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Universitas Indonesia

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Masculinity Reconstruction by K-Pop Idol BTS: BTS ARMY’S Reception Analysis Towards BTS’s Musics and Contents

Jasmine Qurrota Ayuni Perwiradmoko

1 Sociology Department, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia. Email: jasminequrrotaayunip@gmail.com

Abstract

This study has an aim to see the reception analysis from BTS ARMY towards the reconstruction of masculinity that BTS do. The previous studies showed that the K-Pop Male Idol have reconstructed the meaning of masculinity, and also see how the masculinity reconstruction that the K-Pop Male Idol did has been consumed by the fangirls. However, those studies have not explained about how the fangirls point of view about the reconstruction of masculinity, especially if it is contexed in Indonesia's masculinity construction. This study argues that the various product of Korean popular culture or Hallyu, which in the context of this research is BTS’s musics and contents that is spread through a lot of digital media, that shows masculinity construction which different from the hegemonic masculinity construction in Indonesian society, which in the end is able to make BTS ARMY negotiate the meaning of the masculinity that is different from their society’s hegemonic masculinity. The research method is a qualitative approach by conducting a reception analysis to the BTS content by conducting an in-depth interview to BTS ARMY related to the BTS masculinity image that is delivered through the content that they produced. The findings found that, BTS showing a reconstruction of masculinity by breaking the norms which in all this time exist in the hegemonic masculinity, through their musics and contents which were spread through various digital media. So, through it, the informant ARMY precisely gain a new comprehension about masculinity concept which is different than the hegemonic masculinity that exists in their society.

Keywords
Masculinity, Soft Masculinity, Media, Male K-Pop Idol, Reconstruction

Introduction

Korean Hallyu or Korean Wave is currently a popular culture favoured by many people. According to Valentina (2013), the Korean Wave expanded through music, films, dramas, to the visuals of South Korean artists who helped to increase the popularity of South Korean culture. K-Pop Male Idols often show different or hybrid
forms of masculinity, which are also referred to as manufactured versatile masculinity (Jung, 2011). According to Jung, manufactured versatile masculinity has many layers and a mixture of cultures, where at one time they can display very fierce masculinity and on the other hand they can also display cute or beautiful masculinity. Jung mentioned that this transcultural hybridity has become one of the most important aspects of South Korean or Hallyu popular culture, in particular being the main driver behind the popularity of Hallyu culture overseas. The presence of Hallyu cultural which produces a variety of cultural products that are presented through various digital media, offers a different form of gender construction. In the context of this research, one of them is BTS. Reporting from Rolling Stone (2021), BTS is in the first rank as the most discussed K-Pop artist on social media. The presence of K-Pop Idol including BTS through the Korean Wave, which is becoming a trend everywhere, presents a new view of the different masculinity that they bring through their contents. The masculinity that is brought by the K-Pop Male Idol tends to be different from the masculinity that has been constructed so far in society, especially in Indonesia. The masculinity that K-Pop Male Idol bring tends to be influenced by Korean Soft Masculinity, both in appearance and character.

Digital media, in this case, has an important role in the dissemination of Korean music and digital contents. According to Chang Park (2018), the essence of the success from Hallyu culture is social media and internet. He also said that, in this digital era, the boundaries between private domains and public domains became blurred. Now, technology is paradoxically a product of hyperrational modernity, which can enable everyone to show, express and speak to the public. The media that continue to display Korean culture, of course, can slowly grow a new perspective in society regarding masculinity. BTS ARMY, also known as BTS fans in Indonesia, already have their own view of masculinity identity which has been structured in Indonesia and constructed in society. However, with the presence of digital media that displays content regarding K-Pop, especially those presented by K-Pop Male Idol BTS, also by those who are exposed to K-Pop content, it is certainly very possible for new perceptions of masculinity to emerge among the Indonesian fans.

