Toxic Masculinity in Ex On The Beach Double Dutch

A qualitative content analysis that discovers patterns of toxic masculine behaviour in Ex On The Beach Double Dutch

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Abstract

Rising concerns about toxic masculinity in reality dating shows, emphasis a need for a thorough investigation of the portrayal of toxic masculinity in those programs. The aim from the research is to identify verbal-, and non-verbal patterns in Ex On The Beach Double Dutch. Through inductive and deductive coding a coding scheme containing of 10 coding categories and 47 codes was established to facilitate a qualitative content analysis with. The results were analysed in Atlas.ti through code-document and co-occurrence analysis. Verbal social dominance, verbal misogynistic behaviour, and non-verbal social dominance are the most prominent categories. The research emphasizes the need for further research in clearer objectives of toxic masculinity and its relation to reality television.

Keywords: toxic masculinity, reality television, content analysis, ex on the beach, reality dating series

Introduction

In the last years, discussions surrounding toxic masculinity have gained prominence on social media, with reality television, particularly dating shows such as *Ex On The Beach* and *Love Island* facing criticism for their portrayal of toxic masculinity. Twitter users accused the reality dating series *Love Island UK* for instance of participation in toxic masculinity through mistreatment of women, aggressive behaviour, and derogatory language towards women by the male participants in this program (Petter, 2019). Those series seem a solid base for toxic masculinity as they focus on relations between males and females while capturing intimate moments, confessions, and humiliation to create a dramatic narrative that pleasures the audience (Collins, 2008). Despite significant social media discourse, this issue has received limited attention in newspapers and academic research, thus suggesting the need for a more in-depth investigation.

Toxic masculinity is deeply ingrained in society, with men contending with societal pressures. Men strive to form an idealized form of masculinity, however, this ideal is often unattainable, leading to a sense of constant striving and unfulfilled expectations (Allan, 2018). These norms enforce expectations that discourage men from seeking help, expressing vulnerability, or displaying emotion which could result in feelings of inadequacy, fear, shame, and dread (Allan, 2018). This behaviour, when internalized, can lead to social, psychological, and physical harm, including violent actions, substance abuse, and mental health struggles (Kupers, 2005). Given that reality programs reflect contemporary cultural norms and ideologies, the presence of toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach* may perpetuate and normalize such harmful behaviour (Montemurro, 2008).

Reality television is a diverse genre, making it challenging to provide a comprehensive definition. Nevertheless, it generally encompasses unscripted programs that capture real individuals as they navigate through various events in their lives aiming to entertain the

viewer (Nabi et al., 2003). The genre distinguishes itself with a focus on ordinary people, audience participation, voyeurism, and the attempt to simulate real life (Penzhorn & Pitout, 2007). *Ex On The Beach* creates this narrative as it provides the audience with a valid and socially acceptable excuse to probe into the private lives of others, which would otherwise be unacceptable, if not impossible (Wong, 2001).

Viewers often find reality series enjoyable to watch. This is because the 'reality' formats are created for local audiences, so the viewer feels a high level of identification and affirmation (Price, 2010). Even though viewers associate a social stigma with watching reality television they continue watching because of the perceived escapism and social affiliation that is provided (Lundy et al., 2008). Due to this social stigma watching *Ex On The Beach* may provide a sense of superiority over the ordinary people that are portrayed, as status-seeking is a primary motive for reality TV consumption (Cato & Carpentier, 2010; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Such programs offer viewers a "glimpse" into another world, which takes the viewer for a moment away from their reality and thus works so appealing.

The term "toxic masculinity" has gained significant attention on social media platforms in recent years. This was notably contributed by the #MeToo movement, which raised conversations about toxic masculinity, bringing to light concerns about sexual assault and harassment, and men's attitudes towards it (Brookshier, 2019; Mcginley, 2018). Although the concept of toxic masculinity traces back to the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s, initiated by Shepherd Bliss, it has gained academic recognition more recently, particularly since 2016 (Harrington, 2021). Despite its widespread use, the concept of toxic masculinity is seldom defined, with over half of the top 60 academic papers not being able to provide a clear definition (Harrington, 2021). Scholars who do provide a definition often reference the definition of Kupers (2005): "Toxic masculinity is the constellation of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia,

and wanton violence". Consequently, this definition will be adopted in this study.

Existing research on toxic masculinity in television and streaming services is limited. Jenney & Exner-Cortens (2018) focused on the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* and identified an overwhelming presence of toxic masculinity, particularly concerning slut-shaming. However, a Netflix series is a completely different concept than a reality series. Denby (2021) did look into the reality dating series, *Love Island*. A content analysis found sexist attitudes among male participants, manifesting in a sexual double standard where men are celebrated for their sexual prowess while women are shamed for their sexual dominance (Denby, 2021). However, the existing research does not cover toxic masculinity as a whole concept about reality dating series. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by comprehensively exploring toxic masculinity and identifying those patterns in reality dating series, specifically *Ex On The Beach*. In an aim to cover the complete spectrum, the categories of aggression, social aggression, social dominance, misogynistic behaviour, and homophobia will be covered. To enrich this comprehensive understanding of toxic masculinity the categories will be divided into non-verbal and verbal behaviour, a division that has not been made by prior research yet. This would be essential to shed light on diverse patterns and behaviours associated with toxic masculinity to expand the scope of the analysis. There will only be a focus on male behaviour.

Given recent attention and online criticism surrounding toxic masculinity, it is valuable to investigate whether the toxic masculine behaviour, or the portrayal of it, evolved in the time-frame of the first season in 2016 till the last season in 2023. The research will assess if any changing patterns have occurred and thus if the criticisms might have an influence on the levels of toxic masculinity in the series. Additionally, the study will explore variations of toxic patterns between the episodes, considering that participants initially do not know each other and that relationships that foster certain patterns of toxic masculinity may

develop over time. To identify whether development is visible over time the research will look into the introductory, mid-season, and concluding episodes. Leading to the main research question, followed by two additional sub-questions:

RQ 1.1: *"How is toxic masculinity, verbally and non-verbally, manifested by male participants of Ex On The Beach Double Dutch?"*

RQ 1.2: *"How have patterns of toxic masculinity evolved from the first season in 2016 to the latest season in 2023?"*

RQ 1.3: *"To what extent do patterns of toxic masculinity vary across the introductory, mid-season, and concluding episodes?"*

In the upcoming chapters, a literature review will explore various aspects of toxic masculinity, its connection to communication theories, and the potential influence of reality television. The study will discuss the development of the coding scheme, qualitative content analysis choices, and the findings related to the research questions. Additionally, the implications of this study and suggestions for future research will be offered.

Theoretical Framework

Toxic Behaviour

The discourse surrounding toxic masculinity often raises questions about which traits and behaviours can be considered "toxic". Therefore it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of the behaviours and attitudes that are considered under the concept of toxic masculinity. In this research toxic behaviour will be categorised as verbal- and non-verbal behaviour. However, it is important to note that the current literature lacks comprehensive definitions for verbal and non-verbal toxic behaviour. Therefore, to differentiate these categories the Oxford definitions of the words verbal and non-verbal will be applied within the context of toxic masculinity. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2023) "verbal" relates to words. Hence, in this study, any behaviour related to spoken or written words will be classified under verbal toxic masculinity. The word "non-verbal" refers according to the Oxford Dictionary (2023) to behaviour that does not involve words or speech. Therefore, all behaviour that does not contain words or speech, such as facial expressions or body language, will be classified under non-verbal toxic masculinity. This distinction forms the foundation for the development of a coding scheme that will facilitate the content analysis.

However, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of toxic masculinity within the context *of Ex On The Beach*, it is imperative to identify and delineate the specific behaviours and manifestations that align with the concept of toxic masculinity. Dosser (2022) argues that what is diagnosed as "toxic" is the despicable way in which masculinity operates. Those are not abnormal qualities that need fixing but rather features that sustain hegemonic masculinity's power. Toxic masculinity is characterized by a need to rule and by support for homophobic and misogynistic ideologies (Parent et al., 2019). Also, the need for males to dominate an interaction can be considered toxic behaviour (Parent et al., 2019). Traits that could be considered "toxic" are for instance social dominance orientation, lack of empathy,

positive attitudes concerning sexual harassment and bullying, and homophobic bullying (Ingram et al., 2019). From these elements, the categories of social dominance, misogynistic behaviour, and homophobic bullying will be integrated into the research. Together with aggression and social aggression, these will form the framework for the analysis.

Aggression

The study will delve into the examination of verbal as well as non-verbal aggression in *Ex On The Beach*. The show prominently features elements of drama, and often promotes itself through clips that depict conflicts, suggesting the potential presence of aggression in the series. Especially considering the frequent occurrence of verbal aggression in reality television (Coyne et al., 2010). Verbal aggression encompasses loud noises, screaming, angry shouting, personal insults, cussing, foul language, threats, abuse, swearing, and disputing (Stewart & Bowers, 2013). In contrast, non-verbal aggression is characterized as a form of emotional response that demonstrates through physical actions and other behaviours, aimed at causing physical or moral harm to the target (Mukhamadiyev, 2023). It is essential to acknowledge that due to potential social media backlash and a negative public image, it is often not in the best interest of participants to perform physical aggression, which is why extreme violent behaviour is limited in reality programs (Coyne et al., 2010).

