



KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**HIERARCHY AND FANDOM IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A
CASE STUDY *OF SHINGEKI NO KYOJIN* FANBASE ON
REDDIT**

AHMET BERK BÜYÜKYILMAZ

MASTER'S DEGREE

ISTANBUL, JULY, 2023

Ahmet Berk Büyükyılmaz

Master's Degree

2023

**HIERARCHY AND FANDOM IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A
CASE STUDY *OF SHINGEKI NO KYOJIN* FANBASE ON
REDDIT**

AHMET BERK BÜYÜKYILMAZ
ASSOC. PROFESSOR EYLEM YANARDAĞOĞLU

MASTER'S DEGREE

SUBMITTED TO THE PROGRAM OF GRADUATE STUDIES
WITH THE AIM TO MEET THE PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS REQUIRED TO
RECEIVE A MASTER'S DEGREE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

ISTANBUL, JULY, 2023

APPROVAL

This thesis titled Hierarchy And Social Media: A Case Study Of *Shingeki No Kyojin* Fanbase On Reddit submitted by AHMET BERK BÜYÜKYILMAZ, was deemed successful with the UNANIMOUS as a result of the thesis defense examination held on the 24 JULY 2023 and approved as a MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS by our jury.

Associate Professor Eylem Yanardağođlu (Advisor)
(Kadir Has University)

Assistant Professor Özen Bař
(Kadir Has University)

Professor Doctor Erkan Saka
(Bilgi University)

I confirm that the signatures above belong to the aforementioned faculty members.

Professor Doctor Mehmet Timur Aydemir
Director of the School of Graduate Studies
Date of Approval : 24.07.2023

DECLARATION ON RESEARCH ETHICS AND PUBLISHING METHODS

I, AHMET BERK BÜYÜKYILMAZ;

- hereby acknowledge, agree and undertake that this Master's Degree that I have prepared is entirely my own work and I have declared the citations from other studies in the bibliography in accordance with the rules;
- that this Master's Degree Thesis does not contain any material from any research submitted or accepted to obtain a degree or diploma at another educational institution;
- and that I commit and undertake to follow the "Kadir Has University Academic Codes of Conduct" prepared in accordance with the "Higher Education Council Codes of Conduct".

In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

Ahmet Berk Büyükyılmaz

24.07.2023

HIERARCHY AND FANDOM IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF
SHINGEKI NO KYOJIN FANBASE ON REDDIT

ABSTRACT

Reddit is an online social media platform in which the users get into the communities according to their interests. These communities are called subreddits where the users may rank the posts of other users. In these subreddits, users may also discuss the topics which are related with their common interests. Due to platform's enabling infrastructure for discussions, many of the fan groups have begun to use it for their discourses. One of those fan groups, fandom of the manga series called *Shingeki no Kyojin*, has two crowded subreddits called r/shingekinokyojin and r/titanfolk. Ever since the finalization of the manga in 2021 these two subreddits had been in a constant debate about which group is the "superior fandom" through undermining each other's social and cultural capital in the fan community. This study examines the thematic patterns within the debates between the two different subreddits in the context of fandom and participation in relation with the construction of hierarchical structure. A thematic analysis is used to derive meaning from the posts and comments. 3 highest rated posts about the other subreddit are chosen from the each subreddit and comments of those posts analyzed in order to understand the bases of hierarchical structure between these two groups. Analysis pointed out the importance of Reddit's user-engagement system and cultural capital which is created by the knowledge of object of interest on the construction of hierarchical structures.

Keywords: Reddit, Fan Studies, Social Capital, Digital Media, Hierarchy, Toxicity, Online Harassment

SOSYAL MEDYADA HİYERARŞİ VE FANDOM: *SHİNGEKİ NO KYOJİN* FAN GRUBU ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

ÖZET

Reddit, kullanıcıların ilgi alanlarına göre topluluklara girdiği çevrimiçi bir sosyal medya platformudur. Bu topluluklara, kullanıcıların diğer kullanıcıların gönderilerini sıralayabildiği subreddit'ler denir. Bu subreddit'lerde kullanıcılar ortak ilgi alanlarına giren konuları da tartışabilirler. Platformun tartışmalara olanak sağlayan altyapısı sayesinde birçok hayran grubu söylemleri için platformu kullanmaya başladı. Bu hayran gruplarından biri olan *Shingeki no Kyojin* adlı manga serisinin fan grubu, r/shingekinokyojin ve r/titanfolk adlı iki subreddit'e sahiptir. Manganın 2021'de tamamlanmasından bu yana, bu iki subreddit, birbirlerinin sosyal ve kültürel sermayesini baltalayarak hangi grubun "üstün hayran kitlesi" olduğu konusunda sürekli bir tartışma içindeydi. Bu çalışma, iki farklı subreddit arasındaki fandom ve katılım bağlamındaki tartışmalardaki tematik örüntüleri hiyerarşik yapının inşasıyla bağlantılı olarak incelemektedir. Gönderilerden ve yorumlardan anlam çıkarmak için bu çalışmada tematik bir analiz kullanılmıştır. Bu iki grup arasındaki hiyerarşik yapının temellerini anlamak için her bir subreddit'ten diğer subreddit hakkında en yüksek puan alan 3 gönderi seçilmiş ve bu gönderilerin yorumları incelenmiştir. Analiz, Reddit'in kullanıcı odaklı işleyiş sisteminin ve ilgilenilen nesnenin bilgisi üzerine oluşturulan kültürel sermayenin hiyerarşik yapıların inşası üzerindeki önemine işaret etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Reddit, Hayran Çalışmaları, Sosyal Sermaye, Dijital Medya, Hiyerarşi, Toksiklik, Çevrimiçi Şiddet

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZET	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 <i>Origin of Fan Studies</i>	5
2.2 <i>Digitalization of Fandoms and Fan Studies</i>	6
2.3 <i>Fandoms, Identity and Hierarchy</i>	7
2.4 <i>Fractured Fandoms and Conflicts</i>	9
2.5 <i>Importance of Reddit</i>	12
2.6 <i>Toxicity on Online Discourses</i>	15
3. METHODOLOGY	18
3.1 <i>Thematic Analysis</i>	18
3.2 <i>Data Collection and Sampling</i>	19
3.3 <i>Analysis</i>	20
4. RESULTS	22
4.1 <i>Reasons Behind the Fracture</i>	22
4.1.1 <i>“It’s not what I wanted”</i>	23
4.1.2 <i>Moderation</i>	26
4.2 <i>Manifestations of the Fracture</i>	27
4.2.1 <i>Hierarchy through capital</i>	27
4.2.2 <i>Real World Politics</i>	32
4.2.3 <i>Toxic Behaviour</i>	34
5. CONCLUSION	37
5.1 <i>Limitations of the Study</i>	39
5.2 <i>Recommendations for Future Research</i>	39

BIBLIOGRAPHY	40
APPENDIX A	44
A.1 Reddit Posts	44
A.2 Post Images.....	45
APPENDIX B	48



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 - Distribution of the main codes of "It's not what I wanted" subtheme
between subreddits25

Figure 4.2 - Distribution of the main codes of Hierarchy through capital subtheme
between subreddits29

Figure 4.3 - Distribution of Toxic behavior subtheme between subreddits35



LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 - Percentage of the Themes	22
Table 4.2 - Percentage of the Subthemes of Reasons Theme	22
Table 4.3 - Percentage of the Subthemes of Manifestations Theme.....	27
Appendix B - Codebook	47



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOT: Attack on Titan

Mod: Moderator

SnK: Depending on the context, either *Shingeki no Kyojin* or *r/shingekinokyojin*



1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese comic books which are aimed at both adults and children are called manga. Developed in 19th century, manga has been used to tell stories in different genres such as sci-fi, fantasy, romance etc. Since 1950, manga has been a major revenue in Japanese publishing industry, and it has become a crucial milestone in Japanese culture. With the neo-liberalization of the world, manga have gotten outside of the Japanese borders and met with a greater audience. After the internet boom, manga's growth of popularity increased exponentially, and it became a central part of world culture. In 2010's, manga's growth has reached a point that it started to outsell American comics massively (Rutgers Today 2019). The gap between Japanese manga and American comics came to a point that in 2022, *One Piece*, the best-selling manga of all time, officially passed every single Batman comic combined in selling numbers (Screen Rant 2022). Considering Batman's popularity and influence on modern culture, this big of a gap indicates the significance of manga in both industry and the culture.

One of those popular manga series is a fantasy series called *Shingeki No Kyojin* (*Attack on Titan* in English). Created by Hajime Isayama, *Shingeki No Kyojin* series started in 2009 and since its debut, it has gotten a worldwide popularity. In 2023, total of 110 million copies of the series have been sold and it has become the 14th best-selling manga of all time (Gamerant 2023). Especially after the anime adaptation of the series began to release in 2012, *Shingeki No Kyojin* have gotten millions of fans across the globe. Due its complex storytelling, intriguing plot, and interesting characters many people from different countries formed a massive community to share their experiences.

In order to understand the *Shingeki No Kyojin* fandom, it is essential to know the significant aspects of the story. *Shingeki No Kyojin* starts in a fantasy setting in which most of the humanity has perished. The last living humans built a city with massive walls to protect themselves from the giant humanoid man-eating monsters called Titans. For 100 years, humanity have lived in peace within the walls but one day, an enormous Titan appears and destroys a part of the outer wall. The main character of the series, Eren Jaeger, watches his mother eaten by a Titan and makes a promise that one day he will destroy all the Titans.

After lots of battles, betrayals, and plot twists, Eren and his friend learns a harsh truth about the world they live in which will change the scope and complexity of the narrative. At the later parts of the story, it is revealed that humanity has not vanished behind the walls, and they hate the people who live inside the walls. The reason is that people who live inside the walls is a race of people called “Eldians” and they have the ability to turn into Titans. Via using their Titan powers, the ancestors of the humans who live inside the walls pillaged the entire world and destroyed many nations and cultures. Because of that, rest of the humanity despises the Eldian race and want to erase them from the face of earth. With this narrative shift, black and white nature of humans versus Titans story has been abandoned and a more complex story which involves concepts such as politics, racism and genocide has started. In this new story, every character including the main characters make morally grey decisions in order to survive and put an end to the conflict. At the end of the story, Eren got on a dark path and tries to kill everyone except from his people. Series end with bitter-sweet ending in which the conflict does not end but the genocide of Eren has been stopped.

The tonal change in the story have created a massive debate revolving around the *Shingeki No Kyojin*. Since concepts such as racism and genocide have been integral to real world politics and culture, and sensitive for many people, some critics and fans highly criticized the depictions of them. Treatment of the Eldians within the story has been one of the biggest issues for those who criticized the story due to its similarities with the treatment of the Jewish people in World War 2. Furthermore, Eren’s world-wide genocide and its allegedly glorification in the story also another point people found questionable. Therefore, many people have argued that the series is consist of right-wing propaganda.

After the final chapter of the series released, the controversy around the *Shingeki No Kyojin* have spread within the fandom as well. While most of the fandom have enjoyed the finale of series and believed it was thematically the right way to end the series, a significant part of the fandom has found it lazy and ethically wrong. This created a divide within the fandom and since then, both sides have been using variety of methods to undermine other sides arguments and promote their side’s interpretation of the story.

