

## Exploring the Language Usage in Mark Twain's Novel "Adventures of Tom Sawyer": Hegemonic Masculinity Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The practice of legitimizing men's dominance is known as hegemonic masculinity, and it is a concept that has often been explored through numerous adult novels, but rarely in children's literature. To address this research gap, this study conducted a text analysis on the types of hegemonic masculinity depictions in Mark Twain's "Adventures of Tom Sawyer", as one of the most read novels by young readers who attend schools with an international curriculum. The researchers used the descriptive qualitative method hand in hand with Connell and Messerschmidt's theory of hegemonic masculinity. The result showed 3 types of hegemonic masculinity displayed in the novel include toxic masculinity, bad boy archetype, and dominant-submissive roles. These types can influence young to imitate bad role model, engage in bullying, and develop an unhealthy habit of hiding their feelings. Young readers may begin to see mischievous, manipulating, and aggressive behaviour as a common thing to do or even should be done to establish their place in society. *Tom Sawyer* is mandatory reading in the curriculum and is a classic that is unlikely to be taken off of the syllabus, so this study recommends teachers to make students become aware of the underlying ideas and values implicated in the novels. This study presented the implication for schools which assigned the reading of "Tom Sawyer" to address the reality of hegemonic masculinity in the novel to reduce the possible effect of its themes.

### 1. Introduction

As all stages in life are so closely intertwined with competition and survival of the fittest, leadership itself is more associated with "domination." This form of leadership can occur voluntarily without coercion, and an unequal interaction where it signals that some power is involved can be referred to as hegemony. These powers are not always visible and sometimes are intangible. Hegemony tends to be domination that disguises into what is believed as leadership by those in higher social class or position (Yang, 2020). It is so common to occur in society that people often do not see that as a threat or accept it as a natural part of life (Ratna, 2010).

This study is concerned with one of the most insidious forms of hegemony, namely hegemonic masculinity. It is the practice where men's position is dominant in the society, where this ideology is formed culturally by the society themselves. Hegemonic masculinity is so widespread globally that it is a fundamental concept in gender studies (Aulette &

Connell, 1991; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to Donaldson (1993), it is believed that one aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that in big matters, women do not count or matter. Official policies in the states even enable men to maintain a dominant position over women, thereby cementing males to dominate the social status and making the presence of females as just secondary (Hinojosa, 2010). The society judges men as a loser if one can not win in sports, earn less than his partner or even being a stay-at-home dad. If men perform poorer than women, it will be a threat to their sense of masculinity (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2012). Women, on the other hand, are expected to behave in a soft, elegant, and feminine way. In the media, women are portrayed as people who deal with domestic kinds of stuff. These kinds of beliefs have long been embedded in society, even from an early age. For example, boys should play soccer and cars while girls should play with dolls and not aggressive run to always look girly (Archer, 2004). Society expects women to be able to do the housework despite the fact that housework is essential for survival both for males and females. Men are expected to be more aggressive and

dominant physically and psychologically than women to meet the expectations of the society (Baumen et al., 2012). This expectation is worsened with the common belief that if a male could not afford enough money for his family stability, then he is a certified loser and a family disgrace. Men have long dominated the power in society by taking advantage of the cultural norm where women are made less powerful or educated. Due to these reasons, it is natural that hegemonic masculinity is such a common topic in gender studies.

This study is interested to explore what hegemonic masculinity as it is depicted in literature. It is worth exploration from a linguistic perspective due to the uniquely pervasive nature of this practice through the power of words. Studies that have explored this concept through literature in the past have focused on depicting how masculinity is perceived in the time periods of these literary works (Miehls, 2017). Hegemonic masculinity in Iceland was explored by Evans (2018) through the in the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries' historic proeses of Sagas of Icelanders. Literary works in Africa were examined by Alsyouf (2018) who focused on how masculinity was developed until it became a universal concept. Subrayan & Yahya (2016) discussed the hegemonic masculinity D. H. Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers" to examine the effects of social practices and socio historical in that novel. Results of the study showed how the male protagonist aligned with the dominant role by sanctioning aggressiveness, autonomy, and violence. Mishra (2020) identified the presence of hegemonic masculinity through the male character of the novel "Hansa" who stuck to the traditional masculinity and failed to adapt to his changed role. In addition, Boord (2021) presents the understanding of the role of gender and masculinity in the process of Zionist settlement, which was a time when Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine. All of these studies showed the forms of hegemonic masculinity from time to time.

However, as far as the researcher is aware, previous studies that explored masculinity in literature tend to use adult novels as their data. The implication is that existing knowledge heavily leans into how masculinity can and have influenced the thought processes and opinions of males, particularly adult men. Therefore, there is a gap of knowledge on how masculinity is portrayed in literary works meant for children. This study only found one article that used data taken from children's books, but even then, they were a collection of young adult novels (Garrison et al., 2020).

