

Masculinity Representation of BTS Fans through Instagram Social Media

Nur'aini Inayah, Aris Arif Mundayat and Yuyun Sunesti

Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

nurainiinayah@student.uns.ac.id, risrif@gmail.com, yuyun_sunesti@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

The issue of masculinity is still an issue that is often discussed in society. Masculinity is often described as the image of a man with a strong body and a position that is superior to women. Over time, the concept of masculinity began to shift. Masculinity is now starting to be depicted with feminine men. The depiction was introduced through Korean entertainment media (Hallyu). One way is through the boyband BTS. This study aims to explain the representation of masculinity to BTS fans. The theory used in this research is social representation theory according to Stuart Hall. The research methodology used in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Researchers get data from the Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial to find a form of representation of the masculinity of BTS fans. The results found are 1) The new masculinity that exists in society is depicted by men who have feminine traits. 2) Through social media Instagram, members of BTS are able to represent the masculinity of their fans.

Keywords

Representation, Masculinity, BTS, Instagram and Hallyu.

1. Introduction

The issue of gender is still one of the debates in society. Society often distinguishes between men and women based on what they display. As in the patriarchal system, a man is often described as strong, courageous, and must be able to solve problems. Meanwhile, women are often depicted as weak, gentle, and in need of protection from others (Budiastuti and Wulan, 2014). This depiction causes the standard of masculinity and femininity in society. Emerging standards often lead to gender inequalities that can be experienced by both women and men. Standards about masculinity and femininity are usually propagated through culture, including popular culture (Budiastuti and Wulan, 2014). One of the popular culture that is becoming a trend in society is Hallyu (Korean Wave). The Hallyu phenomenon occurs in both European and Asian countries such as Indonesia. Based on data released by Twitter, within 1 year Indonesia was ranked fourth with the largest K-Pop fans on Twitter (Febriastuti 2020). The data is issued based on the number of posts by Twitter users in Indonesia.

The Hallyu phenomenon spreads through music, films, and drama series that are broadcast through digital media. Music in Hallyu is dominated by boybands and girlbands (Lee and Zhang, 2021). The existence of boybands and girlbands is able to have a considerable impact on the emergence of social communities among fans. Boyband and girlband fan communities are often referred to as fandoms (fanbase) which are often found on social media (Fella and Abdus Sair 2020). Some names of Korean boyband and girlband fanbases include Blink which is the designation of the BLACKPINK girlband fanbase, Army which is the BTS boyband fanbase, ELF which is the Super Junior boyband fanbase, and there are still several other fanbase names (Wahyudi, 2020).

One of the South Korean boy bands that is currently popular and is being talked about is BTS (Bangtan Sonyeondan or Bulletproof Boy Scouts). The BTS boyband itself has quite a lot of fans in Indonesia. Based on the observations of researchers on one Twitter account, the BTS fanbase has been followed by 135 thousand Twitter users. In addition, on Instagram social media several BTS fanbase accounts. Fanbase account were also found with 49.8 million followers is @bts.bighitofficial (@bts.bighitofficial: 2021). The @bts.bighitofficial account provides treats related to BTS' albums. The treats are displayed neatly so that they attract the eyes of those who see them. Through these social media, BTS fans were treated to activities from each BTS member. In addition, on the @bts.bighitofficial Instagram account, the appearance of each BTS member looks different from the concept of other K-Pop idols. The body image displayed by each member is able to influence every fan and make it a standard of masculinity. They build an attractive body image that is different from the others. Social media Instagram, so far comes with interesting photo and video content

for its users. Not surprisingly, BTS fans who follow the @bts.bighitofficial account find it easier to capture the body image built by BTS members. This is what makes the writer interested in conducting research on the representation of masculinity of BTS fans through Instagram social media.

2. Literature Review

So far, social media, especially entertainment media, has played a very important role in changing people's views on a value. Changes in people's views of a value will also have an impact on the changes in their behavior. Research conducted by MT & Irwansyah (2020) explained that through social media, especially those based on audiovisual technology, the spread of Korean culture is more easily accepted by the public, especially the younger generation. Through these media many imitations are carried out by the younger generation. In addition, they think that Korean culture is a cultural mecca worth emulating (MT and Irwansyah, 2020). Another study that explains the role of entertainment media in changing the values that exist in society is carried out by Malm (2016). The study explains that the language in modern music shows a stereotype against masculinity and feminism. The image of masculinity is depicted through song lyrics which are stronger than feminism. It is impossible for men to sing hurt songs because of women because the masculine image must be strong and cannot be hurt. Meanwhile, women always sing songs that describe their weakness due to being hurt by men.