The conflict within the fandom has been documented at best in the social media platform Reddit. Because of the fact that subreddit system of Reddit encourages the forming of

new communities, the disagreeing fans have created brand new communities with the like-minded people. This new subreddits which have been branched from the main subreddit of the series moderated by unpaid, volunteer fans. The two significant subreddits in the conflict have been r/shingekinokyojin and r/titanfolk. While r/shingekinokyojin has consisted of mostly people who liked the ending, r/titanfolk has been the center of hate for the ending of the series. Considering the constant posts which have been targeting the other subreddit, those two subreddits could be deemed near perfect for a study which focuses on online fan communities and division within them.

Also, another point which made those two subreddits suitable for this research is that when the study was conducted both subreddits were open to the public which means their posts and comments were available to anyone who opens the subreddit's page whether they were a Reddit member or not.

The case for this research was selected due to researcher's interest in this specific fandom and the division of it. Via following the tradition of "aca-fan" (Lynch 2022, 108) I have chosen a community which he was passionate about. On the other hand, massive online fan community of the series provided a chance for a study which focused on not only a specific angle of a specific case but also aimed to understand the conflicts and hierarchical structures of online fandoms in general. Online fan communities have become an integral part of modern culture. Many people have found affection and a social discourse revolves around a shared interest in those communities. Through these attributes, it could be argued that online fan communities have turned into significant subcultures. With this perspective, it becomes essential to understand how these online fan communities have formed and in which ways the conflicts within them handled. Another aspect about the formation and the conflicts within online fan communities is the toxicity and harassment which emerged from online communication. This study also analyzed the toxicity within a specific fan community and the role of Reddit's system of user-engagement in this toxicity.

In the end, this study focused on a case to give insight into reasons and manifestations of a specific fandom's conflict. This study aimed to indicate a methodization for understanding the conflict within online fan communities, the hierarchy structures of those conflicted fans and toxicity emerges with the conflict.

This study which utilized a thematical analysis to understand the hierarchical structure between two subreddits was conducted between December 2022 and July 2023. In the second chapter of the thesis, the relevant literature was discussed in relation to the study. The third chapter was dedicated to the methodology of the study, and it elaborate the method of thematic analysis, sampling process and the analysis of the study. The fourth chapter showcases the results of the study and explicates the mechanisms behind the results. The fifth and the last chapter discusses the results of the study in relation with the relevant literature. Also, it identifies the limitations of the study and recommends a perspective for future research.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Origin of Fan Studies

Fan studies is a captivating field of academic research that has emerged in recent decades, focusing on the cultural and social practices of fan communities. As Jenkins (1992, 12) so eloquently points out, the term "fan" stems from the word fanatic, signifying the intense enthusiasm displayed by fans.

The origins of fan studies can be traced back to the early days of media studies, particularly through the influential work of scholars like Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams. During the 1960s and 1970s, these scholars delved into the ways in which media and popular culture shape our perception of the world. McLuhan (1994) proposed that media technologies act as extensions of our consciousness, profoundly influencing our understanding of reality.

As media studies progressed, scholars began to pay closer attention to the practices of media fans. One of the pioneering works in this area was Henry Jenkins' (1992) book, *Textual Poachers* which explored the practices of fan communities surrounding television shows such as *Star Trek* and *The X-Files*. Jenkins argued that these fans engaged in a form of cultural poaching, appropriating and reinterpreting media texts in ways that diverged from the creators' original intentions. Notably, Jenkins placed great importance on the communal nature of fan engagement, stating that "meaning-production is not a solitary and private process but rather a social and public one" (1992, 75). Hence, fan studies should prioritize the examination of communal interactions.

Building upon Jenkins' groundbreaking work, fan studies gradually emerged as a distinct field of inquiry. Scholars widened their scope to investigate the practices of fan communities across various media forms, including film, television, literature, and video games. They explored how fans actively engaged with these texts, examined the social and cultural dynamics within fan communities, and scrutinized the intricate relationship between fans and media creators.

A central debate within fan studies revolves around the concept of fan agency. While some scholars argue that fans are active agents who creatively engage with media texts, others contend that fans are passive consumers manipulated by media producers. This ongoing discussion has spurred significant theoretical advancements in the field, most notably the notion of participatory culture, which highlights the active and collaborative nature of fan communities.

Fan studies have blossomed into a multidisciplinary field that sheds light on the cultural and social practices of fan communities. With its roots in the early days of media studies, fan studies have evolved to examine fan engagement across various media forms. The exploration of fan agency and the emphasis on participatory culture have enriched our understanding of the dynamic relationship between fans and the media they adore.

2.2 Digitalization of Fandoms and Fan Studies

Increase in internet accessibility and digitalization in early and mid-2000s have welcomed the fan communities into the cyberspace (Booth 2016). In this new era, fans who were once bounded by their physical locations gained the ability to interact with like-minded people all around the world and create larger communities. This new fan communities, larger and more complex than the older, physical ones, gathered around fan websites, forums and later social media.

Jenkins (2006) argued that main difference between “Digital Fandoms” (as Booth (2016) puts) and older fandoms is that digital fandoms are far more democratic and homogenic than the other. According to Jenkins (2006), digitalization created the convergence culture in which old dynamics of media production and consumption changed drastically. This changes in the media industry affected the fandoms as well. In this new era, importance of fan creations and in relation to those dynamics within fandoms changed towards a more homogenic environment.

Old fandoms followed a certain hierarchical structure in which older or more experienced fans tend to have upper statuses (Fiske 1992). In this somewhat conservative structure, experienced fans welcome the new fans to the fandom via showing them the “true” interpretations of fan object (text) in order to protect the authenticity of the fandom

(Tulloch 1995). This master-student like relationship between experienced fans and newcomers creates a straight hierarchical difference between them and demonstrates a competition over fan knowledge and status (Hills 2002). But according to Jenkins (2006), digitalized fandoms which are using online forums and fan websites to interact with each other does not have the same hierarchical dynamics. He argues that accessibility and anonymity of internet breaks the hierarchical structure of fandoms and enables a more homogenic and democratic environment.

It can be said that with the emergence of the new digital fandoms, and due to their differences with old ones, scholars have focused on the implications of this shift. In order to understand the dynamics of this new fandoms, studies have turned their scope onto the interactions within online fan communities. Hallekson and Busse's (2008) *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, which is a compilation of different essays from different scholars focuses on the variety of areas such as interactions between fans, creation and distribution of fan fictions, and symbiotic relationship between fandoms and producers. Paul Booth's (2016) *Digital Fandom 2.0* on the other hand, pivots the advancement of technology in relation to advancements of fandoms. Also, the second edition of the book covers the role of social media (specifically Tumblr) for analyzing and understanding the modern fan identities. Stein's (2015) *Millennial Fandom* priorities the new, young fans who have become fans in the transmedia age. In the guidance of these literature this study asks:

RQ1: In which ways an online fan community forms and divides within?

2.3 Fandoms, Identity and Hierarchy

As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, power dynamics and hierarchical structures within fan communities have always been an important aspect of the fan studies. In the pre-digital era of fan communities, studies mainly focused on the physical fandoms and fan gatherings such as Comic-Con's and neighborhood level meetings. One of the most important findings of those studies was the clear distinction between the "fan" and the "other" (Fiske 1992). Before analyzing the inner dynamics of fandoms, early studies such as Jenkins' (1992), Fiske's (1992) and Tulloch's (1995) laid the groundwork via

analyzing the distinction between fan and the other. Also, these early research indicated that there is a hierarchical structure between fandoms in which the older and more experienced members of the fandom guides the newcomers to the “right” practices and meanings. According to Tulloch (1995) most senior and powerful fans have control over the norms and practices of fellow fans to ensure the authenticity of a fandom remains stable. The self-given mission of preserving the authenticity of the fandom gives senior fans an upper position in the hierarchy due to the social capital they created through it.

The studies about fandom, identity and hierarchy mainly uses the Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social capital. Bourdieu’s writings on taste and cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1984) have been particularly influential in analyzing the structure of fandoms. One key development that has been informed by Bourdieu’s work has been the study of the formation of hierarchies within ‘subcultural’ contexts (Sandvoss 2005).

Sarah Thornton’s study *Club Cultures* (1996) extends Bourdieu’s concepts via introducing the concept of “subcultural capital”. According to the Thornton, examining the “complex stratifications and mobilities of contemporary youth culture” (Thornton 1996, 92) is crucial for understanding the construction of clubber subcultural identity.

Both Fiske (1992) and Hills (2002) used Bourdieu’s concepts on capital as a framework while analyzing the structure of hierarchy within fandoms. Hills (2002) argues that concepts of cultural processes allow us to view fan culture as more than just a group of fans and instead as a socially hierarchical setting where fans struggle for status, access to the object of their fandom, and fan knowledge. Although Bourdieu’s concepts give the opportunity of analyzing the social hierarchy in a fandom, Hills also criticizes Bourdieu for only focusing on class and economy, thus ignoring the other elements such as race and gender.

After the digitalization of the fandoms, scholars like Jenkins (2006) believed that this new generation of digitalized fandoms will be more democratic and freer from hierarchical structures due to the participatory nature of the internet. But according to McCudden (2011), Duffett (2013), Booth (2016), and Chin (2018) hierarchical structures based around social and cultural capitals exist within the online fandoms as well. In his dissertation, McCudden (2011) borrowed the concept of social capital in order to analyze

both the hierarchical structure within fandoms and the authenticity of fans within these fandoms. She argued that identity construction of a fan within a fandom directly related with this fan's relation with object of fandom, thus his or her social capital. Both Duffett and Chin also used Bourdieu's model for their research in order to identify the patterns within hierarchical structures of fandoms. So, going from these approaches this study asks:

RQ2: What is the role of social and cultural capital in the hierarchical structures within online fandoms?

2.4 Fractured Fandoms and Conflicts

In the earlier days of fan studies scholars tend to look at the fandoms as “positive experiences centered on connecting with like-minded individuals” (Reinhard 2018, 2). Especially scholars like Jenkins who sees fandoms as progressive communities centered their work around the similarities of fan practices and their changing effects on transmedia culture, instead of analyzing the differences. Through those research, in general, fandom is regarded as a pleasant experience. The main reasoning behind this perspective is that “any fandom experience is positive because it is shared between like-minded people; if fans like the same thing, then they like each other and get along better than with people in other communities or social interactions” (2018, 10).

On the other hand, scholars such as Lori Hitchcock Morimoto, Bertha Chin, and Carrielynn D. Reinhard emphasized the importance of understanding the differences in-between fandoms and negative effects of them to the fans. According to Morimoto and Chin a fandom “always already a site of difference, and even potential danger, for fans who do not hew to the cultural norms of the imagined community” (2017, 182). Therefore, as Pande (2018) indicates, fandoms should not have been seen as protective spaces which consist like-minded people. Rather, it needs to be understood that fandoms could also be “spaces of contention and of conflict” (Reinhard 2018, 11). Differences within fandoms could be the conclusion of “different degrees of access to and identification with power, and vulnerability to textual misrepresentations or violence

mirror in fandoms” (Morimoto and Chin 2017, 184) which are directly related with the hierarchical structures within and between fandoms.