Social aggression

Another form of toxic masculinity that potentially manifests in *Ex On The Beach* is social aggression, given the dynamics of relationships that evolve within the series. It appears reality TV portrays excessive amounts of relational aggression (Zilka et al., 2021), raising the possibility that this may be the case in *Ex On The Beach*, particularly because research suggests a higher prevalence of relational aggression in reality programs than in non-reality programs (Coyne et al., 2010). It is important to note that relational aggression and social

aggression are synonymous and can be considered the same (Associates et al., 2005).

Relational aggression is a nonphysical form of violence in which the perpetrator's purpose is to inflict or threaten damage to relationships (Dailey et al., 2015). Victims of this type of assault may suffer long-term psychological trauma. Besides, frequent consumption of socially aggressive reality programs is related to greater levels of social aggression, exceeding other media forms. This is problematic behaviour as multiple studies suggest that individuals who view relational aggression on TV are more likely to engage in higher levels of subsequent relational aggression in social interactions (Coyne et al., 2019). Considering the negative impact of this form of aggression on both the victims and society at large, it is justifiable to categorize social aggression as a component of toxic masculinity. This highlights the importance of acknowledging the potential threat if patterns of social aggression were to emerge in *Ex On The Beach*. Additionally, it is noteworthy that boys in general tend to be more concerned with physical dominance than social aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Given the focus of this study on male behaviour, it is intriguing to assess whether such behaviour is evident in the analysis, which would imply that non-verbal behaviours may be more prevalent within this category.

Misogynistic behaviour

Given the significant presence of female participants in *Ex On The Beach*, who frequently adopt what may be perceived as provocative behaviour, it would not be surprising if instances of misogynistic behaviour would be prevalent in the show. Misogyny is a form of hatred towards women that is rooted in fundamental concerns about how people relate to one another, which affects society, culture, and politics (Wrisley, 2023). The endorsement of misogynistic ideologies falls under toxic masculinity (Parent et al., 2019). Misogyny is a mix of social emotions that both fuel and excuse the mistreatment of women. This could lead to unfair judgments towards women, showing that they would have less moral value than men

(Wrisley, 2023).

Misogynistic attitudes held by men pose significant concerns, as they have been linked to the perpetration of physical and sexual violence against women and adverse health outcomes for women (Fleming et al., 2018). In the context of *Ex On The Beach*, where much of the show revolves around relationships between men and women, it is reasonable to anticipate the emergence of various forms of misogynistic behaviour, therefore a broad area of concepts will be taken into consideration.

One such concept is slut-shaming, which stigmatizes an individual based on his or her appearance, sexual availability, and actual or perceived sexual behaviour (Goblet & Glowacz, 2021). Within toxic masculinity, slut-shaming often targets women who do not conform to established gender norms regarding sexuality. Given the prevalent sexual content in *Ex On The Beach*, it is also plausible that sexual objectification, as a component of toxic masculinity, may manifest in the series.

Sexual objectification is described as the practice of perceiving, using, and/or valuing a person as an object whose worth is determined primarily by physical and sexual appeal (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification can manifest itself in a variety of forms, ranging from depictions of an ideal body type to (unasked) evaluations of one's own body (e.g., stares, whistles, sexual comments) or sexual harassment (Kozee et al., 2007; Moradi, 2011). In *Ex On The Beach*, this might manifest through the reduction of women to sexual objects, focusing predominantly on physical attributes, such as the butt and breasts. A manner through which non-verbal sexual objectification is expressed is through the "objectification gaze" which involves the sexual evaluation of women's bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The exposure to television that portrays women primarily as sexual objects has been linked to an increased likelihood of engaging in disrespectful and harassing behaviour towards women (Galdi et al., 2014). Furthermore, the consumption of objectifying

television content makes men more likely to adopt traditional ideas about what it means to be a man, and this idea, in turn, makes them more likely to engage in gender-based harassment (Galdi et al., 2014). Moreover, the influence is not limited to males, it appears viewing sexualizing reality television is associated with greater levels of self-objectification among young women (Vandenbosch et al., 2015).

Stereotypes represent another significant facet of misogyny. Stereotypes convey broad assumptions about individuals of specific social groups (Ellemers, 2017). In those stereotypes, women are often characterized by communal qualities (Eagly et al. 2020) as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Communal qualities include behaviour that demonstrates concern for other people through the expression of affection and exhibiting sympathy, helpfulness, sensitivity, nurturance, and gentility. In *Ex On The Beach,* women might find themselves subject to societal constraints that prescribe and dictate their expected behavioural norms and boundaries, enforced by the male participants. Traditional gender stereotypes that are nowadays still expected are that women are submissive and insecure for instance (Eagly et al., 2020). Besides, in the media women are often shown as helpless (Giaccardi et al., 2016), which might also reflect in *Ex On The Beach*.

Social dominance

Social dominance theory offers a comprehensive framework that delves into social and intergroup relations, focusing on how individuals construct hierarchical belief systems to provide support for institutional power structures (Islam, 2017). This theory encompasses research into the individuals more likely to hold such attitudes how these beliefs manifest, and evolve, and their consequences on thoughts and actions. One manifestation of these attitudes can be seen in sexual double standards, which represent gendered expectations where men are often expected to exhibit sexual assertiveness and dominance, while women are expected to display sexual submission and passivity (Sanchez et al., 2012). Support for sexual double

standards has been consistently linked to sexism and gender inequality (Zakar et al., 2013). Notably, men's endorsement of sexual double standards is correlated with negative views towards women and has far-reaching consequences for women, including adverse effects on their mental and physical health (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Sanchez et al., 2012). A defining characteristic of toxic masculinity is the compulsion to dominate social interactions (Parent et al., 2019). This behaviour often extends to social dominance, often associated with physical bullying (Goodboy et al., 2016). Non-verbal social dominant behaviour encompasses overt behaviours and covert tactics (Ostrov & Collins, 2007). Overt behaviours may involve physical contact that invades personal space, while covert tactics involve controlling or manipulating social interactions and resources to establish dominance. In the context of romantic relationships, nonverbal social dominance behaviours have been linked to poor relationship quality, increased conflicts, and heightened instances of physical and verbal aggressiveness (Ostrov & Collins, 2007). Furthermore, for males also societal expectations are apparent. Men are often characterized by agentic qualities, including assertiveness, control, confidence, ambition, and forcefulness (Eagly 1987 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Furthermore, men are traditionally seen as selfish and insensitive (Castillo-Mayén & Montes-Berges, 2014). Given the prominence of sexual themes in *Ex On The Beach*, it is conceivable that the stereotype depicting men as constantly ready and willing for sex, deeply fascinated with sexual matters, and proud of their sexual experiences could be perpetuated (Ward, 1995).

Homophobic bullying

Homophobic bullying, although less expected due to the predominantly heterosexual orientation of *Ex On The Beach* participants, remains a recurring theme in discussions on toxic masculinity and should not be dismissed. Homophobia is defined as the negative attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and behaviours directed toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual

persons (Wright et al., 1999). Teasing using derogatory slurs, threats of physical violence, social exclusion, and physical assault to demean, intimidate, or harm individuals based on their perceived or actual homosexuality are forms of homophobic bullying (Wright et al., 1999). Even in predominantly heterosexual content, as *in Ex On The Beach*, homophobic bullying still may emerge. Terms such as 'gay' or 'fagot' are not uncommon and are often used in a derogatory way (Nicolas & Skinner, 2012). This usage as an insult or in a negative context could support negative feelings towards gay individuals, rendering such behaviour problematic (Nicolas & Skinner, 2012).

Adapting Communication Theories

Social Learning Theory

The media plays a substantial role in shaping our perceptions of societal norms (Bandura, 2001 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). According to the Social Learning Theory, the majority of behaviour is acquired by modelling: through observing others, one develops an understanding of how new behaviours are performed, and this coded information eventually acts as a guide for action (Bandura, 1977 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Suggesting that the toxic masculine behaviour portrayed in *Ex On The Beach* could potentially be modelled by the audience.

