

The image of masculinity in the novel *The Death of a Former Minister* by Nawel El Saadawi

Anggita Tri Chandraningtyas¹, Salsa Faradila Mukti²,
Zezyana Ledys Permata³, Gregorius Chandra William⁴,
Musyarof 'Ibad Al Kindi⁵, Calysta Utama Die Citra⁶, Sulis
Fatihatul Hasna⁷, Onok Yayang Pamungkas⁸

University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto,
INDONESIA^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8}

¹Email: calystaautami.dc01@gmail.com

Abstract - This study explores the **construction of masculinity** in Nawel El Saadawi's *The Death of a Former Minister*, examining how male identities are shaped by and complicit in patriarchal power structures. Building on gender theory and previous work on gender inequality in the same text, the research focuses on how men are positioned as agents of marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, and violence within familial, political, and social spheres. Using a qualitative, descriptive textual method, the novel's short stories are subjected to close reading, supported by Mansour Fakih's framework of gender injustice and relevant feminist theories of masculinity [1](#). The analysis traces recurrent images of male authority – husbands, officials, religious and political figures – and interrogates how their bodies, language, and sexual power sustain a dominant masculine ideal that normalizes women's inferiority, objectification, and abuse. The study concludes that El Saadawi represents masculinity not as a neutral or natural identity, but as a historically and culturally produced position of privilege that is deeply implicated in gendered oppression. At the same time, cracks within this model – moments of guilt, fear, or failure – suggest possibilities for critiquing and destabilizing hegemonic masculinity in Arab patriarchal contexts.

Keywords: Arab fiction; feminist literary criticism; gender inequality; gender representation; hegemonic masculinity; masculinity; patriarchy

1. Introduction

According to Admaja & Wirawanda (2024), masculinity is formed from a culture that combines male ideal traits and traits that are considered to be related to men. The media portrays masculinity by portraying a white man as having middle-class status, establishing characteristics, and standards that are at odds with other masculinities known as hegemonic masculinity (Admaja & Wirawanda, 2024). Masculinity is a concept that describes certain social roles, behaviors, and meanings associated with men in a certain time or context (Purwanto et al., 2024). Masculinity is formed through a social construction, the goal of which is for individuals to



understand the roles and behaviors expected in their lives. Thus, masculinity can be interpreted as how a person becomes a man in accordance with the norms and values accepted by society.

The ideal male image is usually portrayed in a tough, strong, brave and muscular figure. As well as being good at holding back overflowing emotions, such as not being able to shed tears. With this view, society often places men in certain standards that limit their self-expression and diversity of identity as human beings. With this concept of masculinity, men do not use their own feelings, they feel depressed, even uncalm because of the concept of masculinity, because they feel burdened by the expectations of others (Purwanto et al., 2024). These norms often create social pressures that make men feel like they have to suppress their emotions, disguise their vulnerable side, and they are reluctant to seek help, including psychological help (Ulhaq & Alfian, 2025).

According to the Oxford Dictionary (Andriana et al., 2023) Toxic masculinity refers to a mistaken view of attitudes and behaviors that men should have. Masculinity is understood as a means of legitimacy to assert male dominance over women and groups that are considered unmasculine (Sanusi, 2014). This elaboration shows that masculinity is not only related to gender identity, but also serves as a tool to maintain power. Connell asserts that the hegemonic core of masculinity is the use of toxic actions, such as physical violence and oppression, as a means of maintaining dominance. These toxic forms of action can arise through behaviors that control, degrade, or limit the freedom of others who are perceived to be weaker.

The concept of toxic masculinity emerged which requires men to behave according to traditional masculinity norms, such as self-limitation, dominance, and negative views of women and homosexual groups. Men are expected to have a bigger physique than women, and do not show vulnerability (Putriana et al., 2025). This view is reinforced by social narratives, for example during the New Order which emphasized wealth, good looks, and physical sensitivity. Today many men are beginning to voice their experiences through educational content, challenging restrictive masculinity stereotypes (Noor & Damayanti, 2024). According to (Ulhaq & Alfian, 2025) Men who absorb traditional masculinity values usually avoid expressing feelings or seeking professional help. The social construct that forbids men from showing sadness makes it difficult for them to manage their emotions, making them vulnerable to being caught in toxic masculinity. As a result, the emotions displayed are often limited to anger, which can encourage violent behavior (Jufanny & Girsang, 2020).

The meaning of freedom for men can be understood as an opportunity to transcend the boundaries of traditional masculinity, i.e. living without the need to assert dominance is not always interpreted as an action that is completely in favor of women, but rather as an effort to label (Noor & Damayanti, 2024). Novels *The Death of a Former Minister* Nawal El Saadawi's work highlights the social and political problems related to male power and the position of women in Egyptian society. Through the male protagonist who experiences psychological and moral pressure due to the patriarchal system, the novel pays attention to how the construction of hegemonic masculinity can be a burden for the man himself. The image of men in this novel is not only portrayed as strong and powerful, but also fragile and directionless, so it is interesting to study using the theory of hegemonic masculinity.