This is then used to represent the characteristics inherent in men and women (Malm, 2016). Discourses related to masculinity and feminism are built in the social structure of society through the media. The result is an imbalance in the relationship between men and women (Drianus, 2019). Based on some of the relevant research descriptions above, this study tries to uncover the relationship between the spread of Hallyu and the representation of masculinity among BTS fans through social media Instagram.

3. Methods

The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. Researchers tried to collect data through interviews, observations, and literacy studies to answer research questions. Researchers collect data in the form of pictures, verbal data, and numbers to answer research questions. Research time can be seen in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Research Table

No.	Activity	2021				
		Jul	Agt	Sep	Okt	Nov
1.	Research preparation.					
2.	Research implementation.					
3.	Reporting of research results					

4. Data Collection

Data collection in the study used 4 ways, namely as follows; Questionnaire; Questionnaires are used to determine the informants to be interviewed. The researcher distributed questionnaires to BTS fanbase, then asked them to fill out a Google Form. The data obtained from Google Form is used to search for deeper data. Interview; Researchers conducted interviews with BTS fans who follow the Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial online. Researchers tried to contact BTS fans in the real world who follow the @bts.bighitofficial account and then conducted online interviews. The data found in the form of verbal data. The scope of informants taken by the researcher is the scope of followers of Instagram accounts. So that researchers do not limit the area inhabited by informants. Researchers also interviewed performance experts as a form of data triangulation. Observation; The observation technique was carried out by observing comments written by BTS fans on the @bts.bighitofficial Instagram account posts. Through these observations, researchers obtained data to strengthen the results of the interviews. Literacy Studies ; Literacy studies are carried out by looking for several reference sources according to the research theme. In this case, the researcher conducted a data search through several articles that had been published by journals. To make it clearer, the following is a table of informant criteria in this study (Table 2).

Table 2. Criteria of Informants

No.	Criteria of Informants
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1.	Followers of @bts.bighitofficial account.
2.	Actively comment on @bts.bighitofficial account. At least one comment per post.
3.	Fans willing to be interviewed.
4.	Performance Experts.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Internet User Data

Table 3. Viewers of BTS's Dynamite MV

No.	Country	Number of viewers
1.	Indonesia	48.5 million
2.	United State	37.3 million
3.	India	36.5 million
4.	Philippines	34.1 million
5.	Vietnam	30.9 million
6.	South Korea	28.9 million
7.	Brazil	27.2 million
8.	Mexico	24.6 million
9.	Japan	22.2 million
10.	Thailand	20.0 million
11.	Peru	11.7 million
12.	Malaysia	11.7 million
13.	Turkey	11.2 million
14.	Argentina	8.98 million
15.	Russia	8.10 million

Source: (Juvita, 2020)

From the Table 3. we can look the number of viewers of BTS's Dynamite MV from 15 countries. Indonesia ranks number 1 with the most viewers of BTS's Dynamite MV, which is 48.5 million viewers Juvita (2020). This shows the high interest of the Indonesian population towards BTS.

5.2 Grapical Result

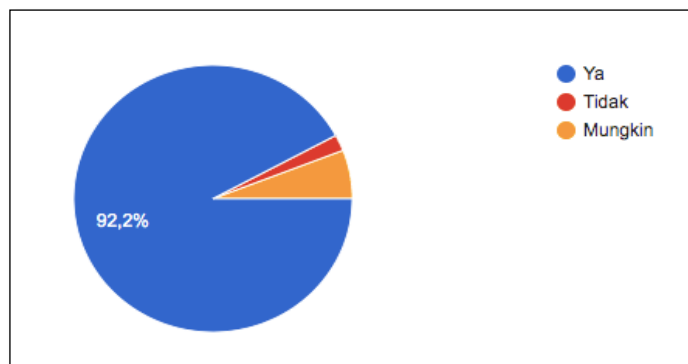


Figure 1. Masculinity chart of BTS

Source: Questionnaire results

The Figure 1. above is the result of a questionnaire filled out by 102 informants. Based on the table, we can see that 92% of the informants stated that BTS is masculine, 2% said BTS was not masculine, and 5.9% gave a doubtful answer. This means, the majority of BTS fans call what each member displays is a masculine appearance.