As Reinhard (2018) puts it, MacDonald’s study on hierarchies within fan communities determined that the concepts like knowledge, access to inside knowledge, and control of venue directly related with the structuring of the power dynamics: “Within a fandom, fans accrue cultural and social capital, perhaps because they have a high level of detailed knowledge related to their object of affection” (2018, 78). According to her, the difference between level of knowledge leads the more knowledgeable fans to position themselves higher on the hierarchy and create conflicts with the “lesser fans” through power dynamics. Those types of conflicts and differences for engaging with the object of affection may cause tension which Reinhard describe as “fractured fandom” (2018, 12). The concept of fractured fandom “refers to the tensions within and among fans and fan collectives that cause gaps or fractures that may result in antagonistic and hostile behaviors.” (Reinhard 2018, 14). Those antagonistic behaviors could lead to harassment and psychological assaults. According to Bethan Jones, one of the reasons behind antagonism within a fandom is that some fans put their attention on defining acceptable fan-related capital and behaviors, then use these criteria in their interactions with others (2018, 12). Therefore, it could be said that some fans use social and cultural capitals as a measure to bully or harass the fans they see “lesser”.

According to Reinhard, there are 5 reasons for fractures to occur:

- 1- Misunderstood
- 2- Defensiveness
- 3- Difference of Opinion
- 4- Power Plays
- 5- Policing Boundaries

Misunderstood refers to the errors within the communication which involves a misinterpretation of a text and debate around it. A fans misinterpretation of said text may lead other fans to harass or try to “educate” him/her. According to Reinhard (2018), main reason behind the misunderstood is the lack of communication and results of this is mostly the said fans feeling of being ignored.

The second reason for a fractured fandom is the defensiveness of the fan community. As Reinhard (2018, 37) indicates, misunderstood “can lead to feelings of defensiveness for the person who feels ignored or mischaracterized”. Thus, it could be said that the first reason of fractured fandom could be the cause of second one. Defensiveness in general designate the involvement of a fans identity or ego wound. Feeling jealous or hurt, attacked fans demonstrate a defensiveness to regain the superior fan identity. Defensiveness, in some cases, also related with the power struggle between fans as well. According to Reinhard (2018) defensiveness is the least common reason for a fracture.

Difference in opinion “involves two or more interpretations of the fandom coming into conflict with one another” (2018, 40). Main reason behind difference in opinion comes from variety of possible interpretations and preferences fans might have about the object of affection. This difference varies from liking and disliking certain characters to disregarding certain plot points and ships¹. According to Reinhard (2018) even the little disagreements in a fan community could lead to worse outcomes like harassment and those negative incidents could turn into major fractures. Mentioned disagreements also could be rooted by ideological differences as well.

It could be said that power plays as a reason for fracture is a result of inherent hierarchical dynamics of fandoms. Reinhard (2018) argues that fans who held the highest hierarchical position and dominate fandoms abuse their power to manipulate the said fandom to their own personal needs. Those dominant fans, or “big name fans” as Reinhard puts, gain their status through social and cultural capital they have which could be a set of skill or knowledge. Then they use the privilege they have to silence or censor the other fans who disagrees with them. Just like difference in opinion, power plays also could be related with the sensitive ideological concepts such as sexism, racism or homophobia. Also, in some cases these power plays may show themselves in situations where one faction of a fandom position themselves as an anti-fandom. Anti-fandoms, similar to fandoms, centers around an object of affection but rather than enthusiasm and enjoyment, anti-fans show hatred and resentment towards the said object.

¹ **W.n.:** Shipping or ships in general refers to the fan activity in which fans discuss and mostly debate about which characters should be in relationship with certain characters.

The last reason for fractured fandoms is the policing boundaries. Reinhard describes this concept as: “Policing boundaries involves someone who wields perceived or actual power attempting to aggressively control the activity of that fan collective and thereby determining who gets to communicate as part of the community” (2018, 44). Through this description it could be said that some members of the fandom (mostly those who have higher social and cultural capital) becomes “policies” and create law-like boundaries to separate good and bad or ideal and deviant. Power plays mostly focuses on the actual communication and contents of it, however, policing boundaries mainly focus on who can communicate and, where and when they can communicate. Also, as Reinhard (2018) argues, reasoning behind power plays comes from selfish reasons whereas users of policing boundaries abuse their power for “fan collectives well-being.” In light of the concept of “fractured fandoms”, this study asks:

RQ3: What are the reasons and manifestations of a fracture within online fandoms?

RQ4: Does the fracture affects the hierarchy of the fandom?

RQ5: Could Reinhard's categorization applicable to online discourses?

2.5 Importance of Reddit

Reddit is a social media website in which people could create or join communities depending on their interests. Those communities are called subreddits. Members of a subreddit could create posts via using texts, images, and videos or comment on existing posts. Reddit uses a n upvote-downvote score system in which users evaluate the inputs of others. In this system, an upvote gives +1 score to a post and downvote gives a -1 score. Posts which have the highest scores are shown at the top where they could be seen easily while the lowest scored ones are shown at the bottom. The same system applies for the comments as well, but in comment’s case if a comment gets a score lower than 0 it will be hidden from the users unless they manually open them. Also, all the posts and comments are regulated through the rules of that specific subreddit by the moderators of that said subreddit.

One of the unique aspects of the Reddit is its comment system. In reddit, when a user comments on a post directly related with the topic of the said post that comment is deemed as a parent-level comment. These parent-level comments are generally discussion starters because other users might directly reply to the parent-level comment and start a discourse. These discourses could derail from the original topic and create its own discussion. Therefore, as the platform itself stated, a Reddit post can be seen as a “discussion forest” which contains different parent-comments and their own “discussion trees”. Therefore, it is important for the researchers to understand that every comment may not directly responding to the main post so examining the context is essential while using the comments as data.

As Hintz and Betts (2022, 116) puts “Reddit is a versatile social networking site which serves as a fast, free, and targeted conduit for academic research”. Platform’s encouraging nature of creating autonomous communities makes it an ideal research area for social sciences, especially for communication studies. According to Hintz and Betts (2022) scholars from the field of communication mostly uses reddit as a subject of investigation, recruitment tool and data source but reddit is open for further utilizations. They argue that new conceptualizations and methods should be utilized in order to use the platforms full potential as a research field. They also emphasize the importance of understanding reddit and picking the right subreddits.

In another work that focuses on importance of reddit, Cauteruccio et. al. (2022) examines the stereotypes of subreddits and authors. According to their research, a subreddit’s lifespan and success can be influenced by the positive actions taken by the authors. Those positive actions mainly refer to posting high quality and engaging content by different authors regularly. Lack of regular quality content or absence of different authors may lead a subreddit into “zombie” mode. A zombie subreddit indicates a subreddit which is unsuccessful but still “theoretically” alive. Cauteruccio et. al. (2022) argues that merging of a two zombie subreddits with related topics could be a way to make them successful. Second part of their analysis focuses on the author stereotypes. They organize their stereotypes through the variables of comment and post frequency. Their stereotype model could be a beneficial tool for analyzing the structure of communal subreddits.

Other research such as Efstratiou et. al.'s (2023) and Chen et. al.'s (2023) mainly focuses on the conflict within the reddit. Efstratiou et. al. (2023) argue that even though there is an echo chamber and hostile intergroup interaction phenomena, toxic speech and conflict mostly arises between the communities on the same side of the political spectrum. Though it mainly focuses on politics, this work emphasizes the importance of understanding the toxicity between communities which shares the same objects of interest. Chen et. al. (2023) on the other hand focus on the emotional aspect of the said toxicity. According to their research, controversial comments could dictate the emotional discourse of a post. Said dictation in the emotional discourse is mainly towards the negative as “controversial comments have stronger negative emotions, especially anger, and fewer positive emotions than non-controversial comments” (2023, 8). These negative emotions could lead to more controversy and even toxicity within reddit communities.

As it is stated earlier, understanding reddit's branching comment system is crucial for deducting a cohesive conclusion. In order to acknowledge the contexts, jargon and sarcastic nature of comments are also important to note. As Hasnat et. al. (2022) indicates users of social media platforms such as reddit are using sarcasm frequently. Those sarcastic comments may be originated from global jokes, or they could be a product of specific jargon of a subreddit community. For instance, *Shingeki No Kyojin* fans use “... ten years at least” sentence pattern as a sarcastic joke because it refers to a controversial moment in the series. Without the knowledge of the reference comment could be misinterpreted. Therefore, in order to acknowledge the context of a comment one must internalize the jargon and culture of that community.

In recent years, using reddit as a data source is a growing practice for fan studies. Aswath et. al. (2020) for instance analyzes the conflict between online football communities on reddit. Their examination mainly focuses on how the conflict occur between different communities and what is the role of subreddits' nature in it. Although most of the research focus on the conflict between different fandoms, Lynch's (2022) work emphasizes the in-fandom conflict and hierarchy through a single subreddit. As an “aca-fan”, Lynch examines the gatekeeping within BTS fandom which she is part of through analyzing the r/bangtan subreddit. According to her moderators of fan subreddits have higher hierarchical statuses due to their authority over the discourse “Moderators determine what

is acceptable discourse for the community through their ability to create and enforce the rules. Since moderators control community discourse, we can see them as having unlimited social capital within their community.” (2022, 117). She also argues that reddit’s moderation system makes the platform differ from the other fan favorite platforms such as Tumblr or Twitter. Unlike the more democratic systems those platforms utilize, reddit’s system enables the construction of hierarchy through authority and power. This unique aspect of reddit is worth examining from the fan studies perspective. So, this study asks:

RQ6: How does Reddit's moderation system incentivize the hierarchy and contribute to the fracture?

RQ7: What is the role of Reddit’s user-engagement system in the fracture and toxicity which arises from it?

2.6 Toxicity on Online Discourses

Through the internet boom and the digitalization of communication, a complex and multifaceted phenomenon emerged: online discourses. The internet has given people access to a worldwide stage where they may participate in discussions, debates, and conversations on a scale they could never have imagined thanks to its wide variety of social media platforms. Although these platforms have enabled everyone to have a voice, negative issues also emerged within these online discourses. One of the most prominent issues that have emerged is the prevalence of toxicity.

Toxicity in online discourses could be described as “a rude, disrespectful, or unreasonable comment that is likely to make you leave a discussion” (Lasser et. al. 2023, 4). Due to internet’s anonymity and social media platforms’ lack of accountability, some contributors of online discourses harass or abuse other members of the community. The impact of toxic online interactions extends beyond the digital realm, affecting individuals' mental health, eroding the quality of discussions, and even shaping broader societal perceptions. Many scholars such as Mohan et. al. (2017) and Gilda et. al. (2022) examined the impact of toxicity on the health of both communities and individuals. Mohan et. al. (2017) mainly focused on the effects of toxic language on the Reddit communities,

whereas Gilda et. al. (2022) analyzed the systematic understanding of unhealthy online communications via differentiating the direct toxic behavior and subtle toxicity.

While some research focused on the toxicity's effect on mental health, studies such as Almerexhi et. al.'s (2020) and Lasser et. al.'s (2023) investigated the other aspects of the toxicity within the online discourses. Almerexhi et. al. (2020) analyzed the language and behavior which leads to the toxicity. Through inspecting the "toxicity triggers" which are not toxic themselves but farrow toxicity in the responses, the study proposed a prediction system to prevent toxicity. On the other hand, Lasser et. al. (2023) explored how the toxicity relates to the other elements of discourses such as argumentation tactics and ingroup-outgroup dynamics. Study emphasized the significance of ingroup favoritism and outgroup hostility on the online hate speech and toxicity.