Children's literature are the literary works specifically produced for young readers. In the past, children's literature was commonly used as entertainment for kids. However, as time passes, more and more people begin to realise how potential children's literature is for children's development. Commonly inspired by the authors' childhood experience or things that are related to nowadays

children's issues, the stories in children's literature can provide young readers the opportunity to see things from a new perspective, improve their critical thinking skills, widen their general knowledge, develop their imagination, and many more (Garvey, 1997; Hastings & Brown, 2002). Children will also indirectly learn the values existing in society depicted in the literature, which means that children's literature is extremely powerful and life changing when adapted into the classroom and home (Ahmen, 2017). In other words, hegemonic masculinity, a value that is prevalent in society and the literary work it produces, can have a significant effect on the population of young males. Therefore, examining the hegemonic masculinity in one of the most read children's literary work can be an important step to find out how they might influence young children, particularly boys.

The children's novel that this study chose as its data is the "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", an 1876 classic children's literature written by Mark Twain, the pen-name for Samuel Langhorne Clemens. It tells about a naughty boy living in St. Petersburg who likes to wander and is well known for his naughtiness. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, an educational initiative that details what K–12 students throughout the United States should know at the conclusion of each school grade, this novel is obligatory read for 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade level due to its social and historical matter (Common Core State Standard Initiative, n.d.). In fact, the author left the following message in the novel:

*"Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in." (page 44)*

While antiquated, this book is a timeless classic that continues to be included in many schools with international curriculums because it has a strong sense of adventure that appeals to young readers. The book offers an educational experience for growth and human contact as a young person, and also helps with language development and understanding of complex ideas, one of which is the topic of this paper. Therefore, the researchers find that this novel has a potential for an interesting analysis on hegemonic masculinity.

## 2. Method

This research applies descriptive qualitative method by regarding the influence of the hegemonic masculinity in Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", which was chosen because it is a compulsory literary work for young children. The data used in this book is the version of the Oxford World's classics book published in 2007 by Oxford University Press, consisting of 246 pages. The data analysis is rooted on Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) theory of

hegemonic masculinity. Their theory is one of the most highly cited theory on the concept and is well-established in the studies of gender, thus why the researchers chose to refer to them. This study analysed the book by focusing on identifying the presence of certain types of hegemonic masculinity and their impact on the readers.

### 3. Result

Results of this study confirmed that the children's book "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" did not escape the influence of society's hegemonic masculinity. The book's language usage whether through the narrative or characters' dialogues contained instance that shows men's position as the dominant one in society. "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" does not only describe how spirited Tom Sawyer's childhood time is like but also some masculinity aspects commonly found in the younger community, especially among boys, particularly aspects of toxic masculinity, bad boy archetype, and dominant-submissive roles.

#### 3.1 Toxic Masculinity

Toxic masculinity is the term used to describe the view of masculinity with a certain standard expectancy in one cultural circle in the society which is often not mentally or physically healthy. Men or boys are expected to avoid any kind of feminism. It is a must to maintain their pride as a "Man" by behaving differently from the females. Even having a feminine environment is considered an insult and will endanger their masculine position, as indicated by the utterance, "*Now sir, go and sit with the girls! And let this be a warning to you*" in the novel. Toxic masculinity is originally derived from the hegemonic masculinity term. Toxic masculinity is often associated with the cause of misogyny, homophobia, aggression, and other gender-based violence that is accepted and valued by the society which can be seen from boys' characteristic depictions found in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" novel. The writer finds one of the examples of toxic masculinity depicted in this novel is how the males should look tough to show their superiority. The tougher one looks, the more charismatic he appears to be too. Tom, for example, is always considered as the most charismatic boy among the other boys by the children his age because he never wants to lose to the others and always tried to maintain his dignity as the toughest boy. For instance, in the first chapter, the boys wrestled on the ground very wildly and aggressively just to prove their worth.

*"In an instant both boys were rolling and tumbling in the dirt, gripped together like cats; and for the space of a minute they tugged and tore at each other's hair and clothes, punched and scratched each other's nose, and covered themselves with dust and glory."* (page 55)

They fought, boxed and rolled around just to maintain their reputation by not losing to their opponents. Their pride is at stake as a result of the

match. Anyone who loses will be considered weak and if he wins then he will be respected and considered stronger and more powerful. This is why both of the boys do not take the fight for granted as if that would be their only chance to prove their superiority over the opponent. Tom's urge to defeat the other boy is an indication of dominating behaviour of Tom to show his power over his territory in order to show who the alpha is there.

Opposite to Tom, Sid, Tom's half-brother who is one of the examples in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" appears to be a stay-at-home boy that seldom causes trouble. Sid always tries to be a good boy in front of his aunt whenever possible. However, this type of boy is considered as a two-faced and annoying figure. Furthermore, as Sid is such a crybaby and always seeks justice for what Tom does by always reporting Tom to Aunt Polly, he is considered a coward. This makes Sid appears as a weak and less powerful boy type. Hence, that is why it seems that Sid has no friends to play with or interact with other than his little family. Another example is another model boy in St. Petersburg called Willie Mufferson.

