



# AN ANALYSIS OF MASCULINITY IN BTS BOY BAND MUSIC VIDEOS

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## Article History

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## Abstract

The massive popularity of K-Pop currently regards as one of the world's most popular. As a result, the researcher was drawn to the Bangtan Boys (BTS) music videos entitled We Are Bulletproof Pt.2 and Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey). This study aims to find out what kind of masculinity BTS Boy Band built and how they portrayed their masculinity in their music videos. The writer also used the qualitative descriptive based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as a sign system separated into denotation and connotation, which builds a myth to obtain the meaning. The results found that the type of masculinity represented by the BTS boyband is metrosexual, seonbi, and bishonen. They have portrayed their masculinity from fashion usage that crosses gender boundaries, expression, and gestures that they represent in the music videos. BTS has a significant role in society as a public figure, especially for the younger generation who love and understand themselves more. If the man himself has femininity and masculinity, there is nothing wrong. BTS has redefined masculinity in many ways, and the most obvious is how they present themselves physically. They portray how the freedom and flexibility to wear whatever they want regardless of gender. BTS also teaches men that it does not become harmful for men to admit that they are vulnerable. It is all right to be clumsy, and nobody will judge anything about it. Loving ourselves is more important than following popular standards in society (which is not necessarily good for one's mental health).

**Keywords:** Literature, Masculinity, K-Pop, BTS, Music Video

## INTRODUCTION

Generally, music is seen as everything related to human voices and musical instruments, music is a branch of art that often appears in human life. Nowadays, various types of music have emerged along with the times, including blues, R&B, jazz, classical, pop, hip hop, and rock. K-Pop music is a genre of popular music originating from South Korea. In this modern era, K-Pop music has become one of the most popular music genres. Masculinity is something important in Korean pop, especially towards members of the boy groups, masculinity means

it is not always visible through the physical, but rather to something that exists from within them, such as the characteristics, behavior, and attitudes of each individual. The concept of masculinity has been applied to many K-pop groups, including BTS. This worldwide phenomenon has been dominating the music industry and breaking language barriers. BTS Stands for Korean expression Bangtan Sonyeondan or Bulletproof boy scouts, BTS is a South Korean male singer group formed by big hit entertainment, BTS consist of 7 people namely RM, Jin, Suga, jhope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook. The writer will analyze fashion, makeup, hair color, their expression, and gesture that shaped masculinity and how BTS breaks the gender norms. An understanding of how societies shape masculinity. Hence, based on the previous descriptions, the writer interested to find what kind of masculinity does BTS Boy Band build in both of their music videos: *We Are Bulletproof, Pt. 2* and *Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey)*.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gender**

Gender is not biological but rather socially constructive. Gender refers to the social process of dividing people and social practices based on their sexed identities. Gender theory can understand as a social construct that addresses the social position and power regarding sexes. Femininity, Masculinity, and Sexuality are a part of Gender studies (Beasley, 2005: 175-186). Based on that opinion, gender is not carried from birth but learned through socialization; therefore, gender can change. Gender role is also a concept of the social construct shaped by the society and culture around us.

### **Femininity**

Femininity is an identity category related to social and cultural characteristics connected with being a woman (Barker, 2004: 86), Based on the definition above, feminine features are not intrinsically wrong—like other human traits, they are frequently beneficial and perform significant functions. However, there are various factors at work in our male and masculine-centric culture that conspires to weaken feminine features and the people who exhibit them.

### **Masculinity**

Masculinity is a quality associated with maleness and manhood. Because of the social construct, masculinity seeing as a counterpart of femininity (Levesque, R. J. R, 2018: 1151). Based on that opinion, behavior patterns and views of masculinity mean the opposite of femininity. For many years being masculine means men have to be tough, manly. However, as the years continued, society began to change and saw masculinity and femininity as distinct but mutually exclusive traits that can coexist in every individual, no matter what their given gender is.