In the research area of toxicity within online discourses Reddit stands in a different place than most of the other popular social media platforms. While platforms such as Facebook and Twitter incentivize its users to create their profiles via using their own names and personalities, Reddit is more open to fake profiles and anonymity (Massanari 2017). Also, Reddit's rules and platform's emphasis on freedom of speech have encouraged people to communicate more direct and rather rude to each other in order to gain more karma as well. Due to these aspects of the platform, Reddit have become a focal point for studies which examines the harassment and toxicity in online discourses.

Studies such as Massanari (2017), Almerexhi et. al. (2020) and Xia et. al. (2020) focused on different aspects of Reddit's enabling nature for toxicity. Almerexhi et. al. (2020) pointed the "toxicity triggers" and their effects on the toxicity within the subreddits. Study also explored the role of Reddit's moderation system and platform's lack of initiative for punishing the toxic behavior. Xia et. al. (2020) also analyzed how the toxicity emerged within subreddit discussions. Their study indicated that sarcasm is one of the most significant triggers for toxic responses. While these studies investigated in which ways toxicity occurred on Reddit, Massanari (2017) pointed out how Reddit and similar platforms such as 4chan and USENET encourage "toxic technocultures" to take hold and have an outsized presence on the platform. While examining Gamergate scandal and the activity of "Fappening" subreddit, Massanari discovered that Reddit's systems and governance structure does not prevent the toxicity. On the contrary, due to the fact that

user-engagement and karma system of the platform are reliant on number of interactions (upvotes and downvotes), large groups of “toxic technocultures” could easily manipulate the platform to establish and expand their toxicity.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a research method which focuses on recognizing patterns and deriving meaningful themes from those patterns. As Braun and Clarke (2006, 79) stated “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” Many of the scholars used this qualitative research method to analyze Reddit posts and comments. Due to Reddit’s branching comment system many of the conversations may deviate from the original topic. Because of this, identifying and separating the data which is valuable to the research becomes a challenge. To overcome this problem, researchers tend to use Thematic analysis because versatile nature of Thematic analysis enables researchers to derive meaning from the unorganized dataset of Reddit.

Caplan and Purser (2019) used Thematic analysis in their Reddit research and constructed a base for future works. In their work which conducted through examining 21000 comments they came across some problems. The two significant problems they came across were choosing the right posts as datasets and sampling the comments which are valuable to the research. They solved the first problem by choosing the posts from only top posts or controversial ones because according to them those posts are the most interacted ones. In order to solve the second problem, they handpicked the comments which are relevant to the study with the consideration of their contexts. Therefore, via explaining the sampling problems they faced and solutions they found, Caplan and Purser (2019) presented a methodological guideline for future Reddit studies. Following the footsteps of Caplan and Purser (2019), Maxwell et. al. (2020) conducted a Thematic analysis on the incel community through examining the currently banned r/Braincels subreddit. Their study showcased two different tropes which were essential to understand the mindset of an incel via deriving thematic meanings from 834 comments.

In the end, due to method’s grounded theory foundation and analytic flexibility, which is well-suited for Reddit, a thematic analysis was conducted for this research.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

In order to analyze the fracture within the community, two conflicted subreddits within the fandom were selected as the focus of the research: *r/shingekinokyojin* and *r/titanfolk*. These subreddits have been selected due number of negative posts in respective subreddits about the other subreddit. The first subreddit *r/shingekinokyojin* has the total number of 1.4 million members and most of its members are either neutral or positive about the ending of the series. On the other hand, second subreddit *r/titanfolk* consist of 248 thousand members who are either negative or extremely negative about the ending mangaka delivered.

After the selection of the subreddits, 3 posts from each subreddit which were about the other subreddit and posted between 1 April 2021 and 1 April 2022 were picked. These dates were chosen because on 1 April 2021 some sections of the final chapter of the series were leaked to the internet and the fracture between the two subreddits began in the context of those leaks. However, on 1 April 2022 a truce happened between the two subreddits due to Reddit's second *r/place*² project. Selected 6 posts were chosen within the top commented posts as Caplan and Purser (2019) suggested. Within those 6 posts, 298 relevant comments were hand-picked for the research.

All the data, 6 posts and 298 relevant comments within those posts, were collected by hand and copied to a word document. In that process, initial comments which directly responded to the original posts were given a number while the comments which were responding to the other comments were given a number and a letter. For the secondary comments, number represents the initial comment they are responding to, and letter demonstrates the order of the comment within the comment tree. This method is used in order to preserve the contexts of the comments and maintain the discourse of the comment trees.

As an example of how this method is utilized, this is a comment tree from one of the posts:

² **W.n.:** *r/place* is an experiment project which was conducted two times in both April 2017 and 2022 on the Reddit. It aimed to create a collaborative piece of art where contributors may add specific pixels to a shared canvas.

1) People read so deep into every little thing, then take it at face value when Eren says "I'm not sure why I did it". We don't need him to reiterate it for us. The rumbling is something that HE wanted. He hated the way the world was and wanted to see it destroyed, but obviously it wouldn't be easy to say that to your best friend's face. He even said, "even if I didn't know you guys would stop me, I still would've activated the rumbling either way"

1a) Also in the S1 finale, when Eren is recovering in his bed post-female titan fight and talking to Mikasa, he says how good it felt to be in that moment of rage... how it felt good to even get beaten up... and maybe to even die.

1aa) This is something relatable tbh. He was on a path of self-loathe and self-destruction. Depressed and desperate, he tries to rationalize whatever is happening to the world and to him. He tries to distant his own feelings from himself, and that his own death is liberation. And because of that, he can do whatever he wants, because he can accept any consequence, it can't be worse than death.

1b) yep, he was still evil in a very deep-rooted sense. He was still the guy who was "disappointed to know there were humans outside the wall."

1ba) Exactly. I don't know why people think him being in love retcons everything he's said or done in the past.

In this comment tree, initial comment which responded to the post was given the number 1. Comments which were directly responding to the comment 1 was named 1a and 1b in accordance with their arrangement. Then, the comments that were responding to the 1a and 1b are named in the same fashion as 1aa and 1ba. Thus, a clear network in which alignments of the comments are kept intact was constructed.

3.3 Analysis

In order to utilize the thematic analysis method, the road map which consist of six different phases was followed. In the first phase researcher got familiar with the data to understand the intricacies of the content he was working with. To accomplish this, all the posts and comment was uploaded to the NVivo 14 software and researcher started to get familiar with the data. Because of the fact that researcher has been following both subreddits for years, familiarization with the discourse of the data was ended rather quickly. For the second phase, initial coding process started. In this process either sole comments or comment groups were designated with codes so at the end of the initial

coding process there were 260 coded nodes. After the initial codes had been created, researcher started to compile similar codes under more inclusive nodes and investigate the thematical patterns for the third phase. In the phases four and five researcher created themes and subthemes through examining the newly combined codes. In the sixth and last phase, codebook has been finalized and through that codebook themes and subthemes which were coherent with the dataset has been uncovered (See the final codebook in Appendix B.2).



4. RESULTS

Main themes emerged from the study and frequency of them could be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 - Percentage of the Themes

Main Themes	Number	Percent
Reasons	75	28,85
Manifestations	185	71,15

Two main themes emerged at the end of the analysis. These themes are 1) Reasons behind the fracture, and 2) Manifestations of the fracture. The themes and their accompanying subthemes are presented.

4.1 Reasons Behind the Fracture

Subthemes of the Reasons Theme and their frequency could be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 - Percentage of the Subthemes of Reasons Theme

Reasons	Number	Percent
“It’s not what I wanted”	55	73,3
Moderations	20	26,7

First main theme which emerged from the analysis is the Reasons Behind the Fracture. Through analyzing the posts and comments within the dataset it was noticed that members of both subreddits indicated two major subthemes for why the fracture happened within the fandom. These two subthemes are “It’s not what I wanted” and, Moderations. It could be said that via understanding those subthemes, the reasons behind the fracture could be unraveled.

4.1.1 “It’s not what I wanted”

“I’ve seen a bunch of members on titanfolk say hateful shit to Isayama for not giving them the ending they wanted. It’s Isayama’s story and titanfolk need to stop bitching that they’re not getting what they want.”

The subtheme “It’s not what I wanted” refers to the total disagreements of fans against the writer, story, and the other fans. These disagreements mostly manifested themselves through blaming the writer whether for his incompetency in writing skills, or his negative attitude against certain characters. Members of r/titanfolk subreddit mainly utilized the “writer’s fault” argument in order to justify their negative feeling about the series’ ending. As an example, one user commented “It’s not our fault Isayama failed at world building.” This comment indicates that the creator of series, Hajime Isayama, was unsuccessful at creating a believable and grounded story world. By indicating that, user tries to put the responsibility of displeasure onto the writer, thus trying to make it an objective case, not a subjective one. The fact that this comment got 149 upvotes at the time of the research confirms the idea that this mindset is supported within the r/titanfolk community.

The writer’s negative attitude against certain characters is also another argument r/titanfolk community uses to justify their negativity against the later parts of the story. For instance, some members highly criticized his writing decisions against the character called Historia; “Historia’s arc got butchered”, “Even historia’s arc wasn’t done justice to after the ending”, “...Historia is yet another victim of post time skip butchery.” Just as the incompetence argument, using author’s “personal bias” as a defense mechanism against the subjectivity criticism is common.

On the other hand, members of r/shingekinokyojin subreddit defended the author and his decisions about the progression of the story. Due to the fact that they have mainly neutral or positive opinions about the later parts of the story and it’s ending, they put authorial will above the interests and preferences of some fans which could be seen in the quote at the start of this section. This creates a hierarchical structure between all parts of the fandom whereas in this structure writer has the most authority so that he is at the top. The part of the fandom which agree with the writer’s decisions, members of r/shingekinokyojin, are the second chain in the structure because they get their legitimacy

of authority from the top, the author. In this structure, the “deviants”, members of r/titanfolk, have no authority thus they are at the bottom of the hierarchy.

This type of a hierarchical structure is created through Bourdieu’s concept of social capital. As Chin (2018) argued social relations between the parts of the fandom have a direct influence on the social capital within fandom which directly affects the hierarchical balance between the sides. In the case of this study, members of the r/shingekinokyojin uses their agreement with the author decisions as a way of asserting their “fan” social capital.

Just as members of r/shingekinokyojin uses their social capital through their relationship with the writer as a way of positioning themselves higher at the hierarchy, members of r/titanfolk try to utilize their social capital which they got from their relations with the writers of a famous fanfiction called “Akatsuki no Requiem (AnR).” Contrary to the dynamic between two subreddits about the ending of the story, roles are reversed for the discourse around AnR (see in Figure 4.1). In order to legitimize their social capital and thus their position in the hierarchical structure, members of r/titanfolk deemed AnR as the “true ending” of the story and claimed that it is a better finale than writer’s finale. Conversely, members of the r/shingekinokyojin did not accept the legitimization of the fanfiction. As an example of this attitude, one user commented: “It’s honestly so bonkers that a group of what are essentially fanfiction writers have the audacity to believe that they understand the characters, themes, and narrative better than the author himself.”