5.3 Proposed Improvement

Hallyu or Korean Wave is a wave of the spread of Korean culture internationally and has been accepted by people all over the world (Fachrosi et al., 2020). The Korean wave is divided into several fields of entertainment, including K-Drama, K-Pop and Variety Show. These three fields of entertainment have a significant influence on people's lives, especially Korean entertainment fans. The influence that can be seen is in the use of fashion and products from Korea. Trends in the use of fashion among Korean fans, mostly oriented to Korean idols (Setyani et al. 2021).

The spread of Korean culture began in 1992 with the opening of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China. In the following years, many drama and music productions from South Korea began to go global (Utama, 2021). Korean dramas are considered successful in capturing the emotions of the audience by depicting the social expectations of developing countries, modernity and global market forces. There are two Korean dramas that contributed to this phenomenal success, namely 'Winter Sonata' and 'Daejangguem' (Jewel in the Palace). In addition, dramas from South Korea began to receive various awards from the world's entertainment industry (Jung, 2011). Then, in the early 2000s, the boy band H.O.T. Subsequent developments were seen with the emergence of boy bands that were able to achieve success in European and American countries such as the boy bands BigBang, Super Junior, EXO, 2PM, Wanna One, BTS, and the girl group Black Pink (Utama, 2021).

The South Korean boy band that emerged between 2000 – 2005 displayed a masculine side through the use of dark colored costumes. Boybands that emerged in the 2000s included TVXQ and Big Bang with masculine appearances and the Hip-Hop music genre (Nadhiroh, 2018). The next period then appears men with soft masculine traits or men who show a feminine side. The form of masculinity displayed by Korean idols is a form of hybridization between transcultural, national and specific cultures. The result is a new popular culture that is synonymous with South Korea. Before the emergence of K-Pop, the form of masculinity that existed in South Korea was influenced by the entertainment industry from Japan. Considering that South Korea was a colony of Japan during the colonial period (Jung, 2011).

Related to BTS fans, or often nicknamed Army, is a fandom that was founded on July 9, 2013 by the BTS agency. The name Army was given by BTS members which stands for Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth which is likened to soldiers in bulletproof vests. The hope from this meaning is that under any circumstances BTS fans are expected to continue to unite and be together with BTS. At its inception, the Army fandom base only came from South Korea. Even though it only comes from South Korea, the Army fandom base is known as a loyal fandom to BTS. They often carry out actions promoting BTS's work throughout the world. Actions taken include posting BTS works through their personal social accounts and supporting BTS in voting for awards. This proved to be able to expand the fan network and acknowledge the existence of BTS. For Army, the success of BTS is their success too (Jeeheng, 2019).

BTS is one of the famous boy bands with deep meaningful song lyrics for the Army. Through these lyrics, BTS conveys messages to the Army and appears as a full package. The full package means that each member is able to cover the shortcomings of the other members with their respective advantages. In addition, each BTS member is said to have contributed in every work displayed. The contribution is in the form of contributing song lyrics, making musical arrangements, and arranging choreographers in songs. This is a reason for Army to consider BTS members as smart people. Some of the Army even idolize BTS because of the deep meaning of their songs. Army from all over the world are always waiting for the translation of BTS song lyrics in their mother tongue. The translation came from the Army who volunteered to become language translators. They help each other so that every Army can receive the messages that BTS conveys through their songs. The Army also always introduces BTS to the wider community, namely by holding BTS-themed events. As stated by the Jogja Army admin as follows.

The results of the interview research show that BTS members describe the concept of masculinity with men who have white skin, tall and thin bodies (Ulvia Restu Handaningtias, Ika Ariana Indriyany, and Husnan Nurjuman 2018). BTS accentuates a beautiful body image in each of their looks. In addition, the accessories attached to each BTS member depict a new style of masculinity. Every informant admitted that what BTS displayed was an interesting form

of masculinity to see. This standard of masculinity is formed based on what is displayed by BTS members. The dominance of body image in the new concept of masculinity is basically the same as the dominance of the previous masculinity. The body is still the focus of masculinity orientation in society. Besides that, the thing that is slightly different is that each member of BTS also has talents such as singing, dancing, and communicating in English (Efendi, 2021). The talents possessed by these BTS members are one of the attractions for their fans. In addition, the image of masculinity is also depicted with men who have intelligence and broad knowledge insight. The presence of K-Pop provides a new perspective on the definition of masculinity which is often referred to as soft masculinity (Wirawanda, 2019).