### **Semiotics**

Semiotics means a sign which comes from the Greek word semeion. The sign is defined as something based on a previously established social convention, which can be considered representative as something else. According to Barthes in Hanum (2016: 1-3), Semiology aims to take in any system of signs whatever their substances and limits like; images, gestures, musical sounds, and objects. Barthes uses the denotation and connotation levels of meanings to analyze signs or symbol in a visual object. Denotation for images implies what all viewers would recognize the objects, which the images intend to convey, while connotation refers to the sign's socio-cultural and personal associations, and Myth to describe how culture conveys

meaning (Chandler, 2002; Sturken and Cartwright, 2003). The denomination in Barthes' view is the first state whose meaning is closed. The state of denomination produces an explicit, direct and definite meaning. As in the example shown, the men's suit costume is pink. The denomination is the true meaning, which is agreed upon socially, which references reality. Connotative signs are signs whose markers have an implicit, indirect, and uncertain openness of meaning or meaning, meaning the possibility of new interpretations. For example, women's accessories depict femininity. Based on the explanation, semiology is a comprehensive field that explain and analyze signs reflected from objects around human beings. When someone sees an object, the object would indirectly get connotation and denotation. Denotation itself is related to the looking of an object that tries to deliver a message or other meanings. Besides, connotation is related to the understanding and perspective of people based on some factors such as education, culture, and religion.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This writer chooses the qualitative descriptive approach as a research method. Qualitative descriptive is also defining as a research method that produces descriptive data in written or oral words that can observe (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). This research using a qualitative descriptive approach because the kind of data analyzed is audiovisual. The data are not collected statistically or by using research figures but using techniques derived from explanations and interpretations. The data from this study were collected from two music videos from BTS: We Are Bulletproof, Pt.2 and Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey) regarding scenes showing masculinity as the focus of the semiotic research proposed in this study. The following procedure collected the data: first, the writer downloading and watching music videos from hybe labels official youtube channel. Second, identifying the scenes which contain the masculinity in the music videos, three, the writer screen capturing or screen shoot the scenes that are relevant to masculinity, and four, categorizing and separating for each category of masculinity. After collecting the data, the writer analyzed the data through the technique: the first process was to classify the types of masculinity based on fashion, make up, hairstyle, facial expression, and gestures. And then, after classifying the types of masculinity, the writer discuss the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth by sticking to the scenes.

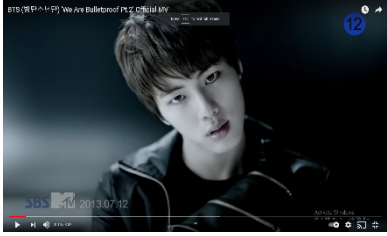





## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This research is analyzing BTS music videos entitled "We Are Bulletproof Pt.2" and "Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey)" by finding out what kind of masculinity does BTS Boy Band build in both of their music videos. The researcher will use the semiotic model of Roland Barthes. Barthes develops two staggering systems that allow producing meaning that is also stratified, namely the level of denotation and connotations. In addition, Barthes also looks at meaning at a deeper level but is more conventional, namely meanings related to myths. The result of the analysis are the type of masculinity that represent by BTS boyband are metrosexual, seonbi, and bishonen. It is a much-needed message for those struggling with fear of retaliation or criticism, as it shows that this form of expression can be accepted and celebrated. BTS has redefined masculinity in many ways, and the most obvious is how they present themselves physically. They portray how the freedom and flexibility to wear whatever we want regardless of gender. BTS's role in this situation is exciting, can be used as an example so that men are more accepting of their vulnerability. BTS also tells the public that accepting their vulnerability is not bad; they have managed to turn it into creativity and create solid and meaningful work.

It means BTS members are not afraid to prove society wrong in building toxic masculinity during this time.

### Data Analysis 1: Types of Masculinity BTS Boyband Build in Both of Their Music

#### Videos

We are Bulletproof pt.2 and Boy with Luv Music videos		
<p>Figure 1 (00.10)</p> 	<p>Figure 2 (00.11)</p> 	<p>Figure 3 (00.12)</p> 
<p>Figure 4 (00.29)</p> 	<p>Figure 5 (01.25)</p> 	<p>Figure 6 (02.53)</p> 

#### Denotative Meaning:

We can see in the picture that most BTS members are wearing black outfits and facing forward. Most of them are wearing sports outfits. As we can see in figure number 1, Jin is wearing a black leather jacket that resembles a motorbike rider. In figure number 2, Jungkook is wearing a rugby (American football) outfit with a variation. In figure number 3, Jimin is wearing a basketball outfit with side facing hat. In figure number 4, V wears a pink outfit with blue hair color and also wearing earrings. In figure number 5, 3 BTS members are wearing multiple outfits with pink and black hair colors. In figure number 6, all BTS members wear almost all pink colors with some accessories and multiple hair colors.