Another important factor for the subtheme of “It’s not what I wanted” is the favoritism. Favoritism implies some parts of the fandom’s extra affection towards some characters. This could manifest itself through excessive support to a character even though it’s immoral and unethical behaviors or shipping certain characters whether or not they have any relation within the story. As an example of excessive support to a character, a user from r/shingekinokyojin mockingly criticized r/titanfolk community for their devotion to a character called Floch: “They idolized Floch so much the entire sub there would only accept his desired conclusion.” Another user pointed some of the shipping activities

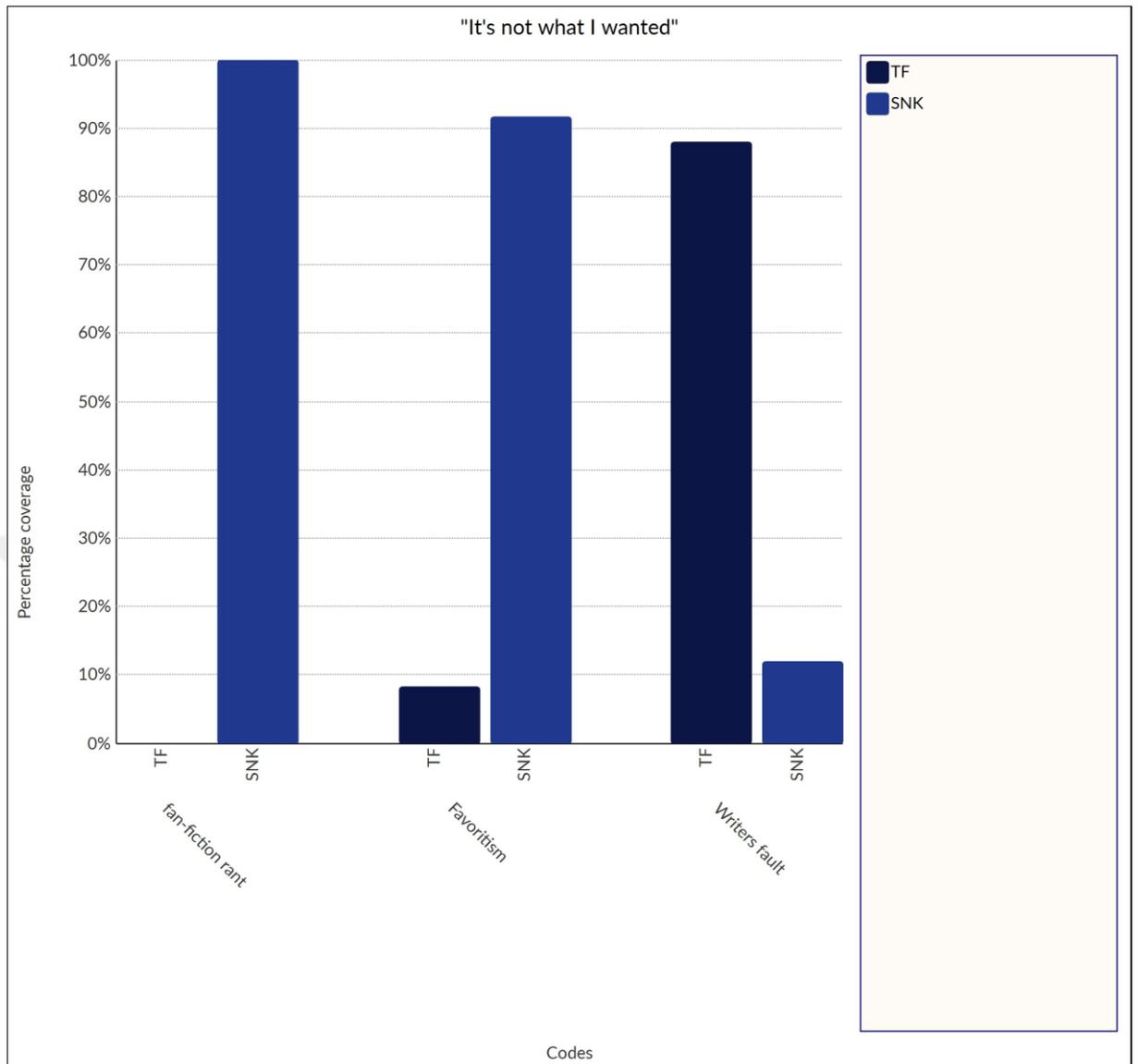


Figure 4.1 - Distribution of the main codes of "It's not what I wanted" subtheme between subreddits

absurdity by commenting: "...I totally get shipping people who have very little scenes together and don't really express any romantic interest in each other. I've done it. But I wasn't pissed when Avengers Endgame didn't end with Steve and Tony getting married and riding off into space together." Both instances imply the disconnection between r/titanfolk members and the object of affection in return solidifies commentators' hierarchical status.

Therefore, it could be said that via emphasizing the author's total authority over the object of affection or his incompetency, both sides of the fandom try to legitimize their status through social capital and undermine other side's arguments. It indicates that even a

simple looking theme about reasons of the fracture such as “it’s not what I wanted” is directly related with the social capital and hierarchical structures.

4.1.2 Moderation

As Lynch (2022) emphasized, subreddit rules and moderators’ attitude towards the members directly affects the fans inclusion within the online Reddit fan community. While conducting this research, researcher found out that even before the fracture which has been related with the ending of the series happened, Reddit’s system was the reason behind the early separation. As one comment from r/shingekinokyojin subreddit explains:

Freefolk was based on the "we do not kneel" aspect of the freefolk because the mods were power-hungry and crazy in the main GOT sub. Freefolk became a place people could shitpost openly Titanfolk formed on a similar basis (hence the similar name) because they found this sub too restricting. It also became a place people could shitpost openly and in some ways, they were right since titanfolk was where people went to freely discuss the manga without the needs for spoiler tags or cautious/spoilerless titles since they had more freedom of discussion and more room to analyze/theorize they got higher expectations of the story and then the ending happened.

As the comment suggests, the main reason behind the fact that there had been two subreddits even before the fracture was the restricting subreddit rules and moderators. This type of a separation between fan subreddits is nothing new for the Reddit based fandoms as the comment which has been provided above also mentions about a *Game of Thrones* subreddit r/Freefolk. So, it could be argued that in contrast to the more “democratic” systems of platforms such as Twitter or Tumblr, Reddit’s rule and moderation system constitute a direct hierarchal structure in which moderators have the full authority. Thus, Reddit as a platform could directly affects the fracture within a fandom.

4.2 Manifestations of the Fracture

Subthemes of the Manifestations Theme and their frequency could be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 - Percentage of the Subthemes of Manifestations Theme

Manifestations	Number	Percent
Hierarchy Through Capital	102	55,13
Real World Politics	42	22,70
Toxic Behavior	41	22,17

The second main theme which emerged from the analysis is the Manifestations of the Fracture. This theme represents in which ways the fracture manifests itself and what are the consequences of it. The study found out that fracture mainly occurs three different ways within the fan community and consequences of them vary from consolidation of authority to gatekeeping. These three subthemes are Hierarchy through capital, Real world politics, and Toxic behavior.

4.2.1 Hierarchy through capital

“you don’t understand the ending”
“no, you :(”
every discussion about attack on titan.”

The subtheme Hierarchy through capital consists of the manifestations of the fracture in which members of one subreddit utilize their cultural or social capital to undermine others’ opinions on the object of interest. Cultural capital is the collected set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that one might use to demonstrate that they are culturally competent and of a particular social standing (Bourdieu 1986). In the case of this study, members of both subreddits use their critical thinking abilities, intellectualities, and ages as a source for their cultural capital. Then, via using those formed cultural capitals fans construct a hierarchical structure in which higher the cultural capital of someone, more valid the interpretation they have.

One method used to form this kind of a structure is showcasing the literary knowledge. For instance, one commenter used his knowledge over the trope of “Mary Sue” within

literary criticism to form their cultural capital and diminish other subreddit's credibility on the subject:

It's amazing how many people admire the walking definition of Mary Sue. This is a character who has no weaknesses, has superpowers that the author hasn't explained where they came from, who is more experienced than veterans at killing titans, has a tragic backstory that leads absolutely nowhere, all the characters love her, and the main character confessed that he always loved her, despite not showing any emotion throughout the entire manga. Kills the main villain effortlessly without even knowing where he is.

In this example, commenter does two things. Firstly, they mention the archetype "Mary Sue" within the literary criticism and explain this character tropes features. By doing so, user asserts their knowledge on the subject, thus strengthen their cultural capital. Secondly, in the first sentence user also mocks the people who like the character they deemed a "Mary Sue" to invalidate their opinion. The mocking act tries to solidify the idea that people who like this certain character does not have the literary knowledge the commenter has, therefore they could not comprehend the object of interest as explicit as them. In the end, commenter use this method to strengthen their cultural capital while diminishing the other side's capital. They do that in order to put themselves and people who share the same opinions with them on a higher status within the hierarchical structure.

Both r/titanfolk and r/shingekinokyojin subreddits utilize the usage of cultural capital to get higher hierarchical statuses in different ways (see in Figure 4.2). Although method of using literary criticism and intellectual superiority used by both subreddit members, executions of this method differ between subreddits.