There are several studies about masculinity in K-Pop or Korea, but the research gaps still exist in these previous studies. The studies did not explain the concept of masculinity that was presented through the K-Pop content. In fact, the presence of mass media and social media play a role in the dissemination of K-Pop content. These studies also did not explain any further about how the entertainment content presented by K-Pop Male Idol described a form of masculinity, and how the audience or fans perceived the point of that content. In addition, those previous studies did not provide the discussion about the context of Korean masculinity in Indonesian masculinity. It was caused by the characteristics of masculinity that have existed and been structured in Indonesia were very different from the characteristics of masculinity presented by K-Pop Idol BTS. The researcher’s argument is that K-Pop content presented by BTS shows different characteristics of masculinity from the masculinity that has existed and been constructed in Indonesia, where the characteristics of masculinity presented by BTS through its contents seem to break the traditional gender norms that has been constructed in Indonesian society. In addition, another researcher’s argument is that not all Indonesian people can accept and be open minded about the masculinity presented by BTS, but here, BTS ARMY can become fans of BTS through the idol’s contents and give different perspective to the masculinity of BTS even though it is different from the concept of masculinity in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to look at how BTS reconstructs masculinity through their K-Pop contents, which can be seen from how BTS ARMY interprets their idol contents, as well as how BTS ARMY interprets the exposure of masculinity.
presented by BTS through its contents which tend to be different from the masculinity that has been constructed in Indonesian society.

**Literature Review**

**Masculinity Construction**

According to Butler (1999), gender and sexual identity did not exist naturally, but were a social construction. Butler also explained that the idea of properties such as clothing and colour counted as a part of certain gender was something that can change over time. Furthermore, Butler also explained that someone could have a feminine outer appearance but was masculine inside and vice versa. That person was shaped by culture and discourses which were propagated through various rules. In addition, according to Butler (2011), when something is performative, it produces a series of effects. One thing that becomes important in performativity is the repetition of an action that is being performed. Butler equated this with 'a ritualized production', or imagining a certain action that was performed repeatedly. Butler (1988) said that gender was performative, so gender could only be seen when an action was performed. The performative perspective of gender provided an explanation of how gender identity seemed to be formed by a series of actions.

In addition to Butler, Connell (1987) explained regarding the construction of hegemonic masculinity, that in western society, there was the archetype of hegemonic men, such as were white, heterosexual, have a fit body, middle class, had an aggressive mental character, strong, and confident. This was also supported by Hermawan's study (2016), that having a shapely or muscular body was defined as a true man and was certainly liked by women. Furthermore, there was the Cosmopolitan Indonesia magazine which indirectly defined that men who do not have a muscular or thin body, but were sluggish and gentle, were considered as not entirely men, because they were considered unable to look after women (Tanjung, 2012). Tanjung said that the standard definition of masculinity as shown in the magazine was fully accepted in society and it became a natural thing. In fact, according to Fauzi (2021) who discussed the social construction of soft masculinity in K-Pop culture, it was found that physical appearance was not a measure of the manliness of men, and that the idea that men must look macho was basically a concept based on a patriarchal system (Fauzi, 2021). This is supported by Donaldson's study (1993) and Connell and Messerschmidt (in Waling, 2016), that the ideal type could vary depending on time, place, and local culture. This is in line with Uliviana's study (in Handaningtias, 2018) that the meaning of masculinity brought by K-Pop Idol could create a new social space for men. By trying to understand the meaning of masculinity presented by K-Pop Idol, people could adapt with this masculinity and it became a natural thing. Furthermore, according to Handaningtias, the dimensions of the text consumed by fans and how the process of reinterpreting the masculine symbols constructed by K-Pop Male Idol through its various contents, such as using full make up and so on, encouraged teenagers to develop new markers in their male characteristics. So, what teenagers saw through the visualization of K-Pop Idol seemed to form a belief for these teenagers about how a man should be.