*"...and last of all came the Model Boy, Willie Mufferson, taking as heedful care of his mother to church, and was the pride of all matrons. The boys all hated him, he was so good. And besides, he had been "thrown up to them" so much. His white handkerchief was hanging out his pocket behind, as usual on Sundays accidentally. Tom had no handkerchief, and he looked upon boys who had, as snobs."* (page 77)

By this, it is visible that a lot of boys find the good boy as a problem for them. Although adults love the good boy, all the boys do not find it agreeable. In fact, they are all sick of it. How Tom sees the owner of a handkerchief as snob indicates that Tom is someone who clearly avoids using a handkerchief at all costs as that is not how a normal boy is supposed to act based on what he believes in. It appears that being a good boy is considered as being a sissy in this novel which portrayed how toxic masculinity roles in the storyline. There is one time when Tom Sawyer stated that he wanted to be a pirate when he grew up, Tom described how cool and tough a pirate looks like. From this, it can be seen how a tough, aggressive and cruel guy is highly admired by the boys that they want to be like one. It indicates that it doesn't matter if a man is cruel, aggressive, or does some bad things, as long as they look super tough or masculine regarding the manly standard, it is acceptable in society. Meanwhile soft good boy attitude is totally contradictory.

In "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", Mark Twain portrayed a lot of depictions related to not showing the real feelings of boys and if done, it is pictured as a weakness for boys. Twain portrayed traditional male characteristics such as being unemotional and violent. This conventional idea is referring to macho-male superiority depiction. This is why, boys are also expected to be able to bear the pain and never cry. If a

boy cries, he looks weak and is considered to have a lower position than others. When Joe Harper, Tom Sawyer, and Huckleberry Finn ran away from their village to play pirates on the other island, there was a scene showing how the boys tried to hide their feeling for missing home and their family members just to appear as “not a coward” to their friends.

When Joe Harper indicated that he began to think about his parent and the situation back home, he tried not to show his soft heart that missed his family, especially his mom. Even though he really missed his mom, he did not dare to go back home in order to stay with Tom and the others on the island. This was done to keep his pride in front of his friends, especially after being persuaded by Tom Sawyer to stay as the wildlife was better than their life back in the village. Tom Sawyer on the other side, despite missing his aunt, he denied the fact that he missed her in front of his friends. Although in the end, he fled away from the island to visit his aunt secretly. He secretly did this because he could not deny that he also missed his family deep down in his heart and yet did not want to admit that he was soft-hearted when it came to Aunt Polly in front of his friends. It was also shown that when Joe, Tom, and Huck were running away living as pirates in chapter sixteen, they were all actually homesick but none of them really wanted to admit it.

*“But Joe’s spirits had gone down almost beyond resurrection. He was so homesick that he could hardly endure the misery of it. The tears lay very near the surface. Huck was melancholy, too. (Tom had a secret which he was not ready to tell yet. “We can see it clearly that all of them long to go back home.” Unfortunately, none of them have the heart to show it to maintain their dignity. Then, when Joe tries to talk about it, he is being mocked by Tom instead as a cry-baby.) “O, shucks! Baby! You want to see your mother, I reckon. [...] Well, we’ll let the cry-baby go home to his mother, won’t we Huck? Poor thing-does it wants to see its mother. [...] Nobody wants you to. Go ‘long home and get laughed at. O, you’re a nice pirate. Huck and me ain’t cry-babies.” (page 139)*

It can be seen here that Joe is being forced not to show his feeling by Tom in this novel. In the idea of toxic masculinity of hegemonic masculinity about showing emotions, men should hide their true feelings and expressions so they will not be considered as cowards for appearing to look fragile or vulnerable. This is due to the unspoken rule of “Be a sturdy oak” so the boys will not be considered “feminine”. In American culture, women are the only ones allowed to feel more emotions and express them. However, different from females, men are only allowed to be exposed more to aggressive and negative emotions. There is even such an unspoken bro code to always act cool, calm and collected. This is how Tom takes advantage by mocking Joe, saying stuff like “cry baby” to show how weak Joe is for missing his mom and home. Males are only allowed to experience harsh and aggressive emotions and not able to express their true

feelings and emotions based on this idea of macho-male superiority to look tough. This is one of the origins on why toxic masculinity occurs in the society.