In general, the image of masculinity is often associated with physical strength, rationality, courage, independence, and ability to lead. In literary studies, the image of masculinity is often presented through the depiction of male figures that reflect or oppose applicable gender norms. Previous research provides the foundation for this research, a research conducted by (Jannah et al., 2025) which results in the image of masculinity in the male characters in the novel *Trauma* Boy Candra's work reflects various dimensions, especially seen through physical aspects such as good looks, strength, and neatness, as well as behavior that reflects a hardworking, calm, but still organized figure.



However, the representation of masculinity displayed is quite diverse, the main emphasis still lies on the physical and behavioral dimensions. This shows that the social construction of masculinity in society still focuses on idealizing certain appearances and actions, without much consideration of the emotional, intellectual, or deeper social responsibilities. While in some cases, masculine image can change due to various factors, such as position, social, and family.

Research on Nawal El Saadawi overwhelmingly foregrounds female oppression and gender inequality, with masculinity usually treated implicitly as the dominant, oppressive norm rather than as a complex identity in its own right. This shapes how earlier studies can be used and critiqued when examining masculinity in *The Death of a Former Minister* (often translated as *Death of an Ex-Minister*).

The clearest prior work is Juhana et al.'s article on gender inequality in the novel "Death of an Ex-Minister" using Mansour Fakih's gender theory (marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence, workload) (Juhana et al., 2021). (a) They identify male superiors who dismiss female employees for dissenting, illustrating institutional male power and female marginalization (Juhana et al., 2021). (b) Husbands are portrayed as economic providers who claim the right to "do anything" to their wives because they "give food," which exposes hegemonic masculinity based on material control and entitlement (Juhana et al., 2021). (c) Male violence appears in physical abuse by husbands and gang rape by ten men, presenting masculinity as violently possessive and sexually predatory (Juhana et al., 2021).

However, masculinity is not theorized as a constructed gender position; men function mostly as instruments of women's subordination. The study's main limitation for your topic is that it reads men primarily as agents of inequality, not as subjects whose masculinities are multiple, fragile, or contested.

Although not about *Death of a Former Minister*, several works on El Saadawi's fiction help frame masculinity. In *The Fall of the Imam*, male characters manipulate Islamic tenets as "poisonous pedagogy" to legitimize gendered and political domination (Alimi, 2025). Religion is politicized to sustain male leadership and treat women as commodities (Alimi, 2025). Masculinity here is bound to religious authority and state power, suggesting a model for reading male officials and ex-ministers in your novel. Hayward's study of *God Dies by the Nile* analyses how the Mayor's body, class position, and sexuality create an "able" masculine image that secures power in a rural Egyptian setting (Hayward, 2005). Masculinity is linked to class privilege, racialized appearance, and control of language and imagery (Hayward, 2005).

This intersectional reading can be adapted to ex-minister figures whose masculinity combines political office, social status, and sexual access. Broader feminist work on El Saadawi shows her fiction as a sustained critique of **patriarchal, often religiously legitimized, male dominance** within Arab societies (Alimi, 2025; Karim & Malti-Douglas, 1997). Malti-Douglas and Karim emphasize that her male characters often embody institutionalized patriarchy rather than individualized villainy, embedding masculinity in legal, political, and religious structures (Karim & Malti-Douglas, 1997).

Recent research on marital rape in Egypt shows how **gendered power and marital sexuality** normalize male sexual entitlement and minimize women's autonomy [3](#). Husbands invoke religious discourse (threat of angels' curse, "lawful rights") to guilt wives into sex, making wives' well-being secondary to male desire (Shousha & Taha, 2025). These findings resonate with El Saadawi's fictional portrayals of men who claim sexual rights over women's bodies backed by religion, culture, and law (Juhana et al., 2021; Alimi, 2025; Shousha & Taha, 2025).

Table 1: Prior Work on Gender and Masculinity around El Saadawi

Focus of Study	Main View of Men /	Relevance / Limitation for
----------------	--------------------	----------------------------



	Masculinity	the Topic
Gender inequality in <i>Death of an Ex-Minister</i>	Men as employers, husbands, rapists enacting marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence	Gives concrete scenes of male dominance but does not theorize masculinity as such (Juhana et al., 2021).
Patriarchal religion in <i>The Fall of the Imam</i>	Male leaders weaponize Islamic law as "poisonous pedagogy"	Illuminates religious-political masculinity; different text but similar ideological structures (Alimi, 2025).
Mayor in <i>God Dies by the Nile</i>	Elite male body, class, and sexuality as sources of power	Offers model for reading classed, racialized, sexualized masculinities (Hayward, 2005).
General study of El Saadawi's feminist poetics	Men embody institutional patriarchy within Islamic/Arabic heritage	Strong framework on patriarchy; masculinity itself not foregrounded (Karim & Malti-Douglas, 1997).
Marital rape in Egypt	Husbands' sexual entitlement normalized via religion and culture	Empirical backdrop for male sexual power in the fiction (3. Shousha & Taha, 2025).