If such behaviours were prevalent in the series, they could be harmful to society, according to this theory. However, several prerequisites impact the modelling process. First, individuals must pay attention to the behaviour, and the behaviour must be noteworthy. Because program creators want to make money, they use techniques such as violence and sex to attract viewers (Dainton & Zelley, 2019). In the context of *Ex On The Beach*, the program's considerable drama and sexual content could serve as notable attention-grabbers for viewers. Second, the retention phase emphasises the importance of being able to visually and verbally store the observed behaviour for later replication (Bandura, 1977, 2001 as cited in Dainton &

Zelley, 2019). Third, in the reproduction phase, individuals use modelling to execute a fairly realistic presentation of new behaviour (Bandura 1977 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). However, the behaviour must be tailored to the situation. The specific setting of *Ex On The Beach* does not typically mirror everyday life, posing challenges to direct modelling. However, behaviours that occur during group holidays may provide a more applicable context for potential modelling. Finally, motivation is required, which includes the ability to duplicate the behaviour as well as the desire, or motivation, to utilize the learned action (Bandura 1977, 2001 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). The question pertains to whether individuals possess the motivation to enact the behaviours exhibited in Ex On The Beach. Participants in the program may present themselves as superior, portraying an image of a thriving sexual life and an abundance of partners. This could potentially serve as a source of inspiration for some male viewers to emulate such behaviours. This behaviour is especially dangerous for viewers of media violence (Bandura, 1986 Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Bandura (1986, as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019) states that violent behaviours capture the attention of the viewer. Kicking, punching, stabbing, shooting, and biting are also easy to recall and reproduce, which are behaviours that are not uncommon to appear in *Ex On The Beach*. In case the characters are not punished, or rewarded for the aggression, for instance by the "Tablet of Terror" that sends messages to the participants in the villa, positive motivation is easily introduced. Young viewers are more likely to shift to such violence by themselves, given that they are the primary audience of *Ex On The Beach*. Thus, according to the Social Cognitive Theory, the depiction of toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach* carries the potential to result in imitation of the presented behaviours by its viewers.

Cultivation Theory

Another theory that argues the potential influence of *Ex On The Beach* on the viewer is the cultivation theory. Cultivation theory argues violent TV content influences the way the

audience perceives social reality (Gerbner, 1998 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Frequent TV viewers will overestimate the level of real-life violence and with that perceive the world as a mean and scary place. This theory assumes TV influences audience perceptions of social reality, shaping how individuals reason and relate with others. If you look closer at *Ex On The Beach* the series seems to be driven by extreme conflicts, sexual content, and dramatic confrontations. Repetitive representation of commercialized social life is what audiences come to expect and believe as more or less normative (Gerbner, 1998 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). This would suggest that repeatedly toxic behaviour appearing in *Ex On The Beach* would influence the normative beliefs of the audience. However, the theory does state that the effects are limited, they are consistently present and do make a significant difference in the way people think, feel, and interact. Heavy viewers are likely to perceive the world in ways that parallel TV's reality of life. As there are currently 9 seasons of *Ex On The Beach Double Dutch* on Videoland viewers might fall into binge-watching, and thus as well into a twisted reality of life. Furthermore, resonance is another way cultivation is thought to occur (Gerbner, 1998 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). In case individuals perceive toxic behaviour on television, it could be possible, in case they experience toxic behaviour in their private life, that the situation replays in their heads, amplifying that such behaviour is the norm. Research indicates that among adolescents who perceive reality TV as more realistic, a notable correlation exists between the consumption of socially aggressive reality programs and higher levels of social aggression (Coyne et al., 2010).

Even though there is limited literature that emphasizes toxic masculine behaviour, the literature attributed to establishing primary categories of toxic masculinity to create a solid base for the coding scheme that will be used for the content analysis. Furthermore, the literature gave valuable insights into behaviours that could appear in *Ex On The Beach*, which could be adapted as sub-codes in the coding scheme. It also emphasised the influence much of

this toxic behaviour can have on individuals as well as society, pointing out the relevance of this research. However, further research is needed that combines all aspects of toxic masculinity and discovers the exact behaviours that fall under toxic masculinity. Also, more research is needed to define and distinguish non-verbal and verbal toxic behaviour.

Methods

Design

To be able to answer the research question a qualitative content analysis has been conducted. The research explores the reality dating series *Ex On The Beach Double Dutch*. The Dutch version has been used as it was most easily accessible and up-to-date. To gain access to *Ex On The Beach Double Dutch* a subscription to Videoland was obtained. To discover whether the amount of toxic masculinity differs over time, the first and the last season have been analysed. The first episode of season 1 launched a the 28th of August in 2016. The first episode of season 9, the last season, aired on the 14th of May 2023.

As it appears toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach* is context-dependent there is chosen to watch complete seasons for a clearer interpretation of the coder. Therefore, complete season 1 and complete season 9 (excluding the reunion) have been analysed. Season 1 consists of 8 episodes. Season 9 consists of 9 episodes. Thus, a total of 17 episodes have been analysed. One episode takes approximately 45 minutes. Due to time limitations, not all the complete episodes have been transcribed. All episodes have been watched and all the scenes that give the potential for toxic behaviour have been transcribed. With this potential is meant for instance arguments, interesting gazes, or conversations between males about women that should be looked into further to determine if and what type of toxic masculinity it fits into. However, only the males, no female behaviour is taken into consideration. Scenes where women talk between each other for instance were therefore not relevant to include in the transcripts and coding. The toxic behaviour itself is transcribed, and often other parts of

the interaction as well to provide some context. All verbal toxic behaviour is transcribed, as well as the most prevalent and important non-verbal cues. The scenes that reflect what happened previously in the series or what will happen next have been ignored.

Procedure

To identify toxic masculine behaviour a coding scheme has been established. A combination of an inductive and a deductive approach has been used. A deductive approach was used to establish a basis for the coding scheme. With the help of existing literature, the main concepts of toxic masculinity have been identified and included in the coding scheme. To improve the coding scheme an inductive approach has been used, by viewing four episodes of *Ex On The Beach* and spotting different types of toxic masculine behaviour. This resulted in the establishment of 10 different code categories and 52 codes.

For easier understanding and analysis the content in the series has been segmented into three different categories: personal statements, real-life events, and introduction videos. During personal statements, the participants are separated from the group and talk in front of a camera. During those personal statements, the participants share their views on the situations that are happening in the villa. Real-life events are events that occur in the villa, these are often interactions between people and not directed at the camera. Furthermore, there are introduction videos. In those videos, the main characters are introduced as well as the new arriving exes. As those scenes differ a lot from each other and might influence the amount of toxic masculinity, the scenes are divided into those three groups and numbered accordingly.

At the beginning of the coding, intercoder reliability was conducted. This intercoder reliability resulted in a reduction of the number of codes to 43. However, during the coding multiple gaps in the coding scheme were found, which resulted in adding three additional codes to fill the gaps. The codes that have been added are non-verbal revenge, verbal revenge, and non-verbal risky behaviour. This resulted in a final coding scheme containing 46 codes

and 10 coding categories. Moreover, for the unit of analysis, there is chosen to combine all the statements from one scene into one quotation for clearer interpretation. One scene includes one personal statement, or one real-life event such as multiple shots of the same fight, or one complete introduction video, to ease the coding process. With coding complete scenes all applying codes in one scene can easily be assigned. In the Appendix the finalized codebook can be found.

Intercoder reliability

Intercoder reliability was assessed using episode 4 of season 9, which was chosen for its expected diversity of toxic behaviours. This data was coded by a second researcher. Atlas.ti was used to calculate the intercoder reliability. The results of the intercoder reliability are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Categories	Kriffendorff's c-Alpha-binary	Kriffendorff's Cu-Alpha
Verbal aggression	0.404	-0.028
Verbal social aggression	-0.017	N/A
Verbal social dominance	0.387	0.343
Verbal misogynistic behaviour	0.233	0.73
Non-verbal aggression	0.222	N/A
Non-verbal social aggression	-0.004	N/A
Non-verbal social dominance	0.585	1.0
Non-verbal misogynistic behaviour	0.094	N/A
Total	0.611	0.323

Krippendorff's alpha (a) is used as it is a reliability coefficient that measures the agreement among coders (Krippendorff, 2011). Kriffendorff's c-Alpha-binary has been used to assess the reliability of the codes. To identify the reliability of the different coding categories Kriffendorff's Cu-Alpha has been used. A Kriffendorff's Alpha of 1 would imply perfect agreement and 0 no agreement. The overall Kriffendorff's Alpha binary was 0.611, which is not acceptable. The Cu-Alpha was even lower, 0.323. However, the Cu-Alpha was in many categories not obtained due to the limited assignment of codes, which is probably of great influence on this result. The episode did not include any verbal or non-verbal homophobic bullying.

From Kriffendorff's c-Alpha-binary it appears the coders were in the categories of verbal social aggression, non-verbal social aggression, and non-verbal misogynistic behaviour not in agreement at all. Therefore the codes within those groups were taken under the loop to clarify greater distinctions. Concerning Kriffendorff's Cu-Alpha the category of non-verbal social dominance had a perfect agreement of 1.0 and verbal misogynistic behaviour also had a good score of 0.73. However, verbal aggression even implies there was less agreement by the coders than expected by chance with a score of -0.028. This category differentiates itself thus not sufficiently yet and had to be adapted. As this asked for major changes in the coding scheme the differences between the coders have been analysed in-depth. There has not been a second round of intercoder reliability with the revised coding scheme to aim for sufficient Kriffendorf scores due to time limitations.