### 3.2 Bad Boy Archetype

The definition of the bad boy archetype in short is negative behaviors done by young men with the intention of appearing more stunning in order to gain recognition as a man, which often involves violence and harm to others. The strange thing that is found here is that although people don’t really like the negative traits in the bad boy archetype, they still think this is normal and acceptable and even very acceptable. There is even an assumption and belief in society that boys will be boys and it has become the instinct for boys to be wild and aggressive. People see boys’ violence as a common thing and none is in charge to stop it while others suffer from it. In a patriarchal community, it is even seen as what a boy is supposed to be. If boys do not show the indication of being strong, active, and loud, they will be considered as a loser and lame sissy by the others.

It is found that there are indications that the character’s life is full of hegemonic masculinity in the form of the bad boy archetype. The bad trait of boys is seen as a good thing instead by the other kids. Aggression, rebellion, and manipulation are some of the examples of common bad boy traits often featured. Take Tom Sawyer for example, his manipulation skill to persuade others is considered as a good thing that makes him appear to be a smart natural leader. Tom was not only able to manipulate children his age but also the adults. Starting from manipulating his lover, Becky, by ignoring her so that she would come to Tom first;

*“She would be sorry someday – maybe when it was too late. Ah, if he could only die temporarily! [...] What if he turned his back, now, and disappeared mysteriously? What if he went away – ever so far away, into unknown countries beyond the seas – and never came back anymore! How would she feel then!” (page 97)*

To his fellow guy, Joe Harper, so that Harper changes his mind on returning home by mocking him as a crybaby for wanting to go back to his family; “O, shucks! Baby! You want to see your mother, I reckon.” and “Well, we’ll let the cry-baby go home to his mother, won’t we Huck? Poor thing-does it wants to see its mother.”. Knowing that it scares Harper, Tom manipulates him by saying harsh masculinity ruining-stuffs so that Harper decides to stay and undo his intention to leave the island. Worse yet, Joe Harper is not the only child being manipulated by Tom Sawyer. The story of Tom Sawyer also featured the masculine aspects that are commonly found in our society. As shown in the story, Tom Sawyer is well known for his mischief and big talk. He is irresponsible as he does not hesitate to try to escape his responsibilities by manipulating his friends. In the chapter of a glorious whitewasher, when Aunt Polly assigned Tom Sawyer

to do the chore of whitewashing the fence, Tom was so embarrassed to be forced to do some housework by his aunt because a gang leader was not supposed to do some work like that. Then he began to develop a brilliant idea of making other kids around the neighbourhood do his chores by manipulating them. There was one time when Tom was punished by his aunt Polly for whitewashing the fence;

*“He began to think of the fun he had planned for this day, and his sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having to work – the very thought of it burnt him like fire.” (page 58)*

Tom managed to manipulate Ben into giving away a lot of his valuables just to do Tom’s work which Tom Sawyer himself disliked. Tom, who initially manipulated Ben to indirectly replace Tom’s position, actually managed to trick all the boys there to join the queue to do the same thing with poor Ben. He successfully convinced the other kids that what he did was a rare chance that only some people were allowed to do it. The real reason Tom Sawyer didn’t mind manipulating all the kids was to get him off the job his aunt ordered him to do. Tom hated doing work because he would feel constrained and not free from scrutiny to do the things he loved. So to gain control over himself, he chose a faster way so that his work could be completed without having to be done by himself. In the end, most of the kids traded their valuables just to try Tom’s chore. Lastly, to his own aunt Polly, he tricked her by mentioning something was behind her so that she would be scared and distracted which resulted in Tom being able to run away successfully;

*“...hand me that switch. The switch hovered in the air – the peril was desperate- My! Look behind you, aunt! The old lady whirled around and snatched her skirts out of danger. The lad fled, on the instant, scrambled up the high board-fence, and disappeared over it. His aunt Polly stood surprised a moment, and then broke into a gentle laugh. [...] “But my goodness, he never plays them alike, two days, and how is a body to know what’s coming?” (page 51)*

Although Tom Sawyer does everything he wants, none of the other characters really stop him from being manipulative. It’s even shown that Aunt Polly sees it as a funny trick of a boy instead of an early sign of manipulation skill. Not rarely that Aunt Polly sees Tom’s mischievousness as a cute thing done by a boy his age. This is why Aunt Polly always forgives Tom Sawyer no matter what Tom does to her.

In some of Tom’s actions, his aggressiveness is considered as being tough, bold and strong which leads other kids to respect and admire him. Although it is not a new thing that most of the adults think that Tom Sawyer was not a good role model, most of the boys in the village really respected the mischievous Tom Sawyer. It is very common to find hegemonic masculinity in the males of conventional society that

adhere to a patriarchal culture. Bad boy archetypes are not only found in adults or teens. These can even be found in early childhood. It can be seen that hegemonic masculinity has become a model of the society where it has been implemented in society from an early age from the depiction in this novel.