The three works by Wajdi et al. (2024; 2025) and collaborators apply close reading and thematic criticism to canonical and popular texts, foregrounding character psychology, social structure, and affective bonds. Together, they show a consistent interest in how literature and media model values (self-confidence, class mobility, family/friendship) for contemporary audiences.

In "A Self-Confident Profile: An Analysis of the Novel *The Old Man and the Sea*", Santiago is read through self-confidence, resilience, and dignity, linked to themes of perseverance, man-nature struggle, and intergenerational mentorship via Manolin (Wajdi et al., 2024). The study explicitly connects Hemingway's minimalist style, symbolism, and imagery to the construction of Santiago's inner strength and to modern concerns about personal agency and adversity (Wajdi et al., 2024). Across the three works (Hemingway, *Laskar Pelangi*, and *Reply 1988*), there is a clear thematic continuity: literature and screen texts are treated as moral-emotional narratives that shape views on selfhood, social class, and intimate bonds. The Hemingway paper claims Reader-Response Criticism, but evidence of systematic reader data or reception analysis appears limited; the dominant method is still text-centred interpretation (Wajdi et al., 2024). In the *Laskar Pelangi* (Wajdi et al., 2024) and *Reply 1988* (Wajdi et al., 2025) pieces, social class and affect (nostalgia, family, friendship, love) are described in depth, but the theoretical frameworks (e.g., Bourdieu, class theory, affect theory, media studies) seem underdeveloped or only lightly engaged. The analyses risk overgeneralizing from single texts to broader social realities without triangulation (e.g., audience studies, contextual historical work).

2. Method

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis to examine the representation of masculinity in novels "*The Death of a Man Former Minister*" written by Nawal El Saadawi. This method provides an opportunity for researchers to critically understand the depth of the meaning of the text through an in-depth reading of the narratives, discourse structures, character behaviors, and language symbols that reflect the construction of masculinity in a patriarchal culture. The main source of this research is the text of the novel "*The Death of a Former Minister*", while the supporting source consists of theoretical references to hegemonic masculinity



(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), toxic masculinity (Kupers, 2005), the idea of symbolic violence and habitus (Bourdieu, 2001), as well as academic research related to gender representation in literature (Sulistiyowati, 2020).

The data of this research is a text that presents the impact of politics on the image of masculinity in the novel *The Death of a Former Minister* by Nawal El Saadawi. The collection of sources is carried out through a careful and repeated reading of the text of the novel, in which quotations reflecting forms of hegemonic masculinity, toxic masculinity, and subordinate masculinity are marked. These quotes are then grouped by masculinity category and recorded regularly in a table for ease of analysis. Data analysis techniques are carried out through the process of grouping, theoretical interpretation, and contextual analysis. At the grouping stage, text excerpts are divided based on the characteristics of each masculinity. Furthermore, interpretation is carried out by associating these quotes with the theory of masculinity to map patterns of dominance, emotional restraint, violence considered legitimate by norms, and power relations between men and women, as well as between men and men.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

In the novel *The Death of a Former Minister* Nawal El Saadawi's work is the story of a former minister who is in power but now isolated and alone, facing total destruction after losing his position. A novel presented in the form of a monologue to his mother, slowly reveals the nepotism, tyranny and atrocities he committed during his time in power, both publicly and privately. In addition, the novel also highlights brutal gender equality, which highlights a system that puts men in the highest position. Gender equality in this context is understood as achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men to participate in various aspects of development, including political, economic, social, cultural, educational, and defense and security (Sulistiyowati, 2020). Thoroughly novel *The Death of a Former Minister* Nawal El Saadawi's work is one of the stinging reflections on the social, political, and emotional conditions of a society that is shackled by dogma.

Novels *The Death of a Former Minister* Nawal El Saadawi's work is a form of scathing criticism of not only the social and political world that occurs in Egyptian society, but also a critique and autopsy of the dominant, authoritarian and oppressive image of hegemonic masculinity in patriarchal society. El Saadawi sharply highlights that masculinity in this context is a tool of oppression. She explains how men, through this manifestation of masculinity, maintain a system that legitimizes subordination, objectification, and violence against women. The death of the former minister both physically and socially is a metaphor for the failure and emptiness of a kind of masculinity that is based only on power, not on true humanity. In the end, what is left behind is vulnerability, a reminder that all men, regardless of their position, are equally fragile human beings. The existence of subordination between men and women This results in women being marginalized and considered as mere complements in a male-dominated culture (Srimularahma, 2025).