From analysing the intercoder reliability it was found that it would be best to analyse complete scenes to provide more context to a quotation. Furthermore, should be applied to one quotation, as many codes have a certain level of overlap. Besides, certain patterns of codes appeared too vague and caused disagreement between the coders. The code of alpha male behaviour was mixed up with other codes such as sexual dominance, threats,

hypersexuality, and possessiveness. It appeared alpha male behaviour is a too broad concept that covers many behaviours and therefore was removed from the codebook. However, the code 'authoritarian' has been added to fill up the gap of alpha male behaviour that was not represented in the rest of the coding scheme yet. Also, the code of hypersexuality caused a lot of confusion with the codes of alpha male behaviour, sexual dominance, self-objectification, and sexual objectification. It was found that the code of hypersexuality is quite unnecessary as parts of it are visible around different codes, the description of those codes has been extended and the code of hypersexuality has been removed from the coding scheme. Furthermore, the code of dominating physical presence has been deleted as the code appeared too vague and difficult to spot. To make the coding scheme more coherent and less overlapping multiple codes have been combined, resulting in a final amount of 46 codes. Furthermore, the distinctions between the codes were enhanced.

Analysis

To analyse the episodes Atlas.ti was used. In Atlas.ti multiple codes were assigned to the different quotations, which represent each a real-life event, personal statement, or introduction video. The data was analysed with code-document as well as co-occurrence analysis with the focus on identifying patterns of toxic masculinity. Co-occurrence analysis was employed to identify codes that frequently occur together. For the sub-question about seasonal variation one document group was made containing all the episodes of season 1, and one document was created containing all episodes of season 9. Those have been compared with code-document analysis.

Results

In Atlas.ti a total of 597 quotations were made of scenes that appeared to portray forms of toxic masculinity, including 331 personal statements, 247 real-life events and 19 introduction videos. In total 1652 codes were assigned.

Main patterns

Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression (n=58) is prevalent in personal statements as well as in real-life events, frequently involving threats to showcase one's potential for aggression. These threats are seldom explicitly directed at their direct recipient but are more commonly aimed at other males, or the viewers at home to emphasise the aggression in their capability.

> *"If Monja were to cheat on me now, then yes, we would have a very big campfire. Then the villa is simply on fire. I think I'm going to burn all that shit down right here."*
>
> (Personal Statement 150, Season 1 episode 8)

Nonetheless, directed threats do emerge in fights during nighttime, often facilitated through alcohol consumption resulting in extreme levels of verbal aggression. Aiming to intimidate through threatening language as well as raising one's voice in an angry tone. Swearing only becomes prominent in extreme situations where the participants appear to lose self-control.

Verbal social aggression

Verbal social aggression (n=99) in *Ex On The Beach* shows that there is a notable discrepancy between the narratives males in the series share with their male friends and those they share with females. When a sexual relationship with a female is established, or appears to be progressing towards a more serious commitment, some males tend to withdraw and engage in disrespectful commentary and behaviour towards the female in question. Even though the

males employ tactics at first to make the female feel special while not being entirely forthright in their intentions.

> *Nick: "For this moment I said, Ashley, she is not blocked, she is open to everyone, but I cannot tell her that directly now, because then I will get glasses thrown at my head."*
> (Personal Statement 34, Season 1 episode 2)

It appears that the male in this example is aware that his viewpoint may not be well-received by the female, prompting him to resort to manipulation by withholding the truth.

However, social aggression is not solely directed towards females; it is also prevalent within the male group dynamics. Especially when a male deviates from traditional male gender roles, facing disapproval and ridicule from their male peers.

> *Shady:" It's Monja's kissing boyfriend, I don't know what you want to call it. Seems nice to me, a bit gay actually, with his plucked eyebrows and his waxed head."*
> (Personal statement 95, Season 1 episode 6)

Furthermore, in some instances, males engage in mutual encouragement to partake in toxic behaviour. This results in further exclusion of certain males within the group. In the following example one of the males is encouraged to create drama by throwing a drink at another individual to humiliate himself:

> *Jonna: "You should have done that before, but if you want to show that you are a man now, you should just say: 'Listen dick. You wanted to hump my ex. You cheated.' Hoppatee. Got it?"*
> (Real-life event 224, Season 9 episode 8)

Verbal social dominance

The category of verbal social dominance (n=356) appears to be the most prominent theme within Ex On The Beach. The males tend to obfuscate their inability to attain their desired outcomes and maintain control over each situation. On the contrary, they often suggest they possess complete control and portray a lack of emotional engagement. This behaviour is characterized by visible patterns of authoritarian behaviour, appearing especially once a male encounters difficulties with seducing a woman, which often manifests in the form of defensiveness. Resistance is often seen in responses to perceived rejection:

Cinta: "I don't necessarily need to be next to you at the moment, so I chose Marc."

Joey: "I think that's a nice choice. I'd rather not sleep with you either. That's why I left after two minutes."

(Real-life event 135, Season 9 episode 2)

Visible is a reoccurring pattern of dismissiveness of emotions. To shield themselves from appearing vulnerable they mask their true emotions and engage in behaviour as "proud acting". Here the males act content with outcomes that do not align with their desires. Such as pretending to enjoy sleeping alone after pursuing a romantic encounter the night before. Or claiming not to care when their date is involved with someone else. That they protect their emotional guard is sometimes visible in their interactions, as they contradict themselves. Some males openly acknowledge that their social standing is of influence, however, this is only the case in personal statements where no other males or females are present.

Moreover, sexual dominance emerges as the predominant form of social dominance. The males are driven by a desire to pursue numerous sexual encounters with multiple females, all to elevate their social status and reinforce their sense of social dominance.

Rick: "I've fucked her now. So on to the next one and as much as possible, right?"

(Personal statement 269, Season 9 episode 6)

To reinforce their sexual dominance, the males frequently resort to self-objectification by highlighting their physical attributes as sexual commodities. In season 9, Marc names his penis "Junior" in an attempt to draw attention to his penis. However, during sexual encounters his "Junior" transforms into a "Senior", thereby emphasizing the want to possess a large penis. This goes thus far that a large penis is even prioritized by males above the possession of a personality.

Shady: "What do I have to offer a partner? Quite little actually. A very big cock. "

(Introduction video 3, Season 1 episode 1)

Moreover, patterns of competitiveness revolve around establishing dominance over sexual performance. Males even try to assert superiority in this domain by differentiating themselves and bragging about their performances. Dylan from season 9 calls himself the "tongue tornado" underlining his self-professed expertise in oral intimacy. When one of the males perceives himself lacking in this area the pattern of defensiveness returns to protect one's ego. A female ranked five males from best to least skilled in bed, those not ranked at the top immediately turned into defence mode, which illustrates this type of response well.

Maxim: "You were my third, so I can't say I was good then."

Dylan: "I had to share her, right, bro. I had to divide that."

Rick: "Excuses."

Marc: "If only I could have lasted longer than one minute."

(Real-life event 242, Season 9 episode 9)

Additionally, there is a notable emphasis on the pursuit of women within the villa, especially evident when participants enter the villa after a date. Often the initial question is whether any sexual activity occurred between the participants. When no sexual encounters took place, male participants frequently argued this was completely within their control and that those encounters were left for later. But, when an actual sexual encounter happens in the villa, it becomes an occasion to brag.

>*Joey: "Fit straight away. Already had cardio. Already had gymnastics."*
>
>*Marc: "Pump a little."*
>
>*Jonna: "Not us. How many laps did you end up doing?"*
>
>**Marc looks and talks to his penis**
>
>*Marc: "Mate, how much?"*
>
>*Marc: "'I don't know anymore, swa.'"*
>
>(Real-life event 127, Season 9 episode 1)

Even though Marc in this example engages in macho behaviour, he admits that it stems from his desire to fit in with the group and conform to traditional masculine standards. He argues that if he abstains from this behaviour he would be seen as a "pussy".

>*Marc: "Just at that table. You were fucking quiet. I didn't want to embarrass you."*
>
>*Janey: "You just shouldn't talk so tough."*
>
>*Marc: "I know. Those boys were so shitty."*
>
>*Janey: "Why do you have to go along with that?"*

Marc: "Should I play the little pussy?"

(Real-life event 128, Season 9 episode 1)

Verbal misogynistic behaviour

Ex On The Beach features a substantial number of verbal misogynistic behaviour (n=296). Frequently, women are subjected to ill-treatment, primarily driven by the egos of the males. This recurring pattern portrays women as objects of sexual desire, often depicted as entities to be conquered or claimed.

Upon their arrival at the beach, male participants frequently establish a misogynistic tone in their introduction. It seems as if they seek to assert a form of dominance by mistreating women as it is often said in an authoritarian tone. The following example demonstrates how women are being objectified primarily for sexual purposes which is followed by mistreatment.