Tom’s rebellious act is considered as his independent attitude that makes him seem like a decision-maker in the group. All these bad traits will be viewed differently if they are found among girls. It seems like nothing could go wrong with boys falling into the bad boy archetype category. Whatever mischief bad boys do will occur to be a common thing in society, hiding behind the “boys will be boys” culture. No matter good or bad the traits of bad boys are, they will always be accepted in society. That might be the reason why some girls prefer bad boys to good boys as bad boys are believed to appear more masculine, independent, and show the ability to protect.

The discrimination of bad traits in boyhood continues to some extent that as bad boys are so used to being bad all the time, once they do a small act of kindness, people will begin to cheer on the bad boys’ noble deeds. However, when a good boy who always appears diligent and obedient makes one small mistake, he will immediately be scolded by everyone that he is a two-faced human who has been hiding behind the mask of a good boy. It is not a new phenomenon that bad boys will be marked with words like “we can not judge people from the outside, even though they look evil but they have a noble heart” and good boys will be suspected they are told that they “have ulterior motive” or “are such two-faced guys”.

### 3.3 Dominant and Submissive Roles

Hegemonic masculinity draws the dominant position of men and subordination of women. It is not a new thing that it has culturally been valued the most in a conventional patriarchal culture. The portrayal of both the genders with dominant and submissive roles is clearly inevitable. At some point, it is found that “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” displays some examples regarding glorification towards masculinity and resistance towards femininity which all cannot be separated from the desire of the boys to get recognition for their masculinity as social proof, especially, to appear better than their peers. Most of the time, the powerful characteristics of men and the inferiority of women are the major portrayal in the literature. There is a significant difference from the depiction of gender characters in the novel, where boys tend to be described as free and courageous, and independent. Meanwhile, on the other side, girls tend to be described as weak, whiny, and always dependent on other individuals. This gender differentiation plays a big impact on their power and dignity. When trying to punish Tom Sawyer, one of the teachers at Tom Sawyer’s school tried several times to embarrass Tom by telling him to sit with the girls:

*“Now sir, go sit with the girls! And let this be a warning to you,... The titter that rippled around the room appeared to abash the boy...”* (page 89)

This was done to lower Tom Sawyer’s pride as a man so that he felt helpless. This shows how the males view that being put in the same position as the females is something shameful. The dominant and submissive roles are actually very common to be found. They are seen but are often not noticed. The discrimination against those who tend to be more passive and submissive does not only occur in women but can also occur in men. Men also struggle to live up to the expectations in society. Cornell believes that masculinity is an “achievement”, not something that is natural or acquired from birth. This point means that men actually need to work for it, constantly. When Becky’s dad visited the school, the teachers at Tom Sawyer’s school were very kind and welcomed the arrival of Becky’s father. They tried their best to present their best self by being as humble as possible and maintaining their dignity in front of Jeff Thatcher, the judge. It is shown how powerful men in higher positions benefit from this hegemonic masculinity concept rather than less powerful men. Powerful men expressed their power at their workplace, meanwhile less powerful men expressed their power at home, which often leads to domestic violence. There was a time when Becky tore his teacher’s book, Tom helped her by admitting that it was done by Tom. This resulted in Tom being hit by Mr. Dobbins. The school was a home representation in this novel for Mr. Dobbins, the teacher, where the rest of the people in the classroom were all less powerful than him. When the judge visited the school, he is more powerful than the rest of the teachers because of his highly respected position in the village. At school, the teachers were the most powerful people. So Mr. Dobbins showed his power by hurting Tom for tearing his stuff. The two different genders in this novel also have different roles, for example men are usually depicted as those who take on the role of physical work and other things that have a greater risk, especially those that endanger life.

*“Her broad deck seemed crowded with people. There were a great many skiffs rowing about or floating with the stream in the neighborhood of the ferry boat, but the boys could not determine what the men in them were doing.”* *“Early in the forenoon parties of jaded men began to straggle into the village, but the strongest of the citizens continued searching.”* (page 212)

When Tom escapes to an island where the residents are looking for him using a ferry, we can see that it is the men who are on board and taking on the role of carrying out a dangerous search expedition. Also when Tom Sawyer is trapped in a cave with Becky, all the people who return to search for his whereabouts are men too, where they sacrifice themselves to take risks to try to find Tom and Becky’s whereabouts in the cave.

These are the signs that it is men who are considered more capable of doing more risky and dangerous jobs than women.