Masculinity in men is also described by the use of accessories such as earrings, rings, necklaces, brightly colored items, and other knick-knacks. As in the picture of one of the BTS members named Jimin. Jimin is often seen wearing bright clothes and prominent make-up. In addition, he is a member of BTS who often uses complete accessories (earrings, rings, and other trinkets). Recently, Jimin wore a skirt on BTS' Treasure Comeback (Asih, 2021). Another BTS member, J-Hope also often displays fashion that tends to be feminism compared to masculine men in general. On several BTS variety shows, J-Hope often shows himself taking care of his face and body. This is very different from the masculine image in the previous period.

In 2019, BTS comes with an album entitled Map Of The Soul: Personal. The album contains 7 songs, one of which is Boy With Luv. In this song, BTS displays lyrics, movements, and a soft masculine visual appearance. The song was created to fight the toxic masculinity that exists in society. The lyrics tell about a man who is full of love. Each member wears clothes with bright colors and make-up. The dance they perform is a dance that tends to be feminine. The next BTS albums come with a bright and cheerful concept. These displays can be seen on Instagram @bts.bighitofficial.

Previously, masculinity was depicted with men who wore simpler clothes, without excessive accessories, and used colors that tended to be dark (Kurnia, 2004). This shift in the concept of masculinity is one of the impacts of the spread of K-Pop culture which is supported by advances in communication technology (Ulviana Restu Handaningtias et al. 2018). The presence of K-Pop also provides a new perspective on the definition of masculinity which is often referred to as soft masculinity (Wirawanda, 2019). Social media is very influential in providing treats or spectacle to the public. The ease and flexibility in using social media makes people more free to choose what they want to look for. This sometimes causes some chaos that arises due to the inability of the community to filter information.

The form of chaos that often happens to K-Pop fans is for example teenage fanaticism when their idol gets bad comments. BTS fans are able to make movements together on social media. They often give feedback to people who comment on BTS members with bad comments (Fachrosi et al. 2020). In addition, fanaticism towards BTS fans often causes conflicts on social media, especially Twitter. The conflict occurred due to the easily provoked attitude of teenage fans. The bond that exists between fans is a form of bond that is quite strong, so they put more emphasis on emotion than logic.

Another form of fanaticism that arises from the Army fanbase is the purchase of BTS merchents. Merchents that are often purchased by the Army include Photo Cards, Light Sticks, BT21 Characters, and other items offered by BTS members. Every fan has a different way of expressing their liking for BTS members. Expressions that often appear are accessing any information about BTS and buying a photo card merchant. In addition, each Army has a bias member as its idol. Member bias is one or several members they like the most. Member bias is usually one of the reasons someone idolizes BTS. The pattern shown is almost the same. Before becoming an Army (idolizing BTS) they were only interested in one member. Some of the members' fans are biased and some have even formed a new fanbase. It is not uncommon for fans to disagree with each other.

Another interesting thing about the BTS (Army) fanbase is the social action they often do. BTS fans, who are known for their bigotry towards their idols, often raise funds for disaster victims and other social actions. For example, after the BTS Meal phenomenon that harmed several online motorcycle taxi drivers, the Army raised funds to be given to several online motorcycle taxi drivers. Another social action taken is by distributing basic necessities with the remaining money from the online concert event (Solamy, 2022). The action was carried out on behalf of the Army and BTS. On the other hand, it also shows the fanaticism of BTS fans.

Regarding the concept of masculinity, BTS fans think that what their idols display is masculine. Although many members of society outside the Army consider it masculine. BTS fans think that people who view BTS as feminine

are haters. Army also often has a rigid image of people outside the community. Army can also be referred to as an Exclusive community. They think that people outside the Army will not understand the topic of BTS. Army members also often use imaginative language when talking to fellow soldiers. For example, an Army member who idolizes a BTS member named Jin will think of himself as a wife, sister, brother, or friend in Jin's real world. Likewise with other bias fans.