Connell (1987), in the concept of Sexual Character, discussed the traits that generally defined masculinity and femininity, in which the sexual character model became a sexual ideology that had been familiar in society. The concept also explained how masculinity and femininity could indirectly be considered as dimensions of temperament that seem to be measured by everyone. When, in fact, femininity and masculinity did not need to be treated as opposite poles. Connell (1987) explained that 'Hegemonic Masculinity' was always constructed with subordinated masculinity, in which the different forms of masculinity that influenced each other were part of how
the patriarchal social order worked. This hegemony was the achievement of social control in the game of social power that extended and went beyond the contest of power into personal life and cultural processes. Power, in this case, was embedded in various aspects of social life, one of which is in mass media content. This is also supported by Butler (1988) in Jung (2011) that sexuality and gender were culturally constructed through the repetition of gender-style performances at that time. The personality of the K-Pop Idol star and the masculinity that he embodied has been constructed through performances with various masculine images, such as beast-like, kawaii, and soft. Hegemony did not mean a complete cultural domination, where patterns and other groups were more subordinated, not eliminated. This was supported by Connell (1995), that in a culture, there was one masculinity that was most exalted compared to other masculinities.

Reception Theory: Audience Meaning of Media Content
According to Stuart Hall (1973), Reception Theory refers to meaning, production, and one's experience in relation to interacting with media texts, which is how message senders use symbols based on their ideology. The message then would be received and interpreted by the audience based on the framework of their thoughts. Reception Theory is used in this case, because according to Popa and Gavrily (2014), the media is an important aspect in building gender 'identity', to modifying or even to defining gender identity. What is represented in the media has an influence on how we see and perceive gender roles. Furthermore, reception analysis, according to Lorimer (1994) in Hadi (2008), is to see how the audience can perceive the media as a cultural product and how the audience interprets what they read, see, and listen. This is supported by Song and Velding’s (2019) study that increased accessibility to media content circulating throughout countries provided more opportunities for everyone to be able to observe and interpret gender expressions of people around the world.

In Reception Theory, Hall emphasized the existence of decoding and encoding processes. In this encoding and decoding process, the audience did not only receive a message given by the sender (sender, message, and receiver), but the audience could participate in reproducing the message conveyed by the sender of the message (production, circulation, and distribution). He explained how the senders used symbols to encode or encode the meaning of messages made based on their ideology, then the message was interpreted or decoded by the audience who interpreted the message based on their frame of mind. According to Hall, this decoding and encoding process allowed for various degrees of understanding and misunderstanding in the process of exchanging messages during the communication process, which depended on the equivalent relationship formed between the decoder and encoder. Hall explained that there were three ways in which the audience decodes or interprets the message conveyed (Hall, 1973). The three decoding methods used by the audience were Dominant-Hegemonic Position, Negotiated Position, and Oppositional Position. The Dominant-Hegemonic was a position where the audience interpreted the message brought by the sender of the message as it is. In this position, the audience was also able to accept, acknowledge, and agree with the message brought by the encoder without any rejection and produce the exact same message as the message produced by the encoder. Then, in the Negotiated Position, the audience was able to capture the dominant code or ideology brought by the sender of the message. However, in this position, the audience could also reject the message. In other words, the audience seemed to be selecting which messages were suitable and which were not suitable to be applied to the local context or society. Furthermore, the Oppositional was a position where the audience could accept and understand the message being brought, but they showed an attitude that was the opposite of the contents of the message. In this position, the audience seemed to object to the dominant code brought by the sender of
the message, and they had other references that were considered more relevant.