Sukmawati (2024) emphasizes that gender, including masculinity, is actualized through actions that are carried out repeatedly to form gender norms This representation of masculinity not only shows how men are placed as dominant figures in society, but also shows how the character maintains the value of masculinity in the midst of its destruction both emotionally and physically, this novel displays various forms of masculinity, ranging from the form of masculinity to the hegemonic in which men are considered to be in power and have the right to determine everything up to a toxic form of masculinity (*toxic masculinity*) which is seen through aggressive attitudes, emotional control, and symbolic oppression of women. The following analysis presents the main findings regarding the representation of masculinity in the novel *The Death of a Former Minister*, which are classified by categories, text citations, and interpretations of hegemonic masculinity and toxic masculinity theories. This phenomenon shows that men who integrate new



masculinity values are able to resist the hegemonic masculinity norms that have placed women in the position of Fathinah's suborninat (in Utami & Demartoto, 2022).

Hegemonic masculinity refers to a pattern of gender practices that maintain and strengthen male dominance over women, while justifying superiority as a man over other men in the gender social order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In the Novel *The Death of a Former Minister* Nawal El Saadawi's work The role of hegemonic masculinity as a superior, namely a ministerial position, is the main marker of the masculinity of the character who has dominance or power, but in the novel the ministerial position becomes a boomerang over the death of masculinity values built by the figure.

Masculinity is understood as the result of gender construction shaped by social and cultural values in a society (Promise, 2022). Power structure basically explains how power is divided and exercised within an institution or organization. In Max Weber's view (Devi et al., 2023), this structure encompasses two main forms of authority, namely rational, legal authority and traditional authority. Rational and legal authority is based on rules, procedures, and laws that govern the legitimacy of power, while traditional authority rests on historical heritage, cultural values, and beliefs that have flourished in society. This understanding helps explain why ministerial positions are not only administrative positions, but also symbols of social legitimacy that reinforce masculine images and expand the space of dominance of figures in the gender system.

Moreover, the rational and legal power structures as described by Weber are generally dominated by male figures in patriarchal societies. This makes bureaucratic positions such as ministers a space that allows hegemonic masculinity to be demonstrated and social legitimacy. Patriarchy itself is a system of social structures and practices that place men as the parties that dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Jufanny & Girsang, 2020). Thus, the ministerial position not only functions as an administrative position, but also becomes a symbol of patriarchal power that supports the masculine image of the characters in the novel. Table 2 is the result of the findings of hegemonic masculinity that dominates its role.

Table 2: Hegemonic Masculinity in the Novel *of the Death of a Former Minister*

Number	Data	Categories	Title and Chapter
1.	"It is impossible for a person of my position to die just like that, without a large and prominent statement of condolence in the newspapers..."	Masculinity hegemony	MSMM/01/Hal. 3
2.	"A man never says ouch... I will endure the pain and tears when I am hurt..."	Hegemonic masculinity	MSMM/04/Hal. 53
3.	"... his head Height... Chest it is inflated..."	Hegemonic masculinity	MSMM/07/P.117
4.	"I love myself... I love my manhood and I realized from the beginning that it was My reason..."	Hegemonic masculinity	MSMM/04/Hal. 53
5.	"In an authoritarian tone of voice, the man said that no employee had ever argued with him, that no woman had ever fought him before..."	Hegemonic masculinity	MSMM/07/P.110

Based on the data in the table, it shows the characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity, which is a dynamic and rational mindset that has a higher position and role than women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In another sense, hegemonic masculinity is an analytical tool to detect the instrumentalistic relationship of domination and subordination between women and men or men and men (Salsabila, 2025) Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as a social class that is reflected in social life in the form of power or power that is more dominant than other genders.



In the data excerpts that have been presented, it highlights the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, namely, rationality, superior position and dominance. This is reflected in the first data showing that masculinity is external and depends on respect and public status. This status serves as a protective skin from his internal fears and emptiness. His biggest defeat was the potential death without masculine recognition (in the form of a message of condolence). This dependence is further strengthened by the second data, which shows the importance of enduring pain as a symbol of a man's strength and manhood. In addition, the third data highlights a physical gesture narrated in the novel used to show power, control, and a social position.

Hegemonic masculinity serves to legitimize male dominance in the patriarchal system so that it forms a gender hierarchy and unequal power relations, both between men and between men and women (Aetamimi et al., 2024). The fourth data further complements the masculinity characteristics depicted in the novel by showing an attitude of self-love and upholding masculinity, showing dominance and self-control that are the ideal of men in the patriarchal social structure. Furthermore, the fifth data further highlights how the hegemonic role is not submissive and obedient to women because in the theory of masculinity a woman must be obedient and not resist male authority. This subordinate position is further strengthened in patriarchal social structures, where men gain various advantages and privileges that place them in a dominant position. As a result, women are often treated as objects of control and even subjected to discrimination and violence in the domestic space (Date, 2023).