Several informants stated that the masculine concept displayed by BTS through Instagram also influenced them in choosing a partner. Although, from a visual perspective, they admit that they don't really expect to get a partner who is similar to their biased idol. The Army prioritizes similarities in terms of traits, be it maturity, cuteness, affection, and the gentle nature that they catch from BTS members. This they captured and represented from the Instagram account @bts.bighitofficial.

5.4 Validation

In addition, posting on the Instagram social media account @bts.bighitofficial is a form of representation of masculinity to BTS fans. Social representation is a form of reproduction of the meaning that exists in society. Stuart Hall argues that in the process of social reproduction, there are several things involved, including language, signs, and images. Some of the things involved in the process of social reproduction are representative of something (Kurnia 2004). In this section, the language, signs, and images in the @bts.bighitofficial Instagram account are a representation of masculinity for K-Pop fans.

The language of BTS fans reflects admiration for the image being posted on the @bts.bighitofficial account. They praised every performance displayed by BTS members. In addition, every fan has a responsibility to support the work of their idol. If BTS participates in a voting competition, every fan must vote. On social activities carried out by BTS, every fan is ready to spend some money to launch these activities (Fachrosi et al. 2020). Signs such as the brand used by BTS members are also an important aspect that can be seen in the depiction of the representation of masculinity. The goods advertised by BTS are always crowded in the market. For example, the BTS Meal product that attracts people's enthusiasm (Safitri 2021). The sensation of eating together with BTS members makes every fan interested in buying these products. In addition, there is an exchange of symbols among BTS fans in buying BTS Meal products.

Regarding signs, many signs are used between BTS members and Army. For example, the color purple, the color means I will believe and love you forever (Kumparan, 2020). The meaning of this color was revealed by a BTS member named V (Taehyung) at the end of a fan meeting appearance in November 2016. The color was then identical to BTS and Army. In addition, the researchers also found a lot of use of the purple love emoji in the comments column of the @bts.bighitofficial Instagram account. BTS fans always give praise in all the comments column.

In addition to purple, the sign that is often used between Army and BTS is the character BT21. The character is in the form of a doll that describes each member of BTS. Dolls are usually identical as girls' games, but for Army and BTS dolls are likened to the characters of each BTS member. Army that has it can feel close to every member of BTS. This then attracted the attention of the Army more than just idolizing through the screen. The appearance of each BTS member also brings out masculine signs. The earrings they use and the clothes they wear are usually categorized as unisex (can be used by both men and women). these signs are then consumed by fans and create a new form of masculinity according to the thing captured by the Army. The signs that appear between BTS and Army further explain what Army means as a form of masculinity. They won't care about other opinions that think BTS is not masculine.

The process of social representation in society is also supported by the existence of social media. The media, in this case the @bts.bighitofficial Instagram account, greatly influences the image of masculinity on BTS fans. They are able to become agents who direct the thoughts of their followers. The reality that exists in the world of BTS fans is constructed from the language they read, the signs they see, and the images that appear on social media. This shows that the representation of masculinity that appears on Instagram social media accounts is depicted with white men, using accessories, and having high traits and intelligence.

6. Conclusion

The shift in the meaning of masculinity in society is one of the impacts of technological developments, especially social media. On social media Instagram, it was found that the concept of masculinity among BTS fans is shown

through men who are white, use accessories, use bright colors, and have a gentle and kind nature. The masculinity indicator that appears on social media Instagram is a form of representation of the masculinity of BTS fans.

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Biographies

Nur'aini Inayah, S.Pd. is a student of the Master of Sociology at Sebelas Maret University. The focus of the study is in the field of Cultural Sociology. Nur'aini Inayah is a graduate of the Sociological Anthropology Education, Sebelas Maret University. She is currently studying for his master's degree in the master's program in Sociology, Sebelas Maret University.

Aris Arif Mundayat, Ph.D. is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology at Sebelas Maret University. The focus of his studies is in the fields of Cultural Anthropology and Political Science. Aris Arif Mundayat continued his undergraduate education in the Department of Anthropology, Gadjah Mada University and his doctoral studies at Departement of Social and Life Swinburne University of Technology.

Dr. Yuyun Sunesti, G.D.Soc., M.A. is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology at Sebelas Maret University. The focus of his study is in the field of Sociology of Religion. Yuyun Sunesti continued his undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the Departement of Sociology, Flinders University and his doctoral studies at Departement of Inter-Religious Studies Gadjah Mada University.