**Digital Media as an Arena for the Reconstruction of Masculinity**

The rapid development of the Korean Wave is supported by the role of social media such as YouTube and Twitter, which are the media for spreading K-Pop content and making K-Pop more known and loved by a wider audience (Shim, 2006 in Rahmawati et al, 2021). The factor that caused the Korean Wave to spread throughout the world was due to the influence of the internet and social media used by K-Pop fans in uploading, forwarding, and quickly disseminating Korean Wave content to other fans (Akhmad, et al., 2018). According to Kim et al. (2007) in Sangjoon and Abe (2015), Hallyu must cooperate with Korea's Global Corporation, IT business, and foreign government policies to be able to penetrate a wider market and generate maximum profits to build 'Global Korea'. South Korea has made great use of digital media in disseminating its culture, given the convenience that digital media provides, and can be accessed easily by anyone, both legally and illegally. In addition, according to Jalaludin Rakhmat in Akhmad (2018), the mass media had an influence in shaping a person's cognitive aspects, which were then referred to as cognitive prosocial effects. The effect of this cognitive prosocial emphasized the impact that media broadcasts had on the cultivation of knowledge, understanding, and skills (Unde, 2014, in Akhmad, 2018). This was also supported by Sjalim's statement (2013), that using media, especially to be able to access K-Pop content, could have an impact on their mindset and actions.

**Research Methods**

This research used a qualitative approach with the type of case study research to look at the various meanings of BTS ARMY regarding the masculinity of BTS in detail and depth. In addition, this case study was aimed to get thorough, broad, and contextualized research results. The analysis unit of this study was BTS ARMY who was female, with ages ranging between 20-24 years when becoming ARMY. They were divided into three periods of BTS career 3 years of early BTS career (2013-2016), mid-career of BTS (2017 – 2019), and the peak of BTS’s career (2020 – Present).

In this research, the data was collected through an in-depth interview process. This in-depth interview process would later carry out a reception analysis process, namely in the interview process, where the researcher would show BTS musics and contents that has been previously selected and analyzed by the researcher, which the researcher considers having the appropriate criteria. It was expected that the interviews conducted with BTS ARMY would provide their meaning regarding the ideology and reconstruction of masculinity presented by BTS, as well as their meaning regarding what if the masculinity presented by BTS was applied by men in Indonesia. One of the things that became a limitation of this research is it was conducted online. The delimitation was that the informants came from the same community (ARMY) and all of them were women.

**Results**

**BTS ARMY's Perspective of Masculinity**

In the interview process, the researcher explored the informant's perspective regarding the physical aspect as a part of masculinity. According to Connell (1987), the basic pattern of hegemonic men in Western society is white, heterosexual, have a fit body, middle class, and have an aggressive, strong, and confident mental character. If you look at the male preferences of the informants from a physical perspective, there were several informants who explained that according to them, masculine men were those who had a muscular body, were strong, an appearance that had a simple and casual style. Besides that, the common answers given by the informants when the
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 researcher asked about masculine male preferences were automatically explained from the physical side and then continued with the personality side. Some informants also thought that masculinity could only be seen from personality, not physically at all. According to Connell (1987), apart from biological assumptions about sex differences, the existence of social expectations is what causes differences in the behaviour and habits of men and women that need to be emphasized. Informants also generally thought that masculine or macho men could not only be seen by their physique or appearance. Instead, masculine men were those who were mature, capable of being responsible, reliable, nurturing, authoritative, and so on. This is in line with Fauzi's study (2021), that physical appearance is not a measure of male masculinity, and that the idea that men must look macho is basically a concept based on a patriarchal system.

Informants' Perspective on Korean Masculinity Before They Know BTS

Basically, Korea and Indonesia have different masculinity backgrounds. As explained in the previous chapter, Korea has the characteristics of soft masculinity. There is a term called Mugukjeok Masculinity which describes the image of a beautiful man, and Seonbi Masculinity which describes a man with a personality like a noble. From the results of interviews with informants, there were informants who said that Korean men did not seem masculine, especially when they did not know BTS. They had the thought that Korean men were not masculine because they were seen using make-up, impressed like women, and looked beautiful. This thought was also influenced by the perspective that men must be in accordance with what has been constructed in society so that what looked different from the society was considered not masculine.

