti Ayu Febriani (2023). This study examines numerous types of intimate partner violence, including emotional/psychological violence and physical violence, employing a theoretical framework proposed by Bogat et al. (2016). The author identified emotional and psychological effects and physical impacts present in the television series “Euphoria.” This paper presents an analysis of 63 instances of intimate relationship violence and their associated impacts within the context of “Euphoria.” The majority of data on intimate relationship violence mainly focuses on emotional and psychological forms of abuse. Additionally, most of the data

highlights the emotional and mental effects resulting from intimate partner violence.

The second study is “HBO’s Euphoria: how do you understand love and identity through media?” by Mya Martinez (2022). The study’s findings indicate that for a certain group of young adults, engaging with television series like “Euphoria” can offer an important way to acquire knowledge about oneself and others, hence facilitating the process of identity formation. The impacts are increasing open-mindedness, relationship lessons, wants, and closeness in relationships.

The third study is “This show hits really close to home on so many levels: An analysis of Reddit comments about HBO’s “Euphoria” to understand viewers’ experiences of and reactions to substance use and mental illness” by Kaufman et al. (2021). The study used Reddit comments to understand the attitudes and experiences of young viewers regarding substance use and mental health as portrayed in the TV show “Euphoria.” The study involved data exploration, data coding, and thematic analysis using a Python wrapper for the official Reddit API. The ultimate goal was to identify compelling themes and messages in the show to inform future social media interventions targeting adolescent and young adult substance use. The result is that individuals who engaged in discussions on the online platform Reddit regarding the HBO television series “Euphoria” could connect to many of the show’s themes and characters. In general, the Reddit community expressed the opinion that the television series portrayed Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) realistically, and they could relate to the main character.

Additionally, they said the figure had several negative traits. While a significant number of Redditors believed that the show portrayed realism, there was an opposing perspective among certain users who argued that it exhibited a glorification of substance use.

The fourth study is “Content Analysis: Relationships and Sexual Behavior in “Euphoria” Series Season One” by Qolbi et al. (2022). The study analyzes the relationships and sexual behavior portrayed in the first season of the TV series “Euphoria.” The study uses quantitative and content analysis methods to analyze the types of relationships and sexual behaviors depicted in the series. The population studied includes the two seasons of “Euphoria,” and the research aims to understand how these portrayals can influence and create high-risk sexual behavior. The study also examines the differences between shown and implied sexual behavior in the series, the frequency of different sexual encounters, and the portrayal of safe sex practices. The result indicates that the “one-night stand” was the most frequent type of sexual interaction across all episodes. Simultaneously, they showed a lack of emphasis on practicing safe sexual behaviors inside relationships. There were just two occurrences that resulted in the use of condoms. There have been numerous demonstrations of sexual behaviors, yet the focus on protection has been minimal. No mention was made of sexually transmitted diseases despite numerous characters engaging in sexual relationships with multiple partners.

The fifth study is “The Euphoria Effect” by Gierzynski et al. (2023). Dr. Anthony Gierzynski and his students conducted the study to understand the

attitudes of individuals aged 18-25 about societal issues and TV shows. The study involved questions about TV shows, attitudes toward societal issues, and basic personal information. The purpose was to assess empathy for characters in the TV show “Euphoria” and to distract subjects from the study’s intent by including questions about drug policy, gun policy, and gender equality. The research findings suggest that those who have eudaimonic motivations and are more easily influenced by the program exhibit more positive attitudes towards drug users and individuals who have an addiction as their exposure to the program increases. Individuals who were transported and those who were motivated by eudaimonia and watched the program showed stronger support for harm reduction programs.

Previous studies have not conducted a specific analysis of the portrayal of toxic masculinity by Nate Jacobs in Season 1 (2019) of the TV show “Euphoria”. This thesis will give a new perspective about toxic masculinity in “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019) by specifically examining the portrayal of toxic masculinity by Nate Jacobs from episode 1 to 8.

1.6 Method of Study

1.6.1 Method of Research

This study was conducted by using the qualitative method. Creswell (2009:4) defines qualitative research as a study aimed at exploring and comprehending the subjective interpretations that individuals or groups assign to a social or human issue. The method emphasizes the relevance of the scope and specificity of the evaluated data. The writer of this research relied on material offered in the HBO-accessible television show “Euphoria” Season 1 (2019) as

primary data. The writer collected data from the television series using the content analysis and audio transcription method to examine the character Nate Jacobs and his characterization linked with toxic masculinity. The content analysis approach is a research technique used to subjectively assess the content of textual material by systematically classifying and finding themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278). Audio transcription is the process of converting recorded audio content into written text for analysis (McMullin, 2021:140). In addition, the library research method is used to discover and gather the relevant data for this thesis. The series “Euphoria” Season 1 is the most essential and primary data for this inquiry. Secondary data include publications such as journals, articles, and electronic publications. To answer the research questions, the writer used narrative and cinematographic elements of film theory to analyze the television series.

1.6.2 Method of Approach

To answer the research questions, the writer used the gender studies approach. Gender studies is a multidisciplinary field that incorporates various academic disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, political science, history, sociology, psychology, biology, science studies, literary and cultural studies, queer studies, and linguistics (McConnell-Ginet, 2012:503). The focus of the content revolves around gender, specifically exploring the sociological, political, and ideological aspects of sexual categorization and sexual relationships. The gender studies approach used are the hegemonic masculinity theory by Raewyn Connell (2005) and the toxic masculinity concept by Terry Kupers (2005). Toxic masculinity comes from hegemonic masculinity, which is the controlling part of it.

However, the hegemonic masculinity of modern patriarchy is harmful to men who perform it to themselves and other men. Toxic masculinity refers to behaviors and ideals that society frequently imposes on men, emphasizing domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and violence (Kupers, 2005:714).

1.7 Writing Outline

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the study's background, research questions, objectives, scope, importance, relevance, preceding studies, and online writing.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the theories used to analyze this research's data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter describes study types, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. In addition, the data, population, and samples are mentioned.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter gives the results of the author's study of the data for cohesive markers. These analyses include general word, analysis of reference, conjunction, synonym, repetition, superordinate, collocation, substitution, ellipsis, and general description.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the writer's conclusion and recommendation.