Rick: "After sex, I blocked her on Instagram and Snapchat. I didn't want to hear anything about it anymore. I just wanted to move on and find more women."

(Introduction video 16, Season 9 episode 6)

It interesting is that disrespectful slurs about women are often not directed towards women, but towards males. Those are often used with the intent to undermine the masculinity of another male for instance by calling them a "pussy". Although those slurs are pointed towards other males, those slurs still assign women to certain stereotypes, in this case, that women are weak.

In some cases, some of the males tend to assert a possessive attitude towards females, treating them as trophies that can be earned and possessed. Through this they expect a women to commit to a specific male. This behaviour arises rapidly, often without being acquainted with a woman, but already decided upon her arrival based on her looks.

> *Puru: "I see a really beautiful lady, so I pick her up, I take her with me, I lift her, she*
>
> *is just mine."*
>
> (Personal statement 42, Season 1 episode 2)

Furthermore, a pattern of slut-shaming is evident, particularly exemplified by one male participant in season 9 who engages in such behaviour. The male has "principles", wherein he refuses any sexual encounters with a female who already shared an intimate moment with another male in the villa, even a simple kiss, or if her previous sexual encounters exceed the number of 10. On the contrary, he finds himself allowed to have as many sexual encounters as he wishes. Also here the ego of the male seems to step in again.

> *Maxim: "I had a nice night last night with Lynn and Cinta, but they have both already*
>
> *kissed others and Lynn's body count is over ten. So on principle, I can't do anything*
>
> *with it. My ego is just too big to do that."*
>
> (Personal statement 272, Season 9 episode 7)

Especially when a female goes to bed with different males this is inappropriate.

> *Nick: "Yes, yes. She did a threesome. Everyone heard it clearly. So dirty. She is a*
>
> *whore."*
>
> (Personal statement 87, Season 1 episode 6)

Those forms of slut-shaming sometimes take on extreme forms. In real-life event 70 Nick hangs three condoms on the door of Ashley with a card next to it which says: "Who's next?". Besides, the most occurring code in this category is the code of sexual objectification. It turns out that females are often solely judged based on their appearance. Often with the main focus on their tits, butt, and body shape. Labelling them often as 'hot' or 'sexy' women. Especially when the females arrive on the beach the focus is on their sexual attributes.

> *Marc: "Looks good. Big lips, big tits, and a nice ass. We can do something with that.*
>
> *Giorgina is certainly liked by Junior. One hundred percent."*
>
> (Personal statement 169, Season 9 episode 1)

On the dates, it is apparent that the males often try to guide the conversation in a sexual direction. Especially during the conversations between the males as well as in the personal statements it is visible the males focus on conquering a woman to get her in bed. Women appear to be a prey one can hunt on.

> *Sokratis: "She's just hot man, she's a tiger. She has to be careful with that, otherwise, I*
>
> *will catch her."*
>
> (Personal statement 27, Season 1 episode 2)

Furthermore, the males appear to block any sort of emotion as they act as if women are objects that you can share. In season 1 the 'bro-code' is an important concept, referring to the rule that sharing is caring. Meaning the males are all allowed to go to bed with each's other exes and swap between them.

> *Wayne: "We men trade Pokémon cards and cars, but you can't just trade women at all.*
>
> *But yes, we men don't understand that.*
>
> (Personal statement 78, Season 1 episode 5)

To win a female over the males often try to manipulate the female into feeling special, while the males play games with her.

The aim of the male in the series is often solely focused on a sexual encounter with a female. To achieve this goal they often try to manipulate the females to let them believe they are special. Once a female starts to believe this and develop feelings the male starts creating resistance towards her.

Non-verbal aggression

The non-verbal aggression (n=62) that occurs in *Ex On The Beach*, mostly occurs in real-life events. In personal statements non-verbal aggression is only perceived through an aggressive gaze. Most situations with non-verbal aggression seem to start with an aggressive gaze. It appears that this aggressive gaze is used to scare others and transfer a certain level of dominance. Once the males are more verbally challenged their levels of anger seem to rise resulting in often aggressive gestures, followed by invasion of other's personal space and in extreme cases ending in actual physical fights. During those fights, the males only physically attacked other males.

Non-verbal social aggression

When non-verbal social aggression (n=74) occurred it mostly occurred between males. Once a male seems threatened by his ego they strive for revenge, such as attempting to steal a woman from a man. Besides, betrayal is apparent which mostly involves a male betraying a female through kissing, flirting, or sleeping with another woman. Ruining from time to time the relation between the males and often the relation between a male and a female.

Non-verbal social dominance

Regarding non-verbal social dominance (n=266) there appeared a lot of behaviours. Especially the sub-codes self-objectification, sexual dominance, and superior facial expressions appeared a lot. Self-objectification is interesting as it makes men treat themselves as sexual objects. This occurs a lot during the series, especially in the introduction videos. In the introduction video, the males often show off their bodies, sexualizing them by going over their bodies with oil or in a sexual way with their hands. It gets more self-objectifying when the guys go with their hands in their underwear. Especially one guy, Marc, from season 9 engaged in this behaviour. He calls his penis Junior and because of that often looks at his

penis, or goes with his hands to his penis to participate in self-objectification. Here he even gives his penis a voice. Also often the guys like to show their muscles, In season 1 the main focus is on showing the muscles to the camera, while in season 9 they are more likely to do sexy movements with their body.

Furthermore, superior facial expressions appear a lot, this is quite logical as verbal social dominance is also a big category, and often facial expressions are used to deliver the verbal message right, and thus in a dominating way. This shows they mean their message in an arrogant manner, and feel superior about themselves.

Additionally, non-verbal sexual dominance appeared a lot, part of this is movements, such as a lap dance that assert sexual dominance. However, also included in this sub-category are mainly facial expressions that are smirking or looking proud related to what they pronounce often verbally.

In most cases, facial expressions are of great importance to verbal sexual objectification and verbal sexual dominance. It appears that in general, the proud sexual expressions appear together with them. In some cases there is actual sexually dominant behaviour in itself, such as giving a lap dance, however mostly it is proud and sexual expressions that make this category so prominent.

This also counts for superior facial expressions, this code appears a lot as dominance is a big theme in this series. The comments that are said are often made dominant throughout the way they are said. Often this is with a dominant, controlling face. An arrogant smirk for instance.

Those superior facial expressions are used in many situations, however always in situations where they like to show their ego. It varies whether this is about the amount of sex they have, their relation with a girl, but also towards the boys, to show they are not "weak". It often is used to show they have control over the situation, so they appear as if everything goes

the way they want or that they can get everything they want. Boosting their ego in all different contexts.

Non-verbal sexual dominance is also obtained through sexual movements. Such as in real-life event 40 where Puru gives Jodi a lap dance. Or in real-life event 100 where Wayne licks the cheek of a new-incoming ex.

In the cases that one of the guys feels threatened by either a guy or a girl they appear to make use of an intense gaze. Probably to establish dominance and show that the other person should take them seriously and feel threatened.

Furthermore on the dates where there was driving included the guys liked to engage in risky behaviour and participate in driving very fast to impress the girls.

Non-verbal misogynistic behaviour

The objectification gaze is important in non-verbal misogynistic behaviour (n=131). This occurs mostly with the arrival of a new participant/ex. When they arrive the girls are wearing bikinis, and with that showing most parts of their body. What is visible is that this objectification gaze keeps appearing during those arrivals. The eyes of the guys often scan the complete body of a woman, or the eyes are specifically attracted to the butt or breasts of a woman.

Furthermore, regarding sexual objectification, there are multiple instances where the males focus on the sexual attributes of the girls, such as grabbing them by the butt as a form of possessiveness. However, they also use hand gestures to show what for them is the perfect size of tits/butt. Also, sexual gazes are part of this.

Especially in season 1, there is a male, Puru, who takes part on a high level in non-verbal possessiveness. He believes he can claim a girl easily by grabbing her up as well as being very touchy. Furthermore, you see that during the parties when everyone is drunk some

guys have the urge to put their hands on the hips/ass of a girl and be quite touchy as part of possessiveness.

Homophobic bullying

The codes of verbal- and non-verbal homophobic bullying (n=3) have been left out of the analysis because they barely appear.

Co-occurrence analysis

To analyse whether certain toxic behaviours often appear together a co-occurrence analysis has been conducted. Through this co-occurrence analysis, it became clear which sub-codes are connected, and often appeared at the same time.

Angry voice and aggressive gaze, both from the category of verbal aggression, seem to often appear together in quotations. This shows that often when a male raises his voice he will also portray anger in his eyes. In this category aggressive hand gestures and angry voices often go together. Meaning that in quite some cases anger was expressed through aggressive hand gestures and an angry voice at the same time. This connects verbal aggression with non-verbal aggression. It appears aggressive hand gestures almost always come together with an aggressive gaze. However, an aggressive gaze is not always with aggressive hand gestures. This could imply that a form of aggression often starts with an aggressive gaze and sometimes will be strengthened by aggressive hand gestures. Additionally in most quotations where physical aggression and invasion of personal space appear an aggressive gaze is also present. Also suggesting that an aggressive gaze often is a base for further aggressive behaviour.