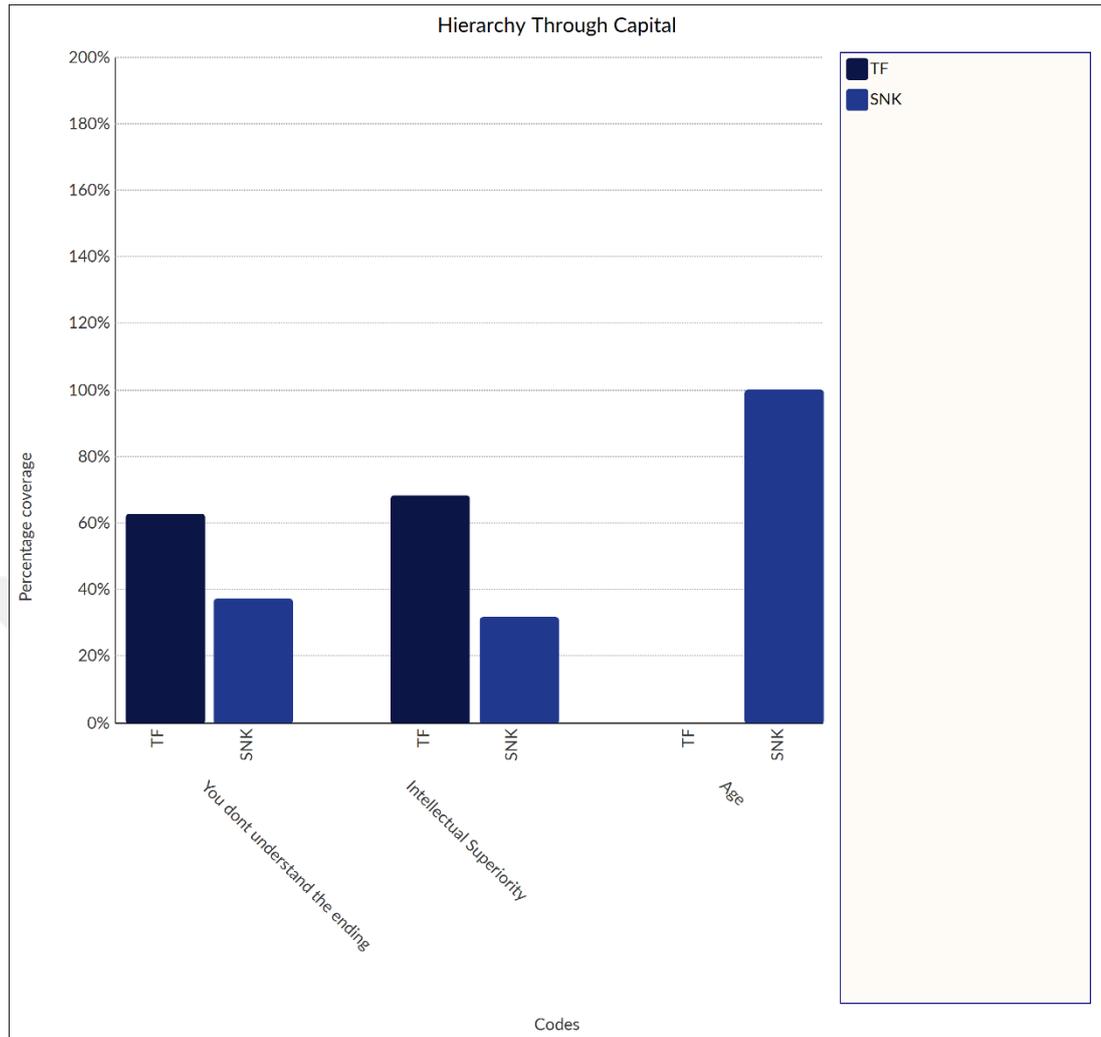


Figure 4.2 - Distribution of the main codes of Hierarchy through capital subtheme between subreddits

The members of the r/shingekinokyojin mainly utilize their cultural capital in line with their social capital which they get from agreeing with the writer. As it was mentioned before, members of this subreddit mainly have positive opinions about the ending the writer delivers. This agreement between them contributes to the social capital of the r/shingekinokyojin members because the writer has the highest authority according to their hierarchical structure. While using their cultural capital as a way of forming hierarchy, members of the r/shingekinokyojin utilize said social capital as well to reinforce their argument. As an example, one commenter both use literary education and textual evidence to undermine the opposing ideas:

People have serious trouble separating headcanon from textual evidence. Why exactly I couldn't tell you, probably mix of lack of literature education and increasing emphasis on subjective experience. But for textual discussion it's an absolute mess.

In this comment, commenter firstly demonstrates the fact that they know what the concept of headcanon is. Headcanon mainly refers to the story expectations which are irrelevant to the evidence within the text. By showing their knowledge on the concept and accusing people of not understanding the difference between headcanon and textual evidence, commenter strengthens their cultural capital and indicates the lack of it on the other side. After that initial move, commenter directly points out the nonexistence of literary education to undermine other side's cultural capital more. In addition to the arguments about the aspect of cultural capital, this comment also emphasizes the objectivity and text itself as a way of demonstrating social capital. The text itself and the objective interpretation of it is brought up into the conversation because it carries the writer's ideals. Since the commenter supports the writer's authority, they use the objectivity argument as a mean to implement their social capital. Another comment also uses the same method while analyzing the concept of theorizing:

There's nothing wrong with theorizing , but don't believe it to such an extent that you interpret every scenes/dialogues in such a way that only your theory makes sense instead of trying to see what the author is trying to communicate. That was the worst part about Titanfolk.

Just as in the previous comment, this comment also put an emphasis on the author's authority over the story and importance of the objectivity. By stating that there is only one correct way of interpreting the story, commenter implies every other reading of the story originates from a weak relation with the object of affection. Thus, those other interpretations are either inferior or directly wrong. This argumentation aimed directly at both social and cultural capital of the members of r/titanfolk to place them on a lower hierarchical status.

On the other hand, the study found out that members of the r/titanfolk subreddit mainly uses mockery and satirical language next to concepts related to the cultural capital. Since the objectivity and intentions of the writer used against them, members of r/titanfolk make fun of other subreddit's denotative understanding of the story. One comment joke about

said surface level understanding of r/shingekinokyojin members via using an analogy to a famous internet scam:

Nigerian prince: I will send you a million dollars if you send me 1k dollars.

snk: What a generous man

titanfolk: Now, wait a second it seems like a scam.

snk: You don't understand, his royal Highness truly wants to make me rich.

In this example, commenter uses one of internet's famous scam mails, "Nigerian Prince", to depict the absurd results of surface level reading. Nigerian Prince is a "supposed" prince who send e-mails to special people for getting thousand dollars from them in order to take over his country and he promises that when he takes the throne, he will pay back with a million dollars. Believing this scam mainly associated with lack of intellect and greed. By using this analogy to showcase other subreddit's denotative interpretation, commenter insults their comprehension skills, therefore diminish their cultural capital. Also, this mockery directly criticizes the relation between r/shingekinokyojin subreddit and author's hierarchical status. As it was mentioned, the social capital of r/shingekinokyojin subreddit directly related with their agreement with the author. With the mockery, commenter highlights the shallowness of said agreement and eviscerate their social capital.

Satirical attitude and mockery of r/titanfolk members can be also seen in form of memes. These memes serve the purposes of undermining the other subreddit's cultural capital through exploiting their lack of understanding. One example of this situation is the clown meme from the post "Based on a conversation I had on rShingekinokyojin lmfao" (see in Appendix A.2). In this meme, the member of r/shingekinokyojin subreddit tries to come up with arguments to depict the character Mikasa as a good-written character. But with every argument, they slowly turn into a clown. In the end, they could not find a proper argument and just accuse the member of the r/titanfolk for not understanding the story while turning into a full clown. There are two implications of the usage of this meme. Firstly, it directly criticizes the way of other subreddits formation of cultural capital which is through literary criticism and intellectual superiority. In the meme, the formation of the cultural capital fails miserably as in the end, member of the r/shingekinokyojin subreddit only states other side did not understand the ending without giving any intellectual

arguments to support this sentiment. Secondly, through depicting this thought process as turning into a clown, creator of the meme openly mocks the members of the other subreddit and their understanding of the story.

Aside from the literary criticism and intellectual superiority, this study indicated that age is also a factor in forming a hierarchy through cultural capital. In most cultures old age associated with wisdom and experience. Thorough utilizing this cultural norm, members of the r/shingekinokyojin tries to position themselves higher on the hierarchical structure. At this point, it is important not note that the concept of age only used by the members of the r/shingekinokyojin subreddit (see in Figure 4.2). For instance, one commenter states that they left the r/titanfolk subreddit because they feel like every other member of it were in adolescence: “I saw one comparing themselves to Eren that he's 16 and that he's total chad and wouldn't have been such a crybaby in his place. That's when I realised that the average age there is 13 and immediately left the sub.” Via arguing they are younger, r/shingekinokyojin members discredits the opinions of the r/titanfolk members. Because according to their argument, due to their young age they do not have the skillset to analyze the object of interest properly. Thus, their interpretations of it are invalid. This argument chain uses age as a tool to dismantle the cultural capital of the r/titanfolk subreddit.

4.2.2 Real world politics

“There’s also a quite popular rumour running around non snk watchers that the show is fascist and pro war, and that sub doesn’t help with our image either.”

The manga series *Shingeki No Kyojin* uses its fantasy setting to demonstrate sensitive real world political issues such as racism, genocide, and Nazism. Those issues and how they were handled in the story also affected fracture within the fandom. Both subreddits attribute real life political stands to the other in order to diminish their reputation and lower their hierarchical status. For instance, members of r/shingekinokyojin mainly accuses the other subreddit’s members of being right-winged, racist, and incel: “People on titanfolk hate eren cause he is simp not incel, it's a racist subreddit after all made by incels”, “It feels like I’m reading through a right wing political subreddit whenever I go on there and they really are insufferable”, “And don't even get me started on the right-

wing nationalist freakshows who took over the fandom, but I don't want to talk about them too much.” In all those comments racism and political spectrum have been used to directly lower the credibility of the members of r/titanfolk.

On the other hand, members of the r/titanfolk also accuse the other subreddit of being racist through their opinions about certain events and characters within the story:

The ending defenders otoh try to make a moral high ground and accuse the Rumbling supporters of being psychopaths who like genocide--and then end up justifying the policies of Marley rounding up Eldians into concentration camps.

Also, another aspect about how real world politics have been utilized is the positioning of the writer. While members of the r/shingekinokyojin believe that writer is not pro-war or pro-genocide and his story depicts atrocities in order to criticize them, members of the r/titanfolk argue that the writer and the story has a political agenda, and the ending of the series is pro-genocide. In the story, there is a nation called Eldia which has many similarities to the real-world Japan. A member of r/titanfolk addressed this similarity by commenting: “Was this Isayama's way of denying Japanese war crimes?” Through investigating the intentions of the writer, r/titanfolk members also disapproves the hierarchical structure in which author has the most authority over the object of interest. This also weakens the social capital of the r/shingekinokyojin subreddit. A comment depicts all aspects of this process as it both questions the morality of the stories ending and offers an alternative which benefits the commenters social capital: “the genocide is portrayed as good because it "saved" Eren's 5 friends. that's even worse than AnR.” This comment both questions the writer’s intentions in order to undermine his authority and promote AnR fanfiction as a better alternative thus increase the r/titanfolk’s social capital.

4.2.3 Toxic behavior

“People love something at first, then become obsessive about it. Then they try to control it and become toxic when they can’t control it.”

The study indicated that actions which members of both subreddits considered as toxic is another important manifestation of the fracture. The toxicity argument mainly used by

the members of r/shingekinokyojin subreddit (see in Figure 4.3), and divided at the three categories which are bandwagoning, gatekeeping, and downvoting.

What members of both subreddits deemed as bandwagoning could be summarized as forming an opinion through following the popular trends, rather than examining the text itself. In the context of this analysis, members of r/shingekinokyojin argued that loud negative voice of the other subreddit affect the newcomers and people who has not read the ending of the story yet and manipulate them into acknowledging ending is bad:

...now the people who are going to read the manga are gonna be affected by the posts on titanfolk such that instead of forming their own opinion on whether the ending sucked or not they're just believe that it sucked because that's what everyone else thinks.

According to another commenter, as this “hate” bandwagon continues to expand, new people find new and absurd interpretations from tiny details to further strengthen the idea that ending is bad:

What makes me sad is that to keep the hate bandwagon going, everyone is finding any little line of dialogue and misinterpreting it in the worst way to make another complaint about how bad the ending is. It's very similar to r/freefolk or r/thelastofus2 and I feel like it's causing people's opinions of the chapter to just devolve worse and worse.

The comment also states the similarities between r/titanfolk and other “deviant” subreddits. These similarities indicate a pattern between fractured fandoms and reinforce the idea that the presented toxicity could be an inherent result of framework behind Reddit's user-engagement.

Gatekeeping is also another toxic behavior which members of both subreddits commonly mentioned. Gatekeeping could be briefly explained as do not letting newcomers into the community easily via strict rules or negativity. According to members of the r/shingekinokyojin, the negativity of r/titanfolk community construct a narrative that ending of the series is factually bad. Furthermore, this narrative is pushing possible new fans away from the community.