*“At breakfast Monday morning, Aunt Polly and Mary were very loving to Tom, and very attentive to his wants.”*  
*“Sid was sick; Mary remained at home to entertain him.”*  
*“Many women visited Aunt Polly and Mrs. Thatcher and tried to comfort them. They cried with them, too, and that was still better than words.”* (page 211)

On the other hand, besides never being shown to do riskier roles, the females were depicted as those who deal with domestic work, emotional feelings and are mostly in charge of things that are less life-threatening. Women always appeared to be more home-oriented. When Tom and Sid were sick, the female characters were there as caregivers. When it came to comforting people, it was the role of the women for helping the victims’ families to ease their pain of missing their children. A lot of times, women are also depicted as humans who need someone more dominant to guide them through certain obstacles. Meanwhile, the boys seem to be able to solve their own obstacles and even compete to appear to be able to do it better than their peers. When Tom and Becky were lost in the cave:

*“Tom knew their ways and the danger of this sort of conduct. He seized Becky’s hand and hurried her into the first corridor that offered.”* (page 215)

The male character was the one shown leading the female character by hand and able to sense the danger they are facing. This shows how females are portrayed as the weaker and more dependent self who need males to guide them, instead of facing the challenge by themselves. To put it another way, males are represented as those who take dominant positions and females take the submissive roles. Similar to many literary works, the greatness of a man cannot be separated from his ability to attract the attention of women to him. So, in the chapter of busy with war and love, we can see how Tom tried his best to impress the new girl he admired, Becky, by trying all sorts of boyish things he knew in the hope to get her attention. However, when Tom took Becky’s punishment chapter, Tom showed us his point of view of girls that he viewed girls as weak and chicken-hearted creatures.

*“What a curious kind of a fool a girl is. Never been licked in school! ... That’s is just like a girl - they are so thin-skinned and chickenhearted.”* (page 160)

This shows how possible it is that males are attracted to females but can look down on them at the same time as they believe that males’ position is sturdier compared to females’ place. All in all, it is commonly found that different genders have different roles such as men are expected to be breadwinner of the family, protector, succeed at work, or even win some matches to maintain solidarity with their peers. However, these kinds of expectations are positive aspects of hegemonic masculinity. The problem is that

most patriarchal cultures that refer to hegemonic masculinity tend to lead to negative impacts from the culture itself. It has a huge tendency to foster domination of others and is socially destructive. Those who do not discern that they fall into the hegemonic masculinity trap tend to show extreme toxic masculinity behaviours, lack of consideration of feelings of others, a strong need to dominate or control others, an incapacity to nurture, a dread of dependency, and a readiness to resort to violence. The stigmatization and subjugation of women, gays, and men who exhibit feminine characteristics are not even inevitable. Basically, toxic masculinity is being used as the gear to earn dominance and control over others.

This is due to the fact that the way the main character presented himself in such ways like behaving aggressively.

*“Don’t you crowd me, now; you better look out.” Tom struck them to ground. ...gripped together like cats; and for the space of minute they tugged and tore at each other’s hair and clothes, punched and scratched each other’s noses... taking control over other both physically and psychologically by manipulating; “If he hadn’t run out of whitewash, he would have bankrupted every boy in the village.” and not following certain rules successfully helped him to get what he aimed for. “He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it namely, that in order to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain.” (page 61)*

Because of this belligerence, it is feared that children might begin to develop a bad boy archetype like the main character because children always follow what they see. Furthermore, as men are considered and to be not allowed to show their emotions about what they feel, it forces them to hide what experience, while the opposite is expected of the other gender.

This affects men, in particular and not to the exclusion of women, not only psychologically but also physically. Hiding emotions can impact their life negatively. After witnessing the murder at the graveyard, Tom felt shocked but was not able to tell anyone. This resulted in Tom losing all his spirit and excitement for hiding his fear of being caught by Injun Joe. Starting from the next day, Tom fell into depression, he was not interested in any joy brought by any activities, his sleep time was even depreciated that his sleep was not sound which resulted in his health deteriorated. Those are some of the symptoms showed in the novel when Tom tried to hide his fearful secret.

Overall, as children do not only learn behaviour from their parents but also their surroundings, children imitate what they see. Being one of the most read literary works, it is very possible for children to imitate what the characters of the storybook-like, and with these three hegemonic masculinity aspects being so prominent in “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”, the main character may not be such a good role model, young readers might be inspired to follow his attitude as inspired by the fiction.

## 5. Discussion

The key findings of this study are the strong evidence of many types of hegemonic masculinity in “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.” The types of hegemonic masculinity are toxic masculinity, bad boy archetype, and dominant-submissive roles. This study contributed in confirming the presence of toxic values and views embedded in a literature written for children and a mandatory assigned reading in K-12 schools. The findings of this study may be concerning for teachers and educational stakeholders who may want to review the appropriateness of including Tom Sawyer in the syllabus.

This study found that the text in children novel contains the element of toxic masculinity, which is a certain cultural norm of narrow behavior related to gender roles and male traits. Females and males naturally have traits that are particular to their genders, either influenced by their sex or their environment (Bauer & Santia, 2021), but some traits can be harmful to their gender and society—in the case of males, these traits are considered toxic. These traits include, but not limited to, using or threatening violence, controlling others, acting aggressively, suppressing emotions, trying to appear 'tough', treating sex as a competition, feeling entitled to sex from others, and using power over women, 'weaker' men, and marginalised groups. This study found that the novel consistently included dialogues where the males are encouraged to look tough for the purpose of displaying and proving their superiority, and the tougher one looks, the more charismatic he appears to be too. Tom, in particular, is always considered as the most charismatic boy among the other boys by the children his age because he never wants to lose to the others and always tried to maintain his dignity as the toughest boy. Charisma is often associated with masculine leadership, although Geva (2020) argues that it is a form of *political* masculinity that women can enact.