#### Connotative Meaning:




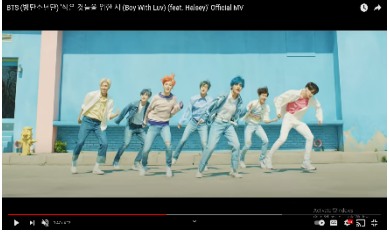

One of BTS member is wear a black leather jacket which is usually associated with aggression and power (Geczy & Karaminas, 2018, p. 104). The black color signifies power. Hargreaves (1986, p. 1) suggests that sport is the manifestation of escaping from boredom and deprivation, which is preferring by men in general and promoted by modern society. Aggressiveness and toughness are perceiving as ordinary and necessary in contemporary sporting practice. BTS members also wear the girly outfit, as we can see in pictures number

4, 5, and 6; it shows that no matter what gender we present, we can wear any outfit that makes us comfortable.

*Myth:*

This scene represents the relationship between masculinity and sport. As noted above, sport is the act of overcoming boredom. Men have a connection with their bodies to express identity. The Injury of sport is approving as the masculine lifestyle. Moreover, physical Injury in sport sees as the performance of maleness. The Injury is not affected the physical state in the first place, but rather the mentality of maintaining masculine performance. Therefore, the performance of masculinity is influencing by the gazes of others at men (Furthermore, such a masculinity performance may lead to self-destruction.

**Data Analysis 2: The Usage of Fashion (Outfit) that Crosses Gender Boundaries**

Boy with Luv Music Video		
<p>Figure 1 (00.21)</p> 	<p>Figure 2 (01.23)</p> 	<p>Figure 3 (01.01.25)</p> 
<p>Figure 4 (01.35)</p> 	<p>Figure 5 (01.46)</p> 	<p>Figure 6 (02.46)</p> 

*Denotative Meaning:*

As we can see from all the pictures above, all the BTS members are wearing colorful outfits. Most of the members wear pink outfits, while others wear blue, violet, and yellow outfits.


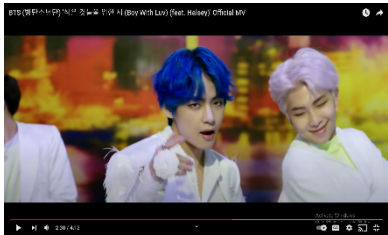




*Connotative Meaning:*

From the picture above, it can seem that some of the personal BTS are included in the characteristics that are widely applied by boybands in Asia, especially South Korea. They often wear an outfit that crosses gender boundaries. They often wear some bright and pink colors, and even tight pants, patterned and colorful. Besides that, in the picture above, all BTS personnel take care of their body appearance and dress style. They unhesitatingly wore clothes that a woman usually wore.

*Myth:*

Since the 19th century, Gender signifiers such as pink and blue have been utilized, especially for newborns and early children. In the United States, there is a current tradition. (and many other countries) is "pink for girls, blue for boys." Before 1940, two conflicting traditions coexisted in the U.S., the current tradition and its opposite, i.e., "blue for girls, pink for boys."

**Data Analysis 3: The Usage of Make-up by BTS Personnel**

We are Bulletproof pt.2 and Boy With Luv Music Videos		
<p>Figure 1 (02.03)</p> 	<p>Figure 2 (02.30)</p> 	<p>Figure 3 (02.13)</p> 
<p>Figure 4 (01.51)</p> 	<p>Figure 5 (00.13)</p> 	<p>Figure 6 (00.11)</p> 

*Denotative Meaning:*

Most male k-pop idols use makeup to support their appearance to be flawless when performing on the stage. As we saw in the picture above, all members of the BTS boyband put simple makeup such as eye shadow, blush on, and lipstick to support their appearance on the stage.