However, the results of this discussion reached its climax by realizing that a power symbolized as a minister in the novel *The Death of a Former Minister* becomes a weapon of master's eating or boomerang that destroys the values that have been built by the character. Narrative rejection this is in line with the view that hegemonic masculinity is not just personal domination, but a gender practice that legitimizes a dominant position over other groups, both men and women (Conference & Sciences, 2021). Because indirectly Novel *The Death of a Former Minister* has a function as a narrative rejection of hegemonic masculinity. Critically, Nawal El Saadawi as a writer of this novel conveys his criticism of masculinity which is built on external power (status and position) which is threatened with destruction and the internal integrity of the character collapses through the final fate.

3.1.1 Characteristics of Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a form of behavior born from a narrow definition of gender roles, namely when male dominant traits are exaggerated excessively to form rigid masculinity standards and suppress Ramdani (in Lestari & Durrin, 2024). Toxic masculinity (*toxic masculinity*) arises when masculine values that are actually natural turn into demands that limit male emotional and social development. This term is used to describe a pattern of behavior that emphasizes superiority, insensitivity, and the obligation to always appear strong in any situation. At this point, masculinity is no longer understood as a flexible identity, but rather as social rules that must be met in order for a person to be considered "masculine enough". These patterns can encourage men to reject vulnerability, hide emotional needs, and stay away from behaviors that are perceived as incompatible with traditional masculine images. As a consequence, various behaviors emerge that not only negatively impact the social environment, but also generate psychological pressure for men who seek to meet these standards.

Masculinity is not biological, but is a social construct that society constructs through the grouping of behaviors based on Whitehead's gender (in Kartika & Iqbal, 2023). The pressures of toxic masculinity not only shape male standards of behavior, but also limit the way they build closeness with others. The demand to always look strong and independent keeps many men away from the emotional support they actually need. As a result, the expression of feelings becomes inhibited and the tendency to withdraw increases. Anepey Research (in Putriana et al., 2025). shows that men are more prone to experiencing loneliness because of the demands to be recognized, master the situation, and continue to prove themselves, so that their social relationships are also disrupted.



In addition to having an impact on social relationships, toxic masculinity also affects the way men view and judge themselves. Men who are trapped in rigid masculinity norms tend to have low self-concept, feel insecure, and have difficulty expressing emotions in a healthy way (Bawangun et al., 2025). The pressure to always appear strong and dominant makes their fragile side suppressed, resulting in internal conflicts that exacerbate the sense of isolation. Thus, the effects of toxic masculinity are not only seen in social interactions, but also penetrate into the realm of psychology, affecting mental well-being and the individual's ability to build healthy relationships. Table 3 is the result of the findings of toxic masculinity characteristics (*Toxic Masculinity*).

Table 3: *Toxic Masculinity Representation in the Novel of the Death of a Former Minister*

Number	Data	Categories	Title and Chapter
1.	"I vented that feeling to them in my office with my subordinate officers, or at home with my wife who was targeted, just like what I saw Dad do to me, Mom."	<i>Toxic Masculinity</i>	MSMM/01/Hal. 4
2.	"We are men... I hit another guy if he couldn't get my hands on me and I received a higher blow..."	<i>Toxic Masculinity</i>	MSMM/04/Hal. 60
3.	"Committing a crime is the only possible way for a man to prove that he is a man."	<i>Toxic Masculinity</i>	MSMM/04/Hal. 55
4.	"We are men... I hit another guy If he can't get my hands on it and I get a higher blow..."	<i>Toxic Masculinity</i>	MSMM/04/Hal. 6
5.	"My father was a civilized man... able to hide his true desire to choke my neck"	<i>Toxic Masculinity</i>	MSMM/03/Hal. 39

This discussion focuses on the analysis of the concept of toxic masculinity which is defined as the demand for men to behave according to traditional masculinity norms, such as self-limitation, domination, and negative views of women and homosexual groups. Men are expected to have a bigger physique than women, both in terms of height and muscle mass, and do not show vulnerability (Firdiyogi, 2022). this obstruction does not stand alone, but rather is the embodiment of a practice legitimized by a larger framework: Hegemonic Masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

(A) Hegemonic Masculinity as the Dominant Structure

Gender differences are socially formed, with men being associated with masculine and feminine women. Conflict arises when these differences are used to maintain the dominance of the Fasih (in Joseph, 2023) Based on the data table, it can be reclassified in data numbers 2, 3, and 4 the occurrence of a physical conflict and violence carried out as a form of defense to maintain position and recognition in society. This phenomenon is in line with Terry A. (Kupers, 2005) view of toxic masculinity, namely physical and emotional violence used as a defense against power and control. This phenomenon reflects a stereotype that power is the only legitimate masculine currency.

Within the framework of the patriarchal system, *toxic masculinity* It is formed as a social construct that emphasizes male dominance, physical strength, and emotional toughness, while rejecting traits or behaviors that are considered feminine (Hu & Rossalia, 2025). This can be seen in data number 5, where a father who commits internal violence or hides violence and fears intimacy in toxic masculinity theory (Kupers, 2005). Toxic masculinity demands that men become powerful and powerful figures so that fear and emotions are perceived as threats to their social status. Hiding violence in public and venting it in the domestic environment becomes a diversion mechanism for lost control in the public eye.