The direct consequences of toxic masculinity are often felt by their feminine counterpart. Because of the emphasis on males to be tough, females--the opposite sex of men—are expected *not* to be tough. Females are gender-typed to be caring, thus many jobs that involve caring (e.g., teaching young children, nursing, etc.) are dominantly expected to be held by women. In fact, whenever men “crosses over” to these allegedly feminine jobs, they are often held to the expectations associated with female behaviours (Brody, 2015). With so little encourage given to men who are in “female” careers, they often internalise the thought of distancing themselves from the traditional “feminine” motivations of choosing said careers, such as male nurses who insist that they became nurses not because they care for the helpless, but for other practical reasons (O’Connor, 2015). A few studies have been combatting against this notion. For instance, Brody (2015) showed that males in the profession of early childhood education and care

display positive masculine traits, such as charisma, initiative, daring, and playfulness, which they integrate into their care and attention toward children's well-being. In hegemonic masculinity, it is often found that heterosexuality, dominance or control over women, and competition among men are being performed (Jewkes & Morrell, 2017).

Many researchers agree that toxic masculinity causes misogyny, homophobia, aggression, and other gender-based violence that is common in society. However, hegemonic masculinity has successfully painted 'tough men' as the ideal view in multiple generations' minds. Conventional wisdom shows that "bad boys" are popular, and many kinds of literature indeed displays this archetype as the type of character that one should like and strive to be. Just by viewing the top and overall selection of literature aimed for boys such as comics, manga, manhwa, etc., the contemporary landscape is largely in favour of the bad boy anti-hero (Castillo, 2016). According to Gopaldas and Molander (2020), bad boy archetype is a combination of juvenile masculinities (aggression, rebellion, hypersexuality), appealing qualities (charisma, ruggedness, sensitivity), and moral ambiguities (via confusion, contradiction, and cumulation), thus it is an engaging type to be used in advertising, erotica, fashion, journalism, movies, songs, television serials, etc. These forms of commercial culture reinforce aspects of hegemonic masculinity by promoting idealistic images of men in masculine personas, such as the lover, the family man, etc. (Pruitt, 2019). Because the bad boy archetype is put on a pedestal, when boys are *not* displaying bad boy traits, they are less popular, called as average, and judged as a loser, as can be seen in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." The novel also introduces children to the dominant-submissive paradigm between males and females. In the patriarchal culture of many countries in the world, influenced and entrenched in the worldwide media, men are naturally dominant and females are naturally submissive. Although the world acknowledges the fact that there are hundreds to thousands of men who are submissive and females who dominant positions, they are also often presented as something that does not happen naturally; females in particular, if they are the bosses of their companies or speaks in a way that commands the room, are described as "breaking the ceiling," which acknowledges the dominant male as the natural position (Campos et al., 2015; Bertrand et al., 2019). This study found that "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" glorifies masculinity and combines this attitude with resistance toward femininity through how they always describe boys with adjectives of 'free' and 'courageous' and girls with words like 'whiny' and 'sissy.'

While it might be a form of extreme paranoia to believe that the reading of Tom Sawyer will inevitably influence children to copy the characters' aggressive body language and misogynistic way of speaking, it

cannot be denied that children do behave through imitation of what they see, and what they read and imagine are not excluded. This is proved by how other kids living around Tom Sawyer looked up to him as the most admired kid in the neighborhood for his carefree and fiery rebellious spirit. Tom Sawyer himself admired Huck for his lawless, vulgar and bad aura; and the pirates who were able to do everything they wanted starting from smoking tobacco that made them look manly, to stealing ships, and yet nobody dared to mess with them be caused of the terrors they brought. Young readers might see that what Tom Sawyer did, was the proper way to live their life or maybe a normal thing in the society. They will begin to see mischievous, manipulating, and aggressive behavior in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" as common things to do or even should be done in order to fit the conventional gender characteristic expectations. Children are learning that these toxic behaviors are acceptable. This might lead children to adopt hegemonic masculinity in their life.