*Connotative Meaning:*

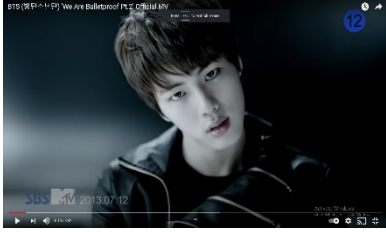





In South Korean culture, the man who wears makeup is expected because their role model is used to do it. In general, people in South Korea are very concerned about their appearance. In the 19th century, men who wore makeup could be found in opera events, unlike today. Everyone takes care of themselves and wears makeup to support that

*Myth:*

When we know a male friend who likes to take care of the body to the spa salon, we may insinuate them as "more than women." It is because body care is identical with feminine women, and it is closely related to the term "recessed" because it is time-consuming, costly, and impractical in men's opinions. It turns out; now we are no longer surprised by men who have been taking care of their bodies for a long time in salons and spas.

Moreover, more and more men's body care products are flooding supermarket shelves. As a result, body care and appearance become neutral.

**Data Analysis 4: Expression of the BTS Personnel**

We are Bulletproof pt.2 and Boy with Luv Music Videos		
Figure 1(00.10) 	Figure 2 (00.11) 	Figure 3 (00.14) 
Figure 4 (02.13) 	Figure 5 (00.51) 	Figure 6 (02.04) 

*Denotative Meaning:*

As seen in the pictures above, some BTS members show sad facial expressions and frowns. Sad expression is one of the male characters who tend to be gentle and sensitive. Regardless of how tough the man is, sometimes they are sad and sullen.

*Connotative Meaning:*

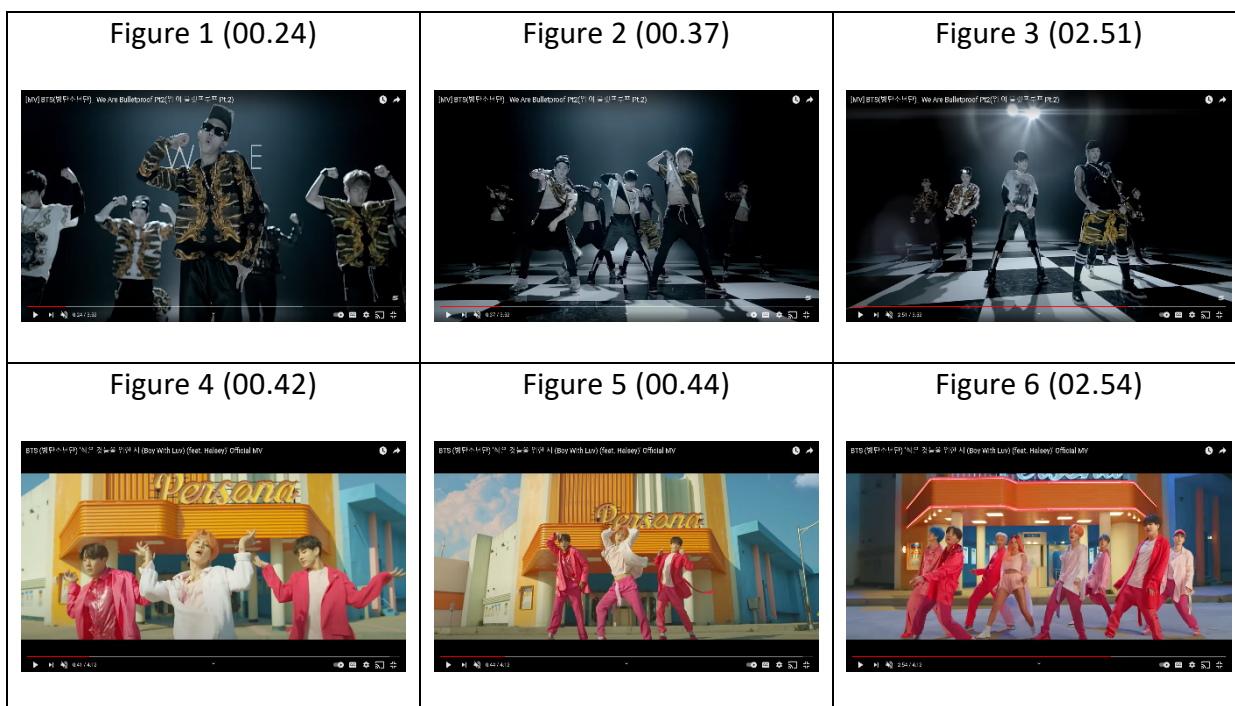
No matter what gender, everyone has the right to express themselves freely without holding back. Some BTS members show their fragility because they are not awkward in expressing whether it is sad, happy, angry, and more.