(B) Reproduction of Violence Through Symbolic Violence and Habitus

A pattern of domination that can occur from generation to generation occurs due to the existence of a legitimizing sociological mechanism. The findings of data number 1 reveal the existence of symbolic violence that occurs in the domestic realm which shows a transformation from the public realm to the private realm, as well as a replication of the pattern of dominance of masculinity that has spread to the family realm and makes it a habitus or *Lifestyle*. This view is supported by Bourdieu (in S. Ulfah et al., 2023), which emphasizes that the family plays a key role in perpetuating masculine dominance and values, by accustoming family members from childhood to the division of labor based on gender and its forms of representation.

According to (Bourdieu, 2001). Symbolic Violence occurs when the power structure is accepted and recognized by the dominated party without realizing it, thus forming a habitus. Bourdieu (in Intan, 2021). adding that symbolic violence is carried out through domination over recognition and consent that is detached from consciousness. In this context, the practice of venting and violence in the domestic sphere occurs repeatedly and this is accepted as a natural thing. These patterns then become habitus and become blueprints in the family. So toxic masculinity serves as a habit that is transferred between generations.

From the discussion above, *toxic masculinity* is formed not only through individual behavior, but also through patriarchal social structures that legitimize male domination. Symbolic violence in the domestic realm is a means of internalizing masculine values, thus forming male dominance while limiting that toxic masculinity has a wide impact on men and their social environment. Therefore, critical awareness and reflective efforts are needed to reduce the reproduction of these adverse behaviours in society.

3.1.2 The Collapse of the Image of Masculinity

The collapse of the concept of masculinity seen in various studies suggests that traditional male norms can no longer meet the emotional needs of modern men. (Jayakody, 2024) reveals that the pressure to maintain masculine traits such as strength, assertiveness, and control often leads to identity struggles when the true feelings don't match society's expectations. This tension is increasingly evident as social and cultural changes urge men to adopt more adaptive forms of masculinity, leaving them feeling confused in understanding their own roles (Jamil, 2025).

In the social context, men are often judged to be unsuccessful when they fail to meet masculinity norms, resulting in social pressure that encourages them to continue displaying masculine behavior (Vebiana & Ariana, 2023) Meta-analysis research on traditional masculinity norms shows that strong attachment to dominant masculine norms is related to rejection of psychological help, increased internal stress, and the emergence of conflict in gender roles, which suggests the collapse of rigid masculinity frameworks in the face of the complexities of today's life experiences. In addition, changes in the economy and society have also led to confusion and loss of identity in men who previously relied on traditional masculine images as a foothold for self-esteem. The results of this study show that the glorification of cultural masculinity norms is often not in line with human needs, thus providing an opportunity to understand masculinity in a more inclusive and psychological way of the individual. Table 4 is the collapse of the image of masculinity.

Table 4: Representation of Subordinate Masculinity in the Novel *of the Death of a Former Minister*

Number	Data	Categories	Title and Chapter
1.	"I superior..."	Subordinate Masculinity	MSMM/01/Hal. 4
2.	"I held back my tears... That night, I crying in a hug... For the first time I knew I didn't need to prove myself."	Subordinate Masculinity	MSMM/04/Hal. 58
3.	"A man needs at least two women... one place to blaspheme, one place to complain and cry."	Subordinate Masculinity	MSMM/04/Hal. 60



This discussion focuses on the concept of subordinate masculinity, this concept is a theory developed by R.W. Connell. Subordinate masculinity is masculinity that is positioned under hegemonic masculinity and is subjected to oppression. For failing to meet the standards of "masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). A failure experienced by men related to economics, sexual orientation and expression that is the standard of hegemonic masculinity.

(A) Emotional Repression as a Demand for Masculinity

Subordinate masculinity failure can occur in emotional failure due to toxic masculinity pressures. Based on the data displayed in the table, there is a failure to maintain the value of masculinity, namely in data numbers 1 and 2, namely a character's acknowledgment of his inability to express hatred for his superiors (Kupers, 2005). In line with the toxic masculinity theory that considers fear, sadness and hatred as femininity. Furthermore, failure to hold back emotions (crying) is a failure to be the ideal "masculine". This emotional repression creates destructive internal pressures, which ultimately place the man in a subordinate position in the emotional and psychological system. According to Freud (in Nensilanti1 et al., 2025) Repression does not eliminate emotional impulses, but only prevents them from appearing in consciousness, so that inner pressure remains and has an impact on the behavior and psychological condition of men. In addition to psychological repression, the failure of the character in expressing emotions reflects Normative Alexithymia, namely, the amount of psychological pressure and the increase in negative emotions that have been normalized (Aetamimi et al., 2024). This gives the position of the figure in the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity.