Moreover, the legacy of gender dominance will be continued by them, the future generation who we expected to end the gap of gender equality. These unhealthy gender-related behaviours will also doctrine them that certain genders should act in certain ways and if not, it must be a "mistake." This doctrine impacts the children a lot because children as the readers are meant to relate and idolise the main character in common rather than other, side characters who may give a different perspective as an attempt to balance the views. Young readers who see themselves as being different from how the society expects them to behave will surely be lack of self-esteem and withdraw themselves from social activities. Gender-gap is a huge issue in human history across many aspects of life. Women are highly underrepresented in the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and the progress of balancing the STEM gender statistics is slow despite continuous systemic encouragements (Casad et al., 2021). There are at least three factors that likely contribute to academic gender inequalities, namely stereotypes, lack of support, and chilly academic climates. Huang et al. (2020) showed that, career-wise, women and men have the same, comparable productivity when they explored the number of papers published per year by both genders, and studies such as this can assist in overturning the factor of stereotype. It is especially urgent since women's career progression is more harshly judged even before they enter the job-hunting phase, and a study conducted by Kristal and Yaish (2020) found that the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in even wider gender gap, with "women's employment and income more severely affected than men's" (p. 2).

Even worse, it is possible that people will avoid those who behave or have behaviours that are not in accordance with what society expects based on their



gender. Besides those, some might get bullied by other kids who see them who do not follow gender stereotypes as a freak. Lack of understanding about hegemony and empathy will result in more and more children being bullied. Take Harper for example, when missing home during his time at the island, Joe Harper was mocked by Tom as a cry baby. This verbal bullying was not Tom's first time. Tom Sawyer mocked a lot, both to other boys and girls, from calling someone sissy to chicken-hearted just for being soft. Those kids who suffered from bullying will be impacted for the short and long term, both mentally and physically. Studies on misogynistic language, at the present, is very centred on social media. For instance, natural language processing researchers' attempts to automatically identify and classify misogynistic language on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, etc. (Aldana-Bobadilla et al., 2021; Anzovino et al., 2018; Farrell et al., 2019; Lynn et al., 2019; Plaza-Del-Arco et al., 2020). Meanwhile, there seems to be very little academic discussion or publications on misogynistic language in the classroom or student-learning context. If mentioned, they are often only included in wider contexts such as bullying or cyberbullying in the learning process (Hamuddin et al., 2020; Pörhölä et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2019), rather than as the main topic to be explored. Studies exploring the language of toxic masculinity and misogyny in the classroom are present, nevertheless.

For instance, Simonsson (2020) explored the connection between sexuality of secondary level students in Sweden and the language used in their English conversation practices. Observation across three classrooms revealed the intrinsic nature of heteronormativity. The students frequently talk about relationships with hypothetical heterosexual relationship scenarios, thereby establishing their positions as heterosexual. The study also found that the pupils employ sexuality as a common bond to facilitate conversations. Another study, Qin (2019, p. 181), examined how a routine vocabulary instructional activity influenced the development of students' identity, and the study discussed about a Taiwanese immigrant boy whose use of language portrayed himself as masculine persona that actually "ran counter to the moral expectation of being a "good learner" embedded in this language activity, leading to his social identification as a problem student."

The existing literature mostly include non-journal articles, such as Fancher and Whittet's (2018) account to expose the little extent of support from faculty given to female lecturers in the face of misogyny, the misogyny in early modern literature classroom (Black et al., 2022), misogyny in academic language present in writing-focused lessons (Roberson, 2020), and the oft-discussed gender stereotyping in incarcerated classrooms (Dugan & Umachandran, 2021).

This study's discussion of hegemonic masculinity, especially in light of its presence in children literature, will be contributive in increasing teachers' awareness to acknowledge, address, and criticise it in class (Miehls 2017; Evans, 2018; Alsyuof, 2018; Yang 2020; Boord, 2021). Children's literature is extremely powerful due to its role in shaping their life when adapted into the classroom and home (Garrison et al., 2020). If reading children's literature helps to teach young readers moral lessons, the activity can also aid in reinforcing undesirable values, thus teachers must be wary of possible influences (Ahmed, 2017; Gottier, 2019; Garrison, Carroll & Derouet, 2020; Mishra, 2020). Being one of the most read literary works, it is very possible for children to imitate what the characters of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" preach and discourage. Therefore, this study urges schools to reconsider the placement of Tom Sawyer in the mandatory book list, or provide instructions for the teachers to correct the harmful values if the book still needs to be included for the value of raising children's awareness of hegemonic masculinity.

## 6. Conclusions

Where previous studies often analyse hegemonic masculinity in adult novels, this study offers the novelty of analysing text and confirming its presence in children literature. In "the Adventures of Tom Sawyer" novel', this study found three distinct types of hegemonic masculinity, namely toxic masculinity, bad boy archetype, and dominant-submissive roles. The novel is ripe of characters, events and dialogues which reinforces the implication that aggressiveness, mischief, manipulation, and other negative traits of bad boys as socially accepted and expected traits in boys. This study reveals the possible consequences of keeping "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" as a mandatory book for K-12 assignment, and cautions teachers to be explicit about how the hegemonic masculinity types in these books are actually not behaviours that they should imitate or find as ideal.

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