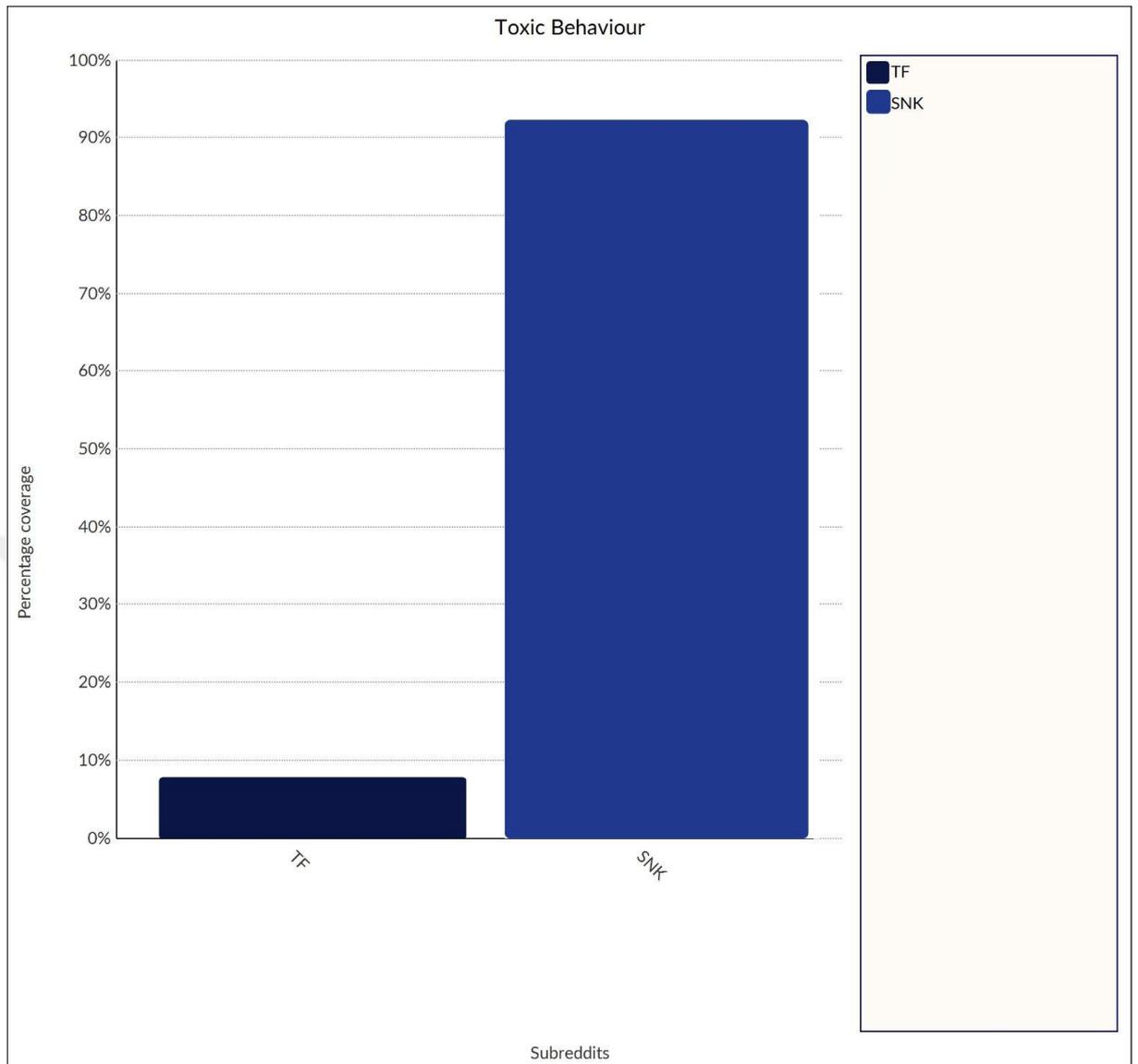


Figure 4.3 – Distribution of Toxic behavior subtheme between subreddits

One member of the r/shingekinokyojin subreddit described the narrative construction process or r/titanfolk as:

...the ensuing toxicity has somehow led to the broader impression that the ending was trash (people who don't closely follow AoT "hear" that the ending was bad because those who complain always have the loudest voice), when it can be described as mediocre at worst.

In this example, commenter link the bandwagoning concept of the toxicity with the negative narrative construction. Also, they emphasize the loudness of the negativity in

comparison to voice of positive feelings. Responding to this comment, another member pointed out the said negativity's bandwagoning effect on possible new fans:

Strong agree, I think that's what frustrates me the most. People who I talk to who haven't read the story say "Oh but I hear the ending really sucks, so I'm not interested in reading it anymore", and it just makes me sad. Especially because it's my favorite story, I want to share my love for it with my friends.

This comment and others similar to it represent gatekeeping effect of the negativity surrounding the series' ending.

Lastly, members of both subreddits also acknowledged the abuse of Reddit's downvote system as a toxic behavior. In Reddit's interface, negatively voted comments become invisible unless the user opens them manually. According to members of r/shingekinokyojin, some parts of r/titanfolk community use abuse this system to hide the comments they do not wish to be seen: "Even now, anytime you shit on Eren and his genocide, you get downvoted hard and harassed on PM and comments.", "... even anime onlies are getting convinced at the idea that the ending is bad even though they haven't read it. People who say otherwise are getting harassed and downvoted." Downvoting also negatively affects the karma points so it could be said that it is a form of online harassment.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the dataset has revealed insightful findings regarding the division within the *Shingeki no Kyojin* fandom and the factors contributing to it. This study enabled an opportunity for deeper understanding of the varying perspectives, moderation policies, hierarchical dynamics, real-world politics, and toxic behavior that have played a role in fracturing the fan community.

One of the most important findings of the study was the significance of social and cultural capital for the construction of a hierarchical structure. As the themes underscored, members of both subreddits tried to utilize their capitals to get a higher hierarchical status over the other subreddit. The subtheme "Hierarchy through capital" revealed how fans employ capitals to establish hierarchies within the fandom. Intellectualism, critical thinking abilities, age, and alignment with the author's decisions serve as sources of cultural and social capital, reinforcing the existing hierarchies. Moreover, the injection of real-world politics into the discourse, as depicted in the subtheme "Real world politics," further intensifies the divide along ideological lines.

As a unique platform, Reddit's role in the process of the fracture was also another important aspect of the study. The study indicated that Reddit's rules, moderation-oriented framework, and user-engagement system had an influence on both the reasons behind the fracture and manifestations of it. Under the "Reasons Behind the Fracture" theme, members of both subreddits stated the fact that strict rules and harsh moderators of r/shingekinokyojin subreddit was the primary reason behind the birth of r/titanfolk subreddit. As a manifestation of the fracture, r/titanfolk members abused Reddit's downvote system to target comments they did not like and harass the users who have posted them. In both of those instances, members r/shingekinokyojin subreddit used other similar subreddits to explain the actions of r/titanfolk members. This situation, set light to the fact that some essential parts of the fracture is inherently related with the Reddit itself.

Toxic behavior, as uncovered in the subtheme "Toxic behavior," represents a distressing manifestation of the fracture within the fandom. Instances of what members deemed bandwagoning, gatekeeping, and harassment aimed at those with differing opinions or

belonging to the opposing subreddit create a hostile environment. Such toxic behavior impedes constructive dialogue, mutual understanding, and the potential for reconciliation within the fan community.

The distribution of themes and subthemes between two subreddits was also an insightful part of the study. Interpretation of the data showcased that even though some subthemes could be seen in both subreddits, others were nearly exclusive to a certain subreddit. For instance, the reflex of appointing author as the utmost authority could only be seen in the r/shingekinokyojin community, whereas r/titanfolk members filled that authority gap with famous fanfiction writers. For the “Manifestations of the Fracture”, even though usage of capitals could be seen in both subreddits utilizations of them differs. While members of r/shingekinokyojin used age and intellectual superiority as main tools to diminish other side’s hierarchy, members of the r/titanfolk have chosen satire and mockery to reach the same goal.

Also, another significant difference in the distribution of subthemes manifested itself in Toxic behavior. According to the data, toxicity argument used over 90% by r/shingekinokyojin members to define the actions of r/titanfolk members. It could be argued that the gap between the two subreddits was related to the concept of canonicity. Since the official ending of the story and objective interpretation of it were in line with the opinions of r/shingekinokyojin community, they did not have to stress their arguments. Whereas members of the r/titanfolk displayed toxic behaviors to make their voice heard because their interpretation of the story was out of the canon.

Study also indicated that categorization of Reinhard (2018) is applicable to the online fandoms as well. The two categories, Difference in opinion and Policing boundaries, were directly related with the “Reasons of the Fracture” theme while the category Power plays overlapped with the “Manifestations of the Fracture” theme.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is the deleted comments and the posts. Because of the fact that the study conducted few years after the period of controversy, some posts and

comments either deleted by the users or removed by the moderators. This situation narrowed the sample size of the study and made certain initial reactions inaccessible.

Also, the comments which were removed by the moderators created a dilemma for the research. At first, researcher planned to add removed comments to the analysis under the scope of Moderation subtheme. But it created an uncertainty because without the comments being seen the reason behind their removal could not be indicated. Therefore, researcher abandoned the idea to add those removed comments to the sample. This thought process indicated a problem for thoroughly understanding the influence of moderation. Without the initial comments, it is impossible to determine whether there is a bias in moderators' decisions to remove them or not. Thus, removed comments could not contribute to the study.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

This study aimed to understand the formation and separation processes of online fan communities. In order to accomplish that, the concept of “fractured fandom” analyzed through two conflicted *Shingeki No Kyojin* fan subreddits. The fandom of *Shingeki No Kyojin* selected as a case for this research due to its large number of members and online activity. Thus, the study conducted with a small sample and represents only a small fraction of the behaviors of online fan communities.

For the future research, scope of the study should be expanded. Rather than analyzing a specific fandom, examining the concept “deviant” subreddit could be a good starting point. As this study suggested, although the contexts change, the style of the fracture and behaviors of those “deviant” subreddits has been similar to each other. With that knowledge, a future study may focus on these subreddits to methodize the separation process and depict the role of Reddit as a medium on those processes. A research which focuses on several cases could reveal a pattern within “deviant” subreddits. The research could also examine the toxicity of the “deviant” subreddits in order to understand the reasons and results of it. In the end, the concept of “deviant” fan subreddit which emerged from this study should be the center of a future research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmad, Suzail. 2023. "The 14 Best-Selling Manga In History." Retrieved 1 June 2023, from <https://gamerant.com/best-selling-manga-of-all-time/#attack-on-titan-110-million-sold>
- Aswath, S., D. Godavarthi, and B. Das. 2020. "Analysing Conflicts in Online Football Communities of Reddit." *2020 International Conference on Emerging Trends in Information Technology and Engineering (Ic-ETITE), Emerging Trends in Information Technology and Engineering (Ic-ETITE), 2020 International Conference*, February: 1–6.
- Almerekhi, Hind, Haewoon Kwak, Joni Salminen, and Bernard J. Jansen. 2020. "Are These Comments Triggering? Predicting Triggers of Toxicity in Online Discussions." *Proceedings of The Web Conference 2020*, ACM Conferences, April: 3033–40.
- Almerekhi, Hind, Supervised by Bernard J. Jansen, and co-supervised by Haewoon Kwak. 2020. "Investigating Toxicity Across Multiple Reddit Communities, Users, and Moderators." *Companion Proceedings of the Web Conference 2020*, ACM Conferences, April: 294–98.
- Booth, Paul. 2016. *Digital Fandom 2.0: New Media Studies*. New York: Peter Lang
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1985. "The Forms of Capital." *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, 241-58.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77–101.
- Cacciatore, Francesco. 2022. "One Piece Officially Outsell Every Single Batman Comic Ever... Combined." Retrieved 3 June 2023, from <https://screenrant.com/one-piece-most-successful-manga-sales-record/>
- Caplan, Mary A., and Gregory Purser. 2019. "Qualitative Inquiry Using Social Media: A Field-Tested Example." *Qualitative Social Work* 18(3): 417–35.
- Cauteruccio, Francesco, Enrico Corradini, Giorgio Terracina, Domenico Ursino and, Luca Virgili. 2022. "Investigating Reddit to detect subreddit and author stereotypes and to evaluate author assortativity." *Journal of Information Science* 48(6): 783-810.