*Myth:*

Generally, masculine characteristics known to the public are a tough man, competitive spirit, holding feelings, and being cold. However, due to culture and period, the characteristics also change. Nowadays, masculinity is very constructed by the mass media. The media plays an essential role in shaping masculinity by ideal imaging criteria to be a masculine man.

**Data Analysis 5: Gestures of the BTS Personnel.**

We are Bulletproof pt.2 and Boy with Luv Music Videos
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*Denotative Meaning:*

In the music video, "We Are Bulletproof Pt.2", the gestures displayed by BTS members tend to be more masculine. In figure 1, the BTS members make a fist as if to show that they are strong. In figure 2, as we can see BTS members showing off a flat and muscular stomach. While in figure 3, BTS members demonstrate a gesture that shows masculinity by putting both hands in their pockets while standing straight.

Unlike the gesture in the music video, "We Are Bulletproof Pt.2", the BTS members are seen demonstrating a more gentle and feminine gesture in the music video "Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey)." On figure 1, three BTS members make a gesture that raises both hands and looks to flex their hands. Figure 2 also shows three BTS members who demonstrate a feminine gesture by waving their hands up. Meanwhile, figure 3 shows all BTS members and Halsey, demonstrating their chest contortion gestures simultaneously.

*Connotative Meaning:*

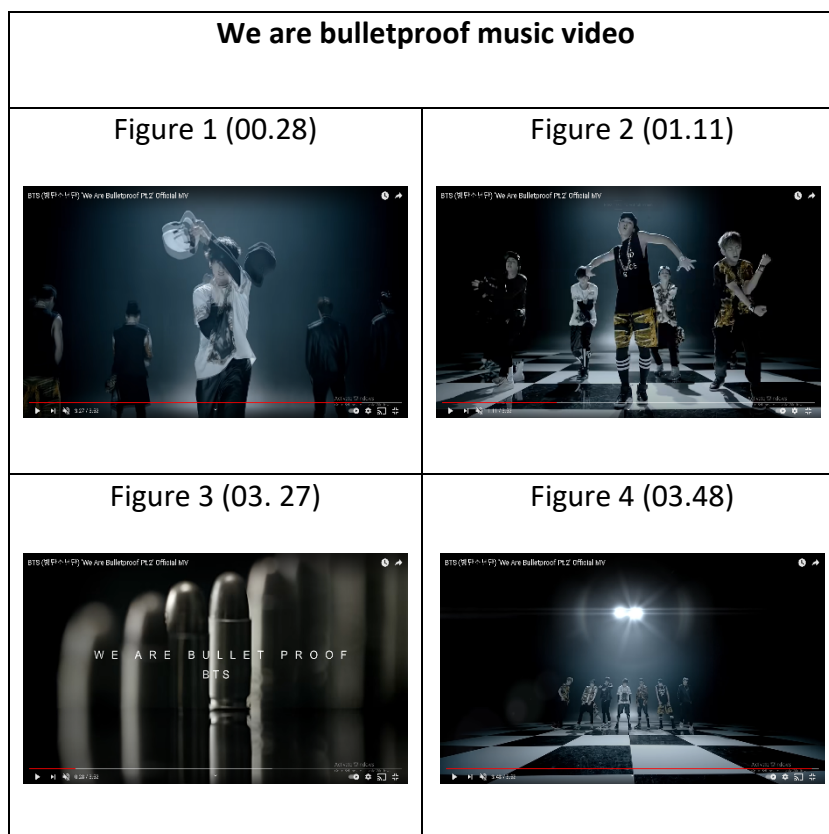
In the music video, we are bulletproof; all BTS members look tough, strong, and not easy to beat. It is in line with the music video's theme, which explains that no matter what happens, we must be tough, strong, and not give up easily in any case. Meanwhile, in the Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey) music video, BTS members seem to want to show that men do not always have to be firm; there are times when they are gentle and loving.

*Myth:*

Masculinity and femininity cannot be measured just by looking at the gestures performed by certain genders; there are times when men act like women and vice versa. For example, tomboyish women often behave like men and often demonstrate male gestures and vice versa.