Changing Perspective on Korean Masculinity Influenced by BTS

Even though most of the informants thought that Korean men seemed less masculine, it turned out that, in the end, the informants' thoughts about masculinity changed due to the influence of BTS. There are informants who are influenced by society and BTS simultaneously. The informants previously thought that men who used makeup looked like women, but they became very open-minded since they got to know BTS. In general, the informants realized that since they knew BTS, they became more aware that a person's masculinity could not be seen at all through appearance. Informants became more open-minded that everyone was free to express themselves as they wanted and what they felt comfortable with, without being limited by gender differences. They realized that men could also use the same fashion as women because BTS dared to break through and show it to the world. Through BTS, they understood that men would always be men, regardless of what they wore and how they expressed themselves. The informants also realized that men could freely express themselves in the way they wanted to, as long as they could make themselves happy. Men were still men even though they wore clothes that tended to be women’s clothes or makeup. The informants had the perspective that men's masculinity could be more reflected in how they behave and treat women.

Reception Analysis of BTS Musics and Contents

In the reception analysis process carried out through in-depth interviews with informants, the content that the researcher chose was Album Love Yourself: Answer S and E, Boy With Luv Music Video, Photos of BTS, Photos of BTS crying and hugging, and Screenshots of BTS conversations and interviews. According to several informants, the concept of the Album Love Yourself: Answer S and Answer E had a unique and interesting concept theme to watch. For these informants, the concept given to these two albums was fresh and different from the usual. Some informants
also said that, with a concept that was full of flowers and bright colors, if they were not already ARMY or BTS's fans, of course, they would think this album concept was very strange, too feminine, and not suitable to be used as a boy group album concept. However, after becoming a BTS fan, they finally understood that the concept was really good and interesting. The concept used by BTS was no longer considered strange and informants think that BTS was very great because they have the courage to adopt such a concept. Then, there were also informants who said that the concept that BTS chose to use in the albums Love Yourself: Answer S and E actually had a deep meaning that BTS wanted to deliver through this concept. Through the album concept, BTS wanted to deliver the message about Love Yourself and Break the Stigma.

In the Boy With Luv music video, BTS succeeded in redefining the pink colour itself in this music video, which has been constructed for women for a long time. In this music video, BTS wore pink clothes, bright hair, and various accessories. Informants generally interpreted that BTS used the pink colour in the music video Boy with Luv basically to regenerate or redefine the stigma associated with the colour. BTS wanted to show that pink was a universal colour and could be used by women and men. BTS used this concept and colour that were considered to have the goal of being able to change one's perception of colour and regenerate the pink colour.

Furthermore, regarding the outfits that BTS wore in some of their photoshoots, the informants generally interpreted that BTS had messages that they wanted to share through their appearance. One of the messages was that BTS wanted to break the stigma of masculinity that has existed in society and showed that clothes and gender are not related to each other. People can wear whatever they want, no matter what their gender is. Even BTS often delivered messages about loving yourself. The informants also interpreted that the use of one's clothes, skirts, or appearance could not represent one's gender identity and could not be used to see one's masculinity. BTS completely ignored the gender perspective that has existed in society, especially when expressing their works. BTS was able to express themselves and their works regardless of the associated stigma that exists in society regarding clothing and also broke that stigma. Until right now, they still wear the clothes they want and think are comfortable, regardless of the stigma that exists.