Another association is that minimal emotional expression mostly seems to appear from defensiveness. This is one of the responses of defensiveness to keep the face neutral and stoic, to act as if they don't care. This mostly appears in the cases of dismissiveness of emotions.

Take for instance this example where Nick acts as if he does not care when the woman he went to bed with went on a date with a different male:

Cherry: "You don't mind?"

Nick: "No, I said at the beginning: Open all gates, make it romantic and fun. If it clicks, it clicks."

(Real-life event 60, Season 1 episode 5)

Here Nick says that he does not care, however, his face says something else due to the minimal emotional expression. He is dismissive of his emotions as it turns out he does care. Here the non-verbal minimal expression and verbal defensiveness come well together.

Non-verbal self-objectification appeared often with verbal sexual dominance. It appears that when a guy is showing off his body or looks at his penis that this often goes along with words that show sexual dominance.

Marc: "My specialty is Junior. This is Marc and this is Junior."

grabs into his boxer to show junior

(Real-life event 116, Season 9 episode 1)

This example already shows that self-objectification is often used to show off as a form of sexual dominance. There also seems to be a connection between authoritarian behaviour and personal humiliation. This happens sometimes as personal humiliation seems to come often out of dominance, and thus is said in a controlling and dominating tone. Furthermore, the connection between verbal sexual dominance and verbal sexual objectification is also prevalent. This suggests that often sexual objectification is used to establish sexual dominance for instance. However, it also should be taken into account that there is some overlap between

those two categories in general which could also be the case. It is that comments about sexual objectification also often emphasize sex, which is why they are related.

Dylan: "I like to lick, right? If it's not your pussy, it's your feet."

(Personal statement 268, Season 9 episode 6)

Comparison seasons

From the code-document analysis, it is visible that in general the amount of toxic behaviour does not vary much from each other and the number of codes per category is quite similar between the two seasons. Taking into account that season 9 consisted of one more episode. However, it is visible that Ex On The Beach scored quite a lot higher in the category of verbal social dominance. It turns out that in season 9, 143 quotations were labelled as verbally sexually dominant, while in season 1 this was only 51 quotations. Concerning non-verbal social dominance, this was also twice as high in season 9 as in season 1. When looking deeper into the quotations it appears that the sexual dominance in season 1 is milder. The quotations that are made are mostly about the fact that the guys would like to go to bed with a girl and most comments solely describe sex on a dominant and controlling tone.

Puru: "Of course, Simone will sleep in my room tonight."

(Personal statement 47, Season 1 episode 3)

Furthermore, the focus is on the seduction of the girls. But the ending is often kept open and not explicitly stated.

Sokratis: "I want to seduce the girls, and see where it goes."

(Personal statement 53, Season 1 episode 3)

While season 9 appears to have a higher emphasize on the sexual encounters itself, which is used as a manner to brag with.

> *Marc: "Eight times. Eight times Junior showed Senior."*
>
> (Personal statement 187, Season 9 episode 1)

Or, showing off with their qualities in the bedroom.

> *Dylan: "I warmed her with my tongue tornado. Even if I lick for one, two or three*
>
> *hours. I don't really care. As long as she cums in my face."*
>
> (Personal statement 193, Season 9 episode 2)

Furthermore, the introduction videos in season 9 appear to be way more sexualized. Here the males act quite aroused and portray many sexual movements, while in season 1 they do talk about sex and show some sports shots or shots under the shower, however, those are not certainly focused on the sex aspect. In season 1 they mostly focus on what the person is saying and show a view shots where the guys try to look sexy but that is where it ends.

Contradictory in season 9 the first person is introduced as Marc-Junior, including not only his name but also the name of his penis. This is followed by movements where he does sexual movements against a car tire and dances with his hand in his underwear. The focus is only on sex here.

Concerning this also a difference in self-objectification is visible. The amount of self-objectification in season 9 is almost twice as high as in season 1. However, the main point is that the levels of self-objectification differ a lot. In season 1 self-objectification is mostly due to showing their muscles to the camera, or in the introduction videos, go with their hands over their body. While in season 9 almost all self-objectification behaviour is related to the penis. Mostly it regards behaviours such as looking at their penis or having their hand in their underwear.

Episodic variations

What appears from the analysis is that in the first episodes non-verbal aggression, non-verbal social aggression, and verbal social aggression appear to be a lot less than in the middle and last episodes. You see that non-verbal social aggression as well as verbal social aggression build up. In the beginning, there is almost no social aggression, but the longer the participants get to know each other the more social aggression there appears.

Verbal aggression raised a lot from the beginning till the end. The lowest in the first episodes, a bit higher in the middle, and in the last episodes is the highest. Verbal aggression is very low in the first episodes. While verbal misogynistic behaviour on the other side is quite high. Non-verbal social aggression is high in the last episodes, this builds also up apparently.

The first episodes mostly contain a lot of non-verbal social dominance, verbal social dominance, and verbal misogynistic behaviour, also a higher level of non-verbal misogynistic behaviour. You see in the first extremes a great contrast between the categories. In the last episodes and middle episodes, the toxic behaviour is somewhat more divided. Also, most introduction videos are part of the first episodes, and here an emphasis is often on glorifying sex and themselves. Besides social aggression, the middle episodes do barely differ from the last episodes.

Discussion

As the findings have been analysed in this discussion the results will be further discussed.

How is toxic masculinity, verbally and non-verbally, manifested by male participants of Ex On The Beach Double Dutch?

Verbal toxic masculinity

Patterns of verbal toxic masculinity are quite apparent in *Ex On The Beach*. Especially about the categories of verbal social dominance and verbal misogynistic behaviour. Verbal aggression is often used as a tool for intimidation, underlining an overarching focus on control. About verbal social aggression, there seems a notable discrepancy between the narratives males share with their male friends and those they share with females, indicating a manipulative tactic to elicit a sense of exclusivity while hiding their true intentions. Showing a pattern of maintaining control while lacking forthrightness and transparency. Concerning social dominance, male participants exhibit a propensity to downplay emotions and project an aura of control, particularly in instances of perceived rejection. This inclination presents the societal expectation for men to avoid appearing vulnerable, reinforcing traditional stereotypes. Furthermore, verbal misogynistic patterns are evident in the objectification and ill-treatment of women, where women are treated as objects that can be conquered or possessed. This reinforces traditional gender roles that emphasize male superiority and female objectification. That this pattern is so prevalent in the series is quite problematic as it appears that exposure to television that portrays women primarily as sexual objects has been linked to an increased likelihood of engaging in disrespectful and harassing behaviour towards women (Galdi et al., 2014). The category of verbal homophobic bullying was not relevant enough and not needed in this analysis. This is probably because most contestants were not aligning with the LGBTQ movement, and thus could not be bullied in this regard. Even though in season 9 two transgenders appeared there were no mean comments made towards them based on their sexuality.

Non-verbal toxic masculinity

The portrayal of non-verbal toxic masculinity is subtler but equally impactful. Non-verbal aggression generally starts with an aggressive gaze, which escalates further toward physical confrontations with other males. Patterns visible in non-verbal social aggression highlight especially the competitiveness between males in the pursuit of women, which sometimes resulted in behaviours such as revenge and betrayal. Even though those occurrences are infrequent throughout the season, their significance makes it worth investigating whether this behaviour also appears across other seasons. Non-verbal social dominance is often conveyed through self-objectification, sexual dominance, and superior facial expression, and with that the most prominent category of non-verbal toxic masculinity. Emphasis lays on physical attributes and superiority over other males as well as females. This behaviour mirrors the emphasis on physical prowess and sexual conquest that aligns with toxic masculinity. Non-verbal misogynistic behaviour is typed especially through the objectification gaze, where female bodies are scanned based on their sexual attributes. Also, women are sometimes touched upon in their private parts. This behaviour can be quite problematic as it appears viewing sexualizing reality television is associated with greater levels of self-objectification among young women (Vandenbosch et al., 2015). The code of non-verbal homophobic behaviour did not apply at all.

How have patterns of toxic masculinity evolved from the first season in 2016 to the latest season in 2023?