Data number 4 shows the mechanism of venting violence, where men who are subordinated in one social realm, for example in the office, can vent dominance in other realms, such as against their wives. This tendency is reinforced by a patriarchal view that places women under male authority (Rain, 2022) This phenomenon reflects how hegemonic masculinity is at the same time toxic as it allows subordination in one field not to prevent individuals from remaining to assert power and control in another. This condition also confirms the crisis of masculinity, as explained by Messerschmidt (in Kinssy et al., 2025) that the inability to meet dominant gender expectations can push men toward destructive behaviors, including agency being diverted to the weaker side. Thus, internal pressures and the demands of hegemonic masculinity norms play an important role in triggering aggressive actions directed at the more vulnerable social spheres.

Based on the discussion above, the collapse of masculinity in *The Death of a Former Minister* explained that the emphasis on hegemonic and toxic masculinity norms can limit emotional expression, as well as be able to trigger identity conflicts, and can encourage aggression that is diverted to weaker parties. Emotional repression can trigger psychological stress, while *the mechanism of displaced aggression* asserts dominance in other realms. This phenomenon emphasizes the need to understand masculinity more inclusively, appreciate or respect emotional well-being, and build equal or balanced social relationships.

References

- Admaja, A. W., & Wirawanda, Y. (2024). *Representation of Masculinity in Glow Men Advertising (Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis)*.
- Aetamimi, B. D. A., Saharudin, & Khairussibyan. (2024). *Representation of Male Masculinity in the Folklore of Princess Mandalika*. 1–10.
- Alimi, N. (2025). Poisonous Pedagogy: Patriarchal Religious Tenet of Child Illegitimacy in Nawal El-Sadaawi's *The Fall of the Imam*. *NIU Journal Of Humanities*, 10(1), 147-157.
doi:10.58709/niujuh.v10i1.2109
- Andriana, M. O., Solihin, M., & Basuki, U. (2023). *Toxic Masculinity In Joss's Extra Ad "Men Dare To Be Different"*. 3(1), 66–75.
- Bawangun, Y., Tiwa, T. M., & Kaunang, S. E. J. (2025). *The Relationship Between Toxic Masculinity And Self-Concept In Adolescent Boys Of State Universities*. 6(3), 257–263.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Male domination*.