Most of the informants were amazed by the way BTS expressed their feelings because they did not hesitate to show their emotions, such as crying. Because all this time, men are judged to have to be strong. Informants interpreted that showing affection by hugging and being spoiled was a natural and universal thing, that it was okay to show affection to fellow friends. Showing affection to fellow friends of the same gender could not be used to see someone's sexual orientation. BTS was also considered to have absolutely no hesitation in expressing their feelings and did not cover it up. Stigmas such as men having to be strong, men could not be spoiled, and men could not cry actually did not diminish the masculinity of a man, and society should know about this. Moreover, BTS also had a mindset that was not gender biased. There were informants who said that actually, the words of thought were very influential. They said during the interview that it would really have a huge impact because not everyone could understand the message they wanted to deliver if it was only through fashion and appearance. Through talking, BTS could show their great way of thinking, and prove that they were not only great in fashion or appearance. Words and ways of thinking could also show someone's true personality. Through what they said in their interviews, it could be seen that they basically had great thoughts and personalities, and they used the power they had to show their thoughts about gender in a variety of ways. BTS was not only seen as anti-toxic masculinity through the use of clothes or the way they behave but also from their way of thinking which could be seen through their words. Of course, their thoughts could be seen when they gave answers and
opinions during interviews, such as interviews with Rolling Stones magazine, Esquire, variety fairs, speeches at the United Nations, and so on.

Discussion

BTS Masculinity Reconstruction

In a society, the masculinity perspective that has been constructed for a long time will dominate the other masculinity perspective. This constructed masculinity perspective seems to be used as an appropriate reference in society. According to Connell (1987), ‘Hegemonic Masculinity’ is always constructed in relation to subordinated masculinity, in which the different forms of masculinity that influence each other are part of how the patriarchal social order works. According to Connell, this hegemony is not complete cultural domination, but a pattern in which there is one masculinity that dominates, while the other masculinity is subordinated, not eliminated. One of the dominating masculinities is the masculinity that is most glorified in culture and even becomes constructed in that society. An informant said that what BTS wore was not in accordance with the norms in society, whereas we knew that the norms in this society were still quite hegemonic. Furthermore, in this case, BTS did not show the definition of masculinity that has been hegemonic so far, but BTS showed masculinity that was the opposite of that masculinity. BTS actually reconstructed this masculinity by presenting the opposite appearance through their contents. This is in line with Handanigtias' study (2018), that the process of reinterpreting masculine symbols constructed by K-Pop Male Idol through various contents such as using full makeup and so on encouraged teenagers to develop new markers in male characteristics. Then, how BTS reconstructed masculinity in society is also in line with Butler's (1999) ideas about properties, such as clothing and colour that were part of a certain gender, was something that can change over time. Therefore, with BTS displaying a different appearance of masculinity, of course, it could change and shift the understanding regarding clothes and colours within gender. So, BTS' appearance did not mean that they were not masculine, but the masculinity they displayed was dominated by the dominant constructed masculinity in society.

Then, the informants commonly changed their perspectives and meanings related to masculinity after they knew BTS. Before the informant knew about BTS, they would feel that what BTS wore, such as skirts, lace clothes, and other women's clothes, were not suitable for men because the clothes were too feminine. However, their perspective changed when they got to know BTS that fashion was just a preference, and they were still men. This is in line with a study by Maraya et al. (2017) that K-Pop idols who had a different image of masculinity actually made their fans find new perspectives on the concept of masculinity. In addition, this is also in line with Handaningtias' study (2018), that the visualization presented by K-Pop Idol could encourage the development of new markers in male characteristics, where the visualization of K-Pop Idol played a role in forming a belief about how men should be. According to Butler (1999), the subject of masculine and feminine appearance was formed by a culture and discourse that was spread through various rules. Butler said that it was what required men to always follow the existing norms of society, and when they did not, they would be seen as deviated by society and were considered not in accordance with existing norms.