Season 9 surpasses season 1 in the number of quotations associated with social dominance, with a greater emphasis on sexual encounters and sexual prowess. Participants in Season 9 tend to overtly brag about their sexual achievements, objectifying their partners and reinforcing a culture that prioritizes conquest to a lesser extent than in Season 1. Other categories of toxic masculinity remain quite consistent across the season, therefore the

suggestion that media criticism might have influenced the portrayal of toxic masculinity over time is not valid. However, it should be taken into consideration that in the first season the participants did not know beforehand they would participate in *Ex On The Beach*, which might have influenced certain outcomes. Also, the program makers seem to play a role to this extent as the introduction videos seem staged due to the tools that are used in the series, and thus the program makers seem to play a big role in this regard. It would therefore be interesting in future research to figure out to what extent the production of such a program steers in the direction of toxic masculinity. Also, the focus on self-objectification is higher in season 9, whereas in season 1 self-objectification was miler focused on the muscles, but turns in season 1 to emphasis on the penis for instance. Support for sexual double standards has been consistently linked to sexism and gender inequality (Zakar et al., 2013). Which is not a step in the right direction. Given the prominence of sexual themes in *Ex On The Beach*, it is conceivable that the stereotype depicting men as constantly ready and willing for sex, deeply fascinated with sexual matters, and proud of their sexual experiences could be perpetuated (Ward, 1995). Also, they support certain stereotypes and keep hanging in there which is problematic.

To what extent do patterns of toxic masculinity vary across the introductory, mid-season, and concluding episodes?

Across the episodes an evolution of certain patterns of toxic masculinity is visible. It appears non-verbal social aggression and verbal social aggression are notably less prevalent in the initial episodes. This might be because for social aggression to occur relationships need to be first. In the introductory episodes, the islanders still have to get acquainted with one another and form those relationships. This could be a suggestion of this behaviour. Verbal aggression seems to build up in the episodes, starting low in the beginning, getting higher in the middle, and ending with high levels. This might also be because verbal aggression is

mostly related to conflicts and when people start to get to know each other they want to please others and not create conflict. While once those relations are created one might be more willing to assert a level of dominance through forms of aggression. However, with those introductory episodes first impressions come, as there are no relations built yet it seems especially the females are most often judged simply on their looks. Also in those episodes, most of the exes did not arrive yet, which means that this could not cause a lot of drama yet.

Practical implications

The findings presented in this study have several practical implications, especially in the context of understanding and fighting against toxic masculinity in reality dating shows such as Ex On The Beach. First, the study highlights the potential negative impact of modelling such programs. Men often identify with male characters they perceive as successful, intelligent, and even violent (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). In case viewers perceive toxic characters in the series as successful this could reproduce toxic masculinity in real life. This observation highlights the need for media producers to exercise their responsibility in creating their content, considering the potential impact on viewer attitudes and behaviour.

Additionally, the study highlights how reality television shows can influence viewers' perceptions of personal relationships and intimacy. These series often present unrealistic standards for how to perceive and engage in intimacy, which can lead viewers to internalize and apply these standards. This aspect can contribute to problematic attitudes towards sex and intimacy, especially as reality TV can present and create unrealistic standards of the way intimacy should be perceived and engaged (Boateng, 2023). Therefore, it is important for viewers to critically evaluate and analyse the way relationships are portrayed in reality shows and consider their impact on their views and behaviour.

Additionally, research suggests that watching reality television, especially if it is

perceived as more realistic, may lead to higher levels of social aggression in real life. The realistic depiction of aggressive behaviour in shows like *Ex On The Beach* may increase the likelihood of viewer imitation, as observed through the lens of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977 as cited in Dainton & Zelley, 2019). Therefore, media consumers need to be aware of the potential influence of this content on their social behaviour.

Responsibility

One could ask themselves who is to blame for all this toxic behaviour, because it clear is that there appears a lot of toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach*. Often it can be noticed that the participants repeat the questions asked by the program makers, those questions seem mostly focused to stir the pot. Those questions are also often about sex, which could contribute to a great extent to the levels of sexual dominance that are portrayed. Because of this one could argue whether the program makers should be held accountable for this behaviour. Furthermore, future research should further investigate the implications of this toxic behaviour on the audience. Discover to what extent this changes the view and behaviour of the audience. It is interesting to discover to what extent producers and editors would be responsible for the promotion of toxic behaviour. As Coyne et al. (2010) found relational aggression was more often artificially produced than that it occurred naturally. This could be because program makers want to show the most entertaining parts of the episode. As some aggression seems to be staged one could ask themselves why participants of the reality series go along with that. Most participants are flattered when they are selected for a reality show because they get the feeling that are more fun and want to live up to these expectations. The production clearly emphasizes to the participants they expect something in return for the privilege the participants are receiving. Due to this privilege, participants could feel they are not living up to the expectations in case they refuse requests from the production (Syvertsen, 2001). When talking about the portrayal of toxic behaviour from an analysis of watching 64

hours of reality television it appears that attitudes about "Women are sex objects" and "Dating is a game" were significantly more rewarded than punished by the program makers (Ferris et al., 2007). Attitudes about "Men are sex-driven" were punished and rewarded around the same amount of times.

Theoretical implications

Furthermore, there is a lack of research done in the area of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity appears to be quite a vague concept, which made it hard for scientists to label it with a good definition. Besides this definition, there is even less research about what toxic masculinity contains, and which traits are assigned to it. Therefore this research took some main concepts that were assigned as toxic behaviour to create the main categories. However, the behaviours in the sub-codes are not backed up by existing literature as definitely toxic behaviour. This made the establishment of a clear coding scheme quite challenging. Toxic masculinity appeared to be such a broad concept that it was quite hard to include all areas of toxic behaviour. While the categories were made, a lot of the sub-codes overlapped with each other, as many of the main categories are closely related to each other. However, for the coding, it was needed to differentiate those codes, which also made certain codes have been pushed into a box that did not always cover the whole concept. Future research therefore should focus more on identifying toxic behaviours, verbally as well as non-verbally so a clearer, more distinctive coding scheme can be made.

However, this research could contribute to the establishment of such a distinction emphasising that toxic masculinity can be separated into the categories of aggression, social aggression, social dominance, misogynistic behaviour as well as homophobic bullying about non-verbal as well as verbal behaviour

Further limitations

The main limitation of this study is due to time limitations. As there was only limited time for this research only two seasons of *Ex On The Beach* have been watched. About the main research question, this still creates a clear line of the toxic patterns in Ex On The Beach. However, about the sub-questions that look more into the differences between the episodes and seasons more content should be analysed to arrive at a solid conclusion. To sketch a better view of reality dating series in general and make assumptions of that it would be interesting to also analyse other reality dating series and see whether the same or different patterns of toxic masculinity appear. This is also possible for the series *Ex On The Beach* itself, as it is a program that exists in many countries. It would be interesting if many of the countries were influenced by the portrayal of toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach*.

Another limitation is that this research only focuses on the toxic masculinity portrayed by males. However, it appears in the series females are also not angels. They often talk about the fact that they want a man with a large penis for instance, which also contributes to forms of toxic masculinity and expectations that are placed upon man. Thus, to gain a clearer view of the contribution of woman in this regard it would be interesting to also focus on this and figure out what the differences between the portrayal of toxic masculinity between males and females is in that regard.

In season 1 participants did not know beforehand they participated in *Ex On The Beach* this could have influenced the behaviour of the participants in season 1. This is especially a limitation for the sub-question that compares season 1 and season 9 with each other. To make this more reliable it would be good for next time to take season 2 where the participants were aware they were taking part in *Ex On The Beach* for instance.

Future research

This research was only focused on the Dutch version of Ex On The Beach. For further research, it would also be interesting to look into the versions of other countries. Besides this research cannot make conclusions about the whole reality dating series genre, thus also other series should be analysed to gain a view of toxic masculinity as behaviour that occurs all across this genre. It might be smart to focus on one certain category of toxic masculinity to be able to distinguish that category better and get clearer and more reliable results. It would also be interesting to see what the influence of females is on the portrayal of toxic masculinity in reality dating series, and to what extent they support this behaviour in the series for instance. There seems to be a relation between certain male participants and certain toxic behaviours. This could be because some male participants possess certain toxic traits from which this toxic behaviour follows. For future research, it would be interesting to investigate certain characters more specifically and see how they respond in certain situations and which toxic traits they then possess. It would also be interesting to see to what extent the audience at home identifies those behaviours as toxic. To better investigate a potential influence on the viewer.

Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying non-verbal, as well as verbal patterns of toxic masculinity in *Ex On The Beach Double Dutch*. This was assessed through a qualitative content analysis. It appeared especially that the categories of verbal social dominance, verbal misogynistic behaviour, and non-verbal social dominance are prominent forms of toxic masculinity. Verbal social dominance stands out the most and mostly includes the pressure the excel in the bedroom, the need to avoid showing any signs of weakness, and the expectation to conform to a stereotypical image of a "real man." Furthermore, it appears the males want to appear in control. Concerning verbal misogynistic behaviour they often mistreat women through objectifying and treating them as if they can be conquered or possessed. Also slut-shaming is quite apparent. Non-verbal social dominance is mostly portrayed through superior facial expressions and the presentation of their own body in a sexual manner. There is also looked at differences between season 1 and 9. Those differences are limited, however, season 9 has a more extensive focus on sex. Furthermore, it appears the introductory episodes contain higher levels of social dominance and verbal misogynistic behaviour, while social aggression appears more to develop over the episodes. In general, all those patterns of toxic behaviour could have a bad influence on the viewer as well as society. Future research should further identify the effects of the portrayal of toxic masculinity in reality television and should also investigate the role of women in this regard.

