
An Issue Of Sexual Violence Against Women And The Concept Of Toxic Masculinity

Many of us see violence against women as a figure or statistic, right? We all don't believe that something that horrifying could happen to us. However, attention needs to be drawn to this issue as 85% of Australian women have been sexually harassed and 1 in 4 people think it's normal for men to pressure women into sex. Anna, a 24-year-old woman, was in a relationship where she was sexually and physically harassed. Her partner belted her so hard that she lost partial hearing in one ear and was raped straight after. The issue of this type of toxic masculinity is consistently seen throughout *Romeo and Juliet*, as comments made by male characters show the violence women faced in the Elizabethan era. Therefore, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* explores the ways in which toxic masculinity condones violence against women and as a result remains extremely relevant to contemporary society in fighting this problem today.

Sexual violence against women is a major public health problem and is a violation against women's rights. Not only does it have psychological effects and health problems, but is also a matter of life or death. Throughout *Romeo and Juliet*, we see sexualized comments made from male characters. In the opening of the play, Sampson and Gregory are getting heated about their frustration with the Capulets, but their conversation becomes increasingly violent and increasingly sexually charged by saying, "I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall and I will be cruel with the maids and cut off their heads... the heads of the maids or the maidenheads". These remarks not only make women an object of male violence and dominance, but also consolidates sexuality with violence. Mercutio's views on love is that he sees it as a joke, as well as a physical pursuit. Mercutio implies that love is just a sexual desire, saying "for this driveling love is like a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole". Mercutio is expressing that Romeo's love is just brought on by sexual frustration, which questions a perfect relationship between the two lovers. This concept of toxic masculinity is like a taboo in society, the conversation is shut down, because of the weakness of vulnerability and fear. However, violence against women needs to be discussed, as a recent study of 1328 young men, by Andrew Yarrow, found that between 55 and 75% said that men should have as many sexual partners as possible and never say no to sex. How do these alarming statistics not create action? On average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner. Not only this, but many studies have found that men are more likely to hire an attractive woman, because it makes the work place a "more pleasant environment". As well as, a male staff member acts aggressively when a female colleague rejects his sexual advances.

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These findings are hopefully compelling a message, that women's violence needs urgent attention. However, there is more and more evidence proving that the main reason for this issue is society's stereotyped ideals of what it means to become a "real man". Research has shown that when men feel a sense of inadequacy, it increases their ambition to commit sexual assault. Therefore, men need to start realising that their actions against women's rights are toxic and self-limiting.

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