## Data Analysis 6: Visual Analysis of We Are Bulletproof Pt. 2 and Boy With Luv (feat. Halsey) Music Videos



### *Denotative Meaning:*

Three members of BTS are seen in a dark room with black and white tiled floors, and the only light is illuminating from above. Then, a scene shows BTS members one by one with different costume colors, but the color is the same. In the picture on figure 1, we can see an image of a line of bullets with white writing that says We Are Bulletproof, which is the song's title that will perform in the video.

The picture in figure 2 shows that all BTS members are preparing to dance simultaneously, like most other k-pop music videos. The music sounds intense, then Jungkook can be seen throwing a hat in slow motion, as shown in figure 4. Finally, in the closing of the video clip, all BTS members can be seen doing different poses.

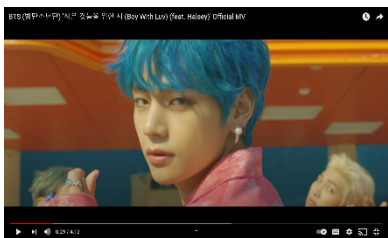



### *Connotative Meaning:*

In this music video, three of the BTS members are standing straight; this can interpret that they are very confident about what they will do. The song is created for the people that are called haters, that no matter what haters say about them, will survive and do their best to the ARMY (BTS fans). They are saying haters that even if haters say anything about them, BTS does not care because they are bulletproof, as, in figure number 1, they represent that the haters are a bullet pointing at them with negative things.

In this song, BTS talks about giving up their social life and freedom for their dreams. Instead of playing and having fun, they gave up sleeping and working hard by rehearsing day and night to become superstars, yet haters criticize them for plagiarism and all sort of illegal things.

*Myth:*

Muscular bodies and public roles are often considered masculine traits attached to the male gender. On the other hand, gentleness, caring for children, and doing various household chores are often called feminine traits. However, it turns out that many married couples understand that building a household takes the cooperation of both parties. Not infrequently, we often see men taking care of their children and shopping for household supplies at the market. We also often see women who work, take on public roles, and become heads of household.

<b>Boy With Luv Music Video</b>	
<b>Figure 1 (00.29)</b> 	<b>Figure 2 (00.38)</b> 
<b>Figure 3 (00.54)</b> 	<b>Figure 4 (1.25)</b> 

*Denotative Meaning:*

The music video begins with three BTS members preparing to dance, and they wear bright color clothes, and some members dyed their hair with pink, blue, and orange colors, as we can see in figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. Some members wear earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings, considered feminine user equipment.

*Connotative Meaning:*

Specific colors are often associated with certain genders and expressions. For example, blue is masculine, suitable for men, while pink is feminine and suitable for women. Likewise, with things, jewelry such as earrings, bracelets, and necklaces are identical to women.

*Myth:*

With such a perception developing in society, it is not surprising that many men do not want to wear clothes and accessories with pink colors because it will give the man the impression

of girly. However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, pink was considered a masculine color. It thought that pink was a masculine color because of the relationship between pink and red, depicting energy, activity, and aggression. Pink is seeing as a lighter version of red which was known as a masculine color.

## DISCUSSION

The aims of this research are to find out the kind of masculinity does BTS Boy Band build in some of their music videos: *We Are Bulletproof Pt.2* and *Boy With Luv* (feat. Halsey). Korean idols currently intend for men who have masculinity but do not lose their gentle attitude, charm, and dignity. Men's soft appearance is complicated when they first appear because, among the prevailing men in society, men usually show masculinity, bravery, adventurousness, love to challenge, and do not show their personality, the soft side. Over time, these things considered uncommon eventually become commonplace so that men who are gentle and soft at the same time no longer become unfamiliar.

After analyzing the data, the writer found that the type of masculinity that represent by BTS boyband are metrosexual, seonbi, and bishonen. BTS has redefined masculinity in many ways, and the most obvious is how they present themselves physically. They portray how the freedom and flexibility to wear whatever we want regardless of gender. BTS also tells the public that accepting their vulnerability is not bad; they have managed to turn it into creativity and create solid and meaningful work. It means BTS members are not afraid to prove society wrong in building toxic masculinity during this time.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, The fashion that BTS used in their music video that crossed gender boundaries. Most Korean people used to wear anything that made them comfortable. It is now a culture in South Korea to wear anything without a discriminate specific gender in fashion. People who do not mind gender habits are usually more straight forward in expressing their feeling.

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