How the ARMYs ended up able to change their perspective and meanings related to the concept of masculinity, of course, was due to the repeated actions taken by BTS in presenting different forms of masculinity through music and its content, such as in their fashion, behaviour, and their thoughts. According to Butler's (1988) opinion gender is performative, and what is important in performativity is the repetition of an action that is being performed. Butler also calls it ‘a ritualized production', or
imagining a certain action that is done repeatedly. So, in this context, when BTS repeatedly displayed different images of masculinity, through their appearance and behaviour, and also supported by their way of thinking that was not gender biased, in fact, were able to change the minds of the audience related to the concept of masculinity. That men are allowed to use feminine appearance and that masculinity cannot be seen only through appearance. This was caused by gender identity that was loosely formed in time and institutionalized in outer space through repetition of actions with style (Butler, 1999), and in this case, BTS did this repetition through music and their contents. Furthermore, Butler (1988) in Jung (2011) also explained that sexuality and gender were culturally constructed through the repetition of gender-style performances at that time, where the persona of the K-Pop idol star and the masculinity they embodied had been constructed through various forms of masculinity images, such as beast-like, kawaii, and soft. In this case, BTS showed these things through their variety of content.

Reception Analysis: ARMY, BTS Contents, and Hegemony Masculinity in Indonesia

Basically, every regional and cultural difference also has a difference in masculinity culture. According to Donaldson 1993; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 (in Waling 2016), the type of masculinity varied depending on time, place, and local culture. Butler also stated the same thing that there were differences in gender norms when viewed from different cultures. This is also the case with masculinity in Indonesia and South Korea. BTS ARMY Indonesia, in the context of this research, has a different culture from BTS who are citizens of South Korea, especially regarding the culture of masculinity. Digital media, in the context of this research, play a role in delivering BTS's work and content. As previously discussed, ARMY generally watches BTS content through platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, VLive, and Weverse. With the Hallyu 3.0 era and all the conveniences provided by the internet and various digital media platforms, it is certainly easier for everyone to access various Hallyu content, both legally and illegally. Hallyu, which according to Sangjoon and Abe (2015) continued to collaborate with Korea’s Global Corporation, IT business, and foreign government policies, is able to penetrate a wider market. So, this digital media seems to be a cultural link that is able to bring the Indonesian ARMY together with the image of masculinity that BTS brings. This is also in line with the opinion of Popa and Gavrily (2014), that what is represented in the media has an influence on how a person sees and perceives gender roles, and that the media is an important aspect in building gender 'identity', to modify or even to define gender identity.

The results of the reception analysis from this study found that there were four informants who were in the dominant hegemonic position, two informants in the negotiated position, and an informant in the oppositional position. Informants who were in a dominant hegemonic position were able to accept, acknowledge, and agree with the message conveyed by the encoder without any rejection and produce exactly the same message as the message produced by the encoder. They argued that one's gender could not be seen through appearance, and Indonesian men would still look good and fit if they wore such an appearance because it was their right to express themselves freely. The informants who were in the negotiated position basically able to capture and understand the reconstruction of masculinity shown by BTS through their work and their content. Besides that, these two informants were actually able to accept and appreciate if Indonesian men had the same masculinity perspective as BTS, but they seemed to sort out what looks were suitable for Indonesian men and which ones did not seem right. They sorted out the use of outfits and make-up that were not excessive and still looked suitable and appropriate for Indonesian men to wear. Meanwhile, informants who were in an oppositional position were also able to receive codes or messages related to the breaking of stigma and the reconstruction of
masculinity that BTS showed through their works and contents. However, this informant seemed to disagree with the stigma-breaking code shown by BTS and seemed to have other references that the informant considered relevant for Indonesian men to apply. The informant thought that the feminine-looking appearance shown by BTS was really not suitable for Indonesian men, and had other preferences which were more suitable for Indonesian men. From these three positions, it could be seen that the media had a great influence on how the audience saw and perceived gender.