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Appendix

Code name	Explanation	Example
Verbal toxic behaviour		
Verbal aggression		
Angry voice	Elevated vocal volume, characterized by raised voices, harsh tones, and intense expressions of anger, including loud and vehement shouting.	*"Listen to me."* *raised voice with aggressive tone*
Swearing	Utilizing indecent, offensive, or impolite language, or employing words that are commonly deemed socially inappropriate or offensive in interpersonal communication.	*"Fucking hell, man."*
Threats	The utilization of language to convey an intention to intimidate, or cause fear or distress to another person.	*"If you cross my boundary like that, we're really going to have a confrontation."*
Verbal social aggression		
Backstabbing	Engaging in negative discussions about individuals in their absence, including ridiculing or criticizing them.	*"Whether Marc likes it or not, I will go to bed with Ellen anyways."*
Betrayal	Language that transgress established trust and prioritize personal interests over the maintenance of a mutually beneficial relationship.	*"For now, I've said, Ashley, she's not blocked, she's open to everyone, but I can't tell her that directly right now, or I'll have glasses thrown at my head."*
Exclusion	Intentional isolation or ostracization of individuals from a group or social setting through the use of disparaging comments, with the goal of causing them to feel rejected and marginalized.	*"So to speak, groups are created. First they tease Lex for a laugh and now they turn him against you."*
Interference	Language intended to cause disagreements, misunderstandings, or strife between people.	*"Yes, I don't want to talk bad about your boyfriend, but he has instigated a lot."*
Personal humiliation	Derogatory or offensive comments directed at an individual with the intent to belittle, demean, or offend them through personal insults.	*"I don't think he is competition for me, especially with his accent."*
Revenge	Using aggressive and derogatory language to retaliate against perceived threats to one's masculinity.	*"I thought: I've been made a bit of a fool. Of course I can't have it, so I have to get him back."*
Social manipulation	The employment of deceptive or exploitative strategies aimed at manipulating or regulating the thoughts, behaviours, emotions, or choices of others, encompassing practices like gaslighting and the dismissal of emotions, without a direct connection to sexual objectives.	*lying to assure the girl does not leave him* Ashley: *"I heard something that I don't really like. I heard from Puru that you said that if I went to someone else it wouldn't matter to you."*

		Nick: "No, I said if you go to someone else, that is your own choice."
Verbal social dominance		
Authoritarian	Attempts to assert an excessive and oppressive level of control and dominance over others through linguistic means.	*"If I would have found her interesting enough, I would have gone to bed with her more often."*
Competitiveness	Language that provokes competitive scenarios or conflicts with the intent to establish dominance or validate one's masculinity.	*"Everyone likes Michelle, but if I also fancy Michelle, it's the law of the strongest. Then I'm going to fire until she crawls into bed with me."*
Defensiveness	Defensive language aimed at evading the appearance of vulnerability, coupled with the practice of emotional suppression.	*"I also prefer not to sleep with you. That is why I left after two minutes."*
Gender stereotyping men	Reinforcing norms governing male behaviour and expression through language, as well as employing gender-based derogatory terms that diminish or disparage men based on their gender.	*"Of course I'm a real man, with a high libido, so we'll see how long she can last before I get her to do it."*
Sexual dominance	Establishing dominance through language by promoting the notion that men should have frequent sexual encounters and possess a large penis, while emphasizing physical appearance and sexuality above other aspects of their identity. This also includes an intense fixation on sexual matters and feelings of superiority based on sexual conquests.	*"I wouldn't mind if Cinta decides to lie down next to me. I can assure her that a ride with Junior will take longer than two minutes."*
Verbal misogynistic behaviour		
Enjoyment mistreatment women	Deriving pleasure from, or displaying a sense of pride in the mistreatment of women.	*"I just really like it when she's jealous, and then you just lure me into those things and I just challenge it, I like it."*
Gender-based slurs women	Derogatory terms or insults that specifically target women, such as "bitch" and "slut".	*"What kind of slut are you."*
Gender stereotyping women	Verbal generalizations regarding the prescriptive or prohibitive expectations of women's conduct and areas of interest.	*"I like hard sex. No female sex."*
Manipulative seduction	Verbal manipulation of women with the aim to achieve sexual goals.	*"Maybe if I get her really drunk, throw in a few bottles of champagne."*
Possessiveness	Verbally treating women as property or objects that can be owned or controlled.	*"I'm jealous and greedy. What's mine is mine."*

Sexual objectification	Language that objectifies women to their sexual attributes or physical appearance, reducing women to their sexual functions and disregard their inherent worth and humanity. Excluding respectful compliments about appearance.	*"I think she's a pretty girl. She does have a nice butt. No breasts, but you can always buy that, so it doesn't matter."*
Slut-shaming	The use of derogatory and judgmental language to criticize women for their sexual behaviour or choices.	*"It's definitely a turn-off if someone has sex quickly. A low body count is more attractive anyway."*
Verbal homophobic bullying		
Homophobic or anti-LQBTQ+ comments	Derogatory or prejudiced language directed at individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.	*"Seems nice to me, a bit gay actually, with his plucked eyebrows and his waxed head."*
Non-verbal toxic behaviour		
Non-verbal aggression		
Aggressive gaze	Strong and intense look or stare that conveys anger.	*Joey looks angry at Lex*
Aggressive hand gestures	Using physical movements of the hands or arms in a forceful or confrontational manner to convey anger.	*Shady makes big aggressive hand gestures*
Invasion of personal space	Encroaching upon an individual's physical boundaries in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable or intimidated.	*Shady enters the personal aura of Simone*
Non-verbal mockery	Engaging in actions, gestures, or facial expressions to make fun of someone through mocking, mimicking or sarcasm for instance.	*Rick and Jonna laugh at Lex, because he is challenging them*
Physical aggression	Physical contact with the intent to harm, intimidate, or exert control over another person.	*Wayne slaps Altin in the face*
Non-verbal social aggression		
Betrayal	Non-verbal cues or body language to convey disloyalty, deception, or a breach of trust.	*Marc kisses with Megan*
Disapproving expressions	Using facial expressions and eye contact to express disapproval, disdain, or criticism toward others actions or ideas with the aim to damage the relationship.	*Wayne looks derogatory at Altin when he arrives*
Interference	Making fun or challenge someone with non-verbal cues to create conflict between other's relationships, such as laughing provocatively.	*Laughing about Ashley who is angry at Nick*
Minimal emotional expression	Stoic and unemotional expression showing lack of empathy.	*Nick keeps his face neutral when he says that he does not care that his girl is on a date*

Passive-aggressive behaviours	Subtle, indirect actions or cues that express hidden hostility or resistance, such as slamming the door.	*Marc and Jonna move the matrass of Lex*
Revenge	Seeking retaliation or payback through actions or gestures.	*Shady laughs to be the karma of Puru*
Silent treatment	A behaviour where a male intentionally ignores or avoids communication with someone, typically as a means of punishment, control, or manipulation.	*Shady is so angry he does not look Simone in the eyes*
Non-verbal social dominance		
Intense gaze	A prolonged and focused stare that communicates authority, control, or intimidation in a social interaction.	*Joey looks intensively into the group*
Risky behaviour	Engaging in physically risky or daring actions to demonstrate bravery.	*Maxim drives hard with Michelle in a car*
Self-objectification	Demonstrating one's physique in a manner that objectifies oneself, such as deliberately drawing attention to private body parts and muscular attributes.	*Marc puts his hand in his underwear*
Sexual dominance	Employing sexual movements to assert dominance as well as facial expressions that manifest pride regarding their sexual conduct.	*Maxim gives Cinta a lap dance*
Superior facial expressions	Smirking, or condescending facial expressions with the intent to convey dominance and superiority.	*Jonna smirks because of his sexual accomplishments*
Non-verbal misogynistic behaviour		
Condescending expressions	Facial cues and dismissive body language that communicate condescension, disrespect, or dismissiveness towards women.	*Sokratis looks annoyed at Ashley*
Possessiveness	Non-verbal actions that manifest ownership or control over a woman.	*Puru lifts Simone when she arrives and walks away with her*
Objectification gaze	Observing in a manner that reduces a woman to an object of desire.	*Wayne looks at the breasts of Simone when she enters the beach*
Reinforcement of misogyny	Non-verbal behaviours or expressions that support the degradation and discrimination of women.	*Lex laughs about the fact that he cheated on Michelle*
Sexual objectification	Gestures, gazes or physical actions that reduce a woman to an object of desire, emphasizing their sexual attributes over their personhood. Excluding the objectification gaze.	*Wayne shows with his hands how Ashley's butt looks like*
Non-verbal homophobic bullying		

| Imitation of Homophobia | Imitating stereotypical LGBTQ+ traits or behaviours in a demeaning manner. |