- Conference, A., & Sciences, C. (2021). *Adab-International Conference on Information and Cultural Sciences*.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). *Gender & Society Rethinking the Concept*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
- Devi, I., Hanani, S., Syafitri, A., Indri, N., & Harahap, Y. (2023). *Bureaucracy and Power Structures in Modern Educational Organizations: with Max Weber's Approach the important role in organizations and social systems. Within this framework, there are different types*. 2(4).
- El Saadawi, N. (2005). *The Death of a Former Minister* (L. Hua, Trans.). Jakarta, Indonesia: Yayasan Obor Indonesia. (Original Work Published 1987).
- Firdiyogi, N. U. R. (2022). *Positive Masculinity Social Construct And*.
- Hayward, S. (2005). (Dis)Enabling Masculinities: The Word and the Body, Class Politics, and Male Sexuality in El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*. , 137-151.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403979605_9.
- Hu, S. M., & Rossalia, N. (2025). *An Overview Of Toxic Masculinity And The Tendency To Body Dysmorphic Disorder (Bdd) In Sarah's Adolescent Boys*. 14(1), 96–110.
- Intan, T. (2021). *Symbolic Violence and Women's Resistance in the Novel My Lecturer My Husband by Gitlicious*.
- Jamil, I. (2025). *Masculinity in Crisis? Exploring Shifts in Male Identity in the 21st Century*. 12–17.
- Jayakody, J. M. A. K. (2024). *The Impact Of Masculinity In Identity Formation , Health Behaviors And Outcomes In The Masculine Identity Formation – In Relation To ' Boys Don ' T Cry ' (1999) And ' The Mask You Live In ' (2015)*. 97–104.
- Jannah, M., Nur, S., Prameswari, R., & Afrizal, M. (2025). *The Image of Masculinity of Male Characters in the Novel Trauma by Boy Candra*. 2001.
- Jufanny, D., & Girsang, L. R. M. (2020). *Toxic Masculinity In The Patriarchal System (Analysis of Van Dijk's Critical Discourse in the Film " Possessive ")*. 14(1).
- Juhana, J., Qalbi, N., & Arfani, S. (2021). Gender Inequality in The Novel “Death of an Ex-Minister” by Nawal El Saadawi. *Eralingua: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Asing dan Sastra*.
<https://doi.org/10.26858/eralingua.v5i1.12543>.
- Karim, P., & Malti-Douglas, F. (1997). Men, women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab feminist poetics. , 46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3012651>.
- Kartika, K., & Iqbal, M. (2023). *Toxic Masculinity on TikTok*. 48–62.
- Kinssy, G., Masculinity, T., & Teen, K. (2025). *Semiotic Analysis of Toxic Masculinity in the Representation of Juvenile Delinquency in the Adolescence Mini Series (2025)*. *That is why we need to be careful not to overdo it*. 1:1-14.
- Kupers, T. A. (2005). Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 713–724. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20105>
- Lestari, D., & Durrin, A. (2024). *Journal of Political Science and Governance Toxic Masculinity and Online-Based Patriarchy Against BTS Fandom as Gender Violence in Indonesia*. 10(November), 21–41.
- Maulana, M. F. (2022). *Men's Involvement in Gender Equality*. 3(2), 138–150.
<https://doi.org/10.32505/anifa.v3i2.4899>
- Nensilanti1, Ridwan, & Aini, N. (2025). *The Dynamics of Sexuality and Repression: A Freudian Analysis in Introduction*. 5(4), 4846–4865.
- Noor, M. A., & Damayanti, V. Pura. (2024). *Toxic Masculinity in Male Japanese Anime Cosplayers*. 3, 437–446.
- Parta, I. B. M. W. (2023). *Novel Wijaya Kusuma Patriarchal Environment*. Sec. 200–208.
- Prasetyo, A. B. (2022). *Description of Masculinity in Caffino Coffee Advertising on Instagram Anggik Budi Prasetyo Representation of Masculinity in Advertising Caffino Coffee on Instagram information that is prima donna because of the form of photos and videos. One of the things to the community*. 37, 50–62.
- Purwanto, J., Sholeh, K., Khonifa, U., & Faizah, U. (2024). Representation of the Image of Masculinity in Ismadi's Flower of Folklore and Its Relevance as a Teaching Material for Hikayat Texts in Class X of High School. *Journal of Research, Education and Teaching: JPPP*, 5(3), 281–290.
<https://doi.org/10.30596/jppp.v5i3.20230>
- Putriana, N., Indreswari, H., & Wahyuni, F. (2025). "Why Guys Cry?": *The Challenge of Toxic Masculinity in School*. 11(1), 96–111.
- S, N. U., Juanda, & Faisal. (2023). *Symbolic Violence of 'Wife' Characters in Women's Short Stories and Real Wedding Gifts (Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Masculine Dominance)*. 3(2), 250–259.
- Salsabila, C. A. (2025). *Hegemonic masculinity in Novels such as Revenge of Desire Must Be Paid Fully by Eka Kurniawan*. 20(1).
- Sanusi, N. (2014). *Masculinity in Gillette We Believe: What Best Man Can Be Nunung Sanusi Ryzal Dwiputra*. 61–69.
- Shousha, N., & Taha, D. (2025). *Sacred Bonds, Silent Pain: Understanding Women's Perceptions and*



- Experiences of Marital Rape in Egypt. *Journal of Family Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-025-00902-4>.
- Sukmawati, N. L. A. (2024). *Suing Masculinity Stereotypes: The Role of Housewives in the Film Rumah Aya (2021)*. *Fig. 4*, 96–110.
- Sulistiyowati, Y. (2020). *Gender equality in the scope of education and social order*. 1(2), 1–14.
- T, E. S., & Srimularahma, A. (2025). *Language Sexism in the Novel "Women at Point Zero" by Nawal El - Saadawi Gender Perspective*. 3(4), 1122–1136.
- Ulhaq, N. F., & Alfian, I. N. (2025). *The relationship between the conformity of masculine gender norms and the attitude of seeking professional psychological help in men of emerging adulthood was moderated by emotional intelligence*.
- Utami, C. M., & Demartoto, A. (2022). *Representation Of New Masculinity (Case Study on Metrosexual Students at the University of Eleven*. 1–10.
- Vebiana, D., & Ariana, A. D. (2023). *Masculinity and Help-seeking Intention in Early Adult Males: Self-stigma as Mediation*. *May 2023*, 11–19.
- Wajdi, M., Darlina, L., Nyoman, I., Sanjaya, S., & Susanto, B. (2024). *A Self-Confident Profile: An Analysis of the Novel The Old Man and the Sea*. *Journal of Language and Literature*. <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v24i1.6673>.
- Wajdi, M., Purnomo, S. H., Mariam, S., Suriyadi, S., & Amrullah, A. (2024). *Exploring social class dynamics in the novel "Laskar Pelangi": An in-depth analysis*. *Journal of Education, Social & Communication Studies*, 1(1), 35–45. Retrieved from <https://ojs.ptmjb.com/index.php/JESCS/article/view/5> (Original work published January 15, 2024)
- Wajdi, M., Joaquin, C. J., Ayub, S., Mustafa, M., & Uzma, S. M. (2025). *Nostalgia and bonds: Exploring themes of friendship, family, and love in K-drama "Reply 1988"*. *Journal of Language, Literature, Social and Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 220–232. <https://doi.org/10.58881/jllscs.v3i1.31>
- Yusuf, F. (2023). *Education and Learning Journal. Also Read*, 192–194.