Masculinity that was shown by BTS, both in terms of appearance and behaviour, was certainly not in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity that has been constructed so far in Indonesia. However, according to Donaldson 1993; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 (in Waling 2016) the ideal type could vary depending on time, place, and local culture. Even more, South Korea basically had a different type of masculinity from the hegemonic masculinity of the West and Indonesia as well. But later, with the presence of digital media which play a role in disseminating information, these ARMYs began to be exposed to BTS’ works and content which contained elements of soft masculinity and breaking the gender stigma through the masculinity that BTS reconstructed. According to Song and Velding (2019), the increased accessibility of media content circulating throughout the country provided more opportunities for everyone to be able to observe and interpret the gender expressions of people around the world. Supporting this statement, Jalaludin Rakhmat (in Akhmad, 2018) said the mass media had an influence in shaping a person's cognitive aspects, which are known as cognitive prosocial effects. Related to this, according to Unde (2014, in Akhmad, 2018), the effects of cognitive prosocial emphasized more on the impact caused by media broadcasts on the inculcation of knowledge, understanding, and skills. Likewise, according to Popa and Gavrily (2014), the media was an important aspect in building gender 'identity', modifying or even defining gender identity. Moreover, according to Butler (1988) regarding gender performativity, when an action is carried out repeatedly, it can change one's expectations. In this context, ARMY, who have a different culture from BTS, but then were exposed repeatedly to contents shown by BTS with their masculine image could eventually give a new perspective and understanding of different masculine cultures. Furthermore, the researcher believed that if this subordinated masculinity that has been able to be accepted by the ARMY could begin to be accepted more widely or even normalized within Indonesian society, then this masculinity certainly had the possibility to be able to reconstruct the hegemonic masculinity that has been constructed so far in Indonesia. This is because according to Connell (2000, in Waling, 2016) masculinity was a form of habit produced in gender relations that contained daily interactions. According to Connell, there was an arrangement into a structure that involved millions of people, making interactions that were easy to symbolize stand out, so that it became tempting to make it a common and well-known condition.

**Conclusion and Suggestion**

BTS, through various musics and contents, delivers messages related to the reconstruction of masculinity. Whether it is through the appearance of their bodies, the expression of emotion and affection, to their mindset that is not gender biased when conducting interviews. Reflecting on the findings of the research questions, the results of the study found that BTS used the media and their influence to reconstruct masculinity by presenting images of different masculinity or subordinated masculinity, through music works and their contents. The results of the study also found that the ARMY informants understood and interpreted that the clothes or body appearance that BTS used in the album concept Love Yourself: Answer S and E, the Boy With Luv music video, and some of their photos were quite ‘feminine’ and not in accordance with the norm in Indonesian society. However, this actually provided a
new understanding of the concept of masculinity. Men are still men and masculine, regardless of what they wear. Also, actually, clothes cannot be used to identify someone's masculinity. According to Butler, someone can have a feminine outer appearance, but still be masculine inside, and vice versa. Besides that, BTS does not hesitate to show their emotions and affection, as well as their thoughts that are not gender biased. The results of the study also found that their attitude to not hide their weak side was actually a truly masculine attitude. According to Jung in Connell, men who suppress their feminine nature do not deserve to be called masculine. In the context of this study, BTS does not suppress their 'feminine' nature at all, such as being gentle, not hesitating to cry or hug each other, being spoiled, and so on. These attitudes are actually a truly masculine attitude, and the informants were able to perceive and interpret that the behaviour that BTS did was actually very masculine.

Apart from that, the thoughts of the previous informants were also influenced by the hegemonic masculinity that was constructed in Indonesia. They also understood that what clothes the BTS wore, also the way they expressed their emotions, were not in accordance with the masculinity that has been constructed in Indonesia. However, the way media showed a variety of BTS musics and contents played a role in bringing together the different masculine cultures and also the reconstruction of masculinity from BTS. In the end, this influenced the audience as well as ARMY informants in perceiving gender and masculinity, who were also able to change their minds regarding this matter.

As a theoretical suggestion, future research can explore more about individual sexual orientation and gender identity, that it cannot only be seen through individual gender expression since all this time gender expression is still limited by appearance, social norms, and stereotypes. Then, as a practical suggestion, future research also can discuss how to deal with toxic masculinity that has existed in society so far.

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