- Chen, Kai, Zihao He, Rong-Ching Chang, Jonathan May, and Kristina Lerman. 2023. "Anger Breeds Controversy: Analyzing Controversy and Emotions on Reddit." *International Conference on Social Computing, Behavioral-Cultural Modeling and Prediction and Behavior Representation in Modeling and Simulation*, September: 44-53.
- Chin, Bertha. 2018. "It's About Who You Know: Social Capital, Hierarchies and Fandom." *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons: 243-56.
- Duffett, Mark. 2013. *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Efstratiou, Alexandros, Jeremy Blackburn, Tristan Caulfield, Gianluca Stringhini, Savvas Zannettou, and Emiliano De Cristofaro. 2022. "Non-Polar Opposites: Analyzing the Relationship Between Echo Chambers and Hostile Intergroup Interactions on Reddit." *17th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM 2023)*, June: 197-208.
- Fiske, John. 1992. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. London: Routledge: 30-49.
- Gilda, Shlok, Luiz Giovanini, Mirela Silva, and Daniela Oliveira. 2022. "Predicting Different Types of Subtle Toxicity in Unhealthy Online Conversations." *Procedia Computer Science* 198, January: 360–66.
- Hallekson, K., Kristina Busse. 2008. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Hasnat, Fahim, Mazidul Hasan, Abdullah Umar Nasib, Ashik Adnan, Nazifa Khanom, Mahsanul Islam, Humaion Kabir Mehedi, Shadab Iqbal and, Annajiat Alim Rasel. 2022. "Understanding Sarcasm from Reddit texts using Supervised Algorithms." *2022 IEEE 10th Region 10 Humanitarian Technology Conference (R10-HTC), Humanitarian Technology Conference (R10-HTC), 2022 IEEE 10th Region 10*, September: 1–6.
- Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. New York City: Routledge.
- Hintz, Elizabeth A., and Timothy Betts. 2022. "Reddit in communication research: current status, future directions and best practices." *Annals of the International Communication Association* 46(2): 116-33.
- Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual poachers: television fans & participatory culture*. New York: Routledge
- Jenkins, Henry and John Tulloch. 1995. *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Star Trek and Doctor Who*. London: Routledge.

- Jenkins, H. 2006. *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Lasser, J., Herderich, A., Garland, J., Aroyehun, S. T., Garcia, D., & Galesic, M. 2023. "Collective moderation of hate, toxicity, and extremity in online discussions." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.00357*.
- Lynch, Kimery S. 2022. "Fans as transcultural gatekeepers: The hierarchy of BTS' Anglophone Reddit fandom and the digital East-West media flow." *new media & society* 24(1): 105-21.
- Massanari, Adrienne. 2017. "#Gamergate and The Fappening: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *new media & society* 19(3): 329–46
- Maxwell, December, Sarah R. Robinson, Jessica R. Williams, and Craig Keaton. 2020. "A Short Story of a Lonely Guy': A Qualitative Thematic Analysis of Involuntary Celibacy Using Reddit." *Sexuality and Culture* 24(6): 1852–74.
- Mccuden, M., L. 2011. "Degrees of Fandom: Authenticity & Hierarchy in the Age of Media Convergence." PhD diss., University of Kansas.
- Mcluhan, M. 1994. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2049-2054.
- Medina, Cynthia. 2019. "Why Are Manga Outselling Superhero Comics?" Retrieved 6 June 2023, from <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/why-are-manga-outselling-superhero-comics>
- Morimoto, Lori Hitchcock and Bertha Chin. 2017. "Reimagining the Imagined Community: Online media fandoms in the age of global convergence." *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world*. New York City: NYU Press, 174-88.
- Pande, R. 2018. *Squee from the Margins: Fandom and Race*. University of Iowa Press.
- Reinhard, Carrielynn D. 2018. *Fractured Fandoms: Contentious Communication in Fan Communities*. UK: Lexington Books.
- Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The mirror of consumption*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Stein, L. E. 2015. *Millennial Fandom: Television Audiences in the Transmedia Age*. University of Iowa Press.
- Thornton, Sarah. 1996. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Wesleyan University Press.

Xia, Yan, Haiyi Zhu, Tun Lu, Peng Zhang, and Ning Gu. 2020. “Exploring Antecedents and Consequences of Toxicity in Online Discussions: A Case Study on Reddit.” *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction - CSCW 4 (CSCW2)*: 1–23.



APPENDIX A

A.1 Reddit Posts

https://www.reddit.com/r/titanfolk/comments/r9e248/based_on_a_conversation_i_had_on/

https://www.reddit.com/r/titanfolk/comments/uawefo/holy_shit_rshingekinokyojin_hit_a_new_low/

https://www.reddit.com/r/ShingekiNoKyojin/comments/mn94ab/i_find_it_sad_that_people_are_choosing_to_ride/

https://www.reddit.com/r/titanfolk/comments/tzikwm/rshingekinokyojin_in_a_nutshell_a_story_in_two/

https://www.reddit.com/r/ShingekiNoKyojin/comments/mli7dk/comment/gtmmgp9/?utm_source=reddit&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

https://www.reddit.com/r/ShingekiNoKyojin/comments/sh7d3l/ive_never_seen_this_in_a_story_before/

A.2 Post Images

Mikasa is the
best character

No she has
great character
development!

She is important
she saved everyone
from tge curse1!!!11!!1

You dont
understand the ending

imgflip.com



Image from post “Based on a conversation I had on r/shingekinokyojin lmfao”

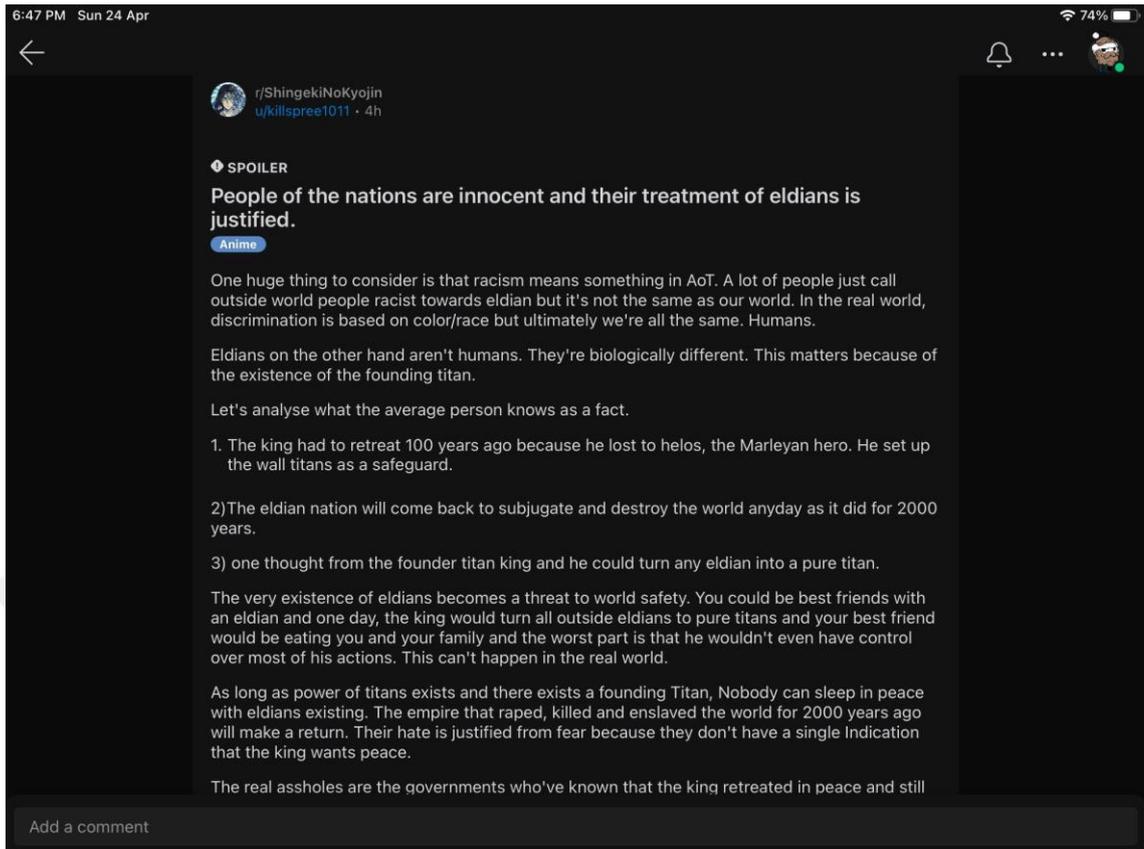


Image from post “Holy shit rShingekiNoKyojin hit a new low”

 r/ShingekiNoKyojin
u/ADB2105200 · 10h Join

 1

SPOILER

Just finished the manga , what the fuck was the ending

Manga

Just finished it due to not wanting to stop for another year , so.. firstly:

DID THE ENTIRE STORY LITERALLY HAPPEN BECAUSE A CHILD RAPE VICTIM WHO LOVED HER RAPIST WANTED SOME RANDOM BIATCH 2000 YEARS IN THE FUTURE TO KILL HER SIMPING GENOCIDAL BOYFRIEND

What is the 'point' of the story exactly , earlier it was about war , race , cycle of conflict etc . Now:

An absolute dumbfuck who massacred 80% of the world just so his 5-10 fucking friends (half of them war criminals) can live in luxury? A woman who was raped in childhood needs to see mass genocide and said mass genocide stopped by another woman who is basically the genocider's slave but 'bravely' defies her love and kills him and then makes out with his corpse?

How does any of this make sense?

 128   262  Share  Award

 **Reuels MOD**  · 44m
 subreddit janitor 

stop reporting this post. the post is fine. people are allowed to have different opinions regarding the ending on this sub. just follow general conduct rules and don't be a dick about it when presenting your opinion in the comments.

   Reply  Vote 

Images from post “rshingekinokyojin in a nutshell (a story in two parts)”

APPENDIX B

Name	Description
Manifestations of the Fracture	Thematic points of the manifestations of the fracture
Hierarchy through capital	Usage of the concepts such as age, critical thinking ability and literary criticism skills as ways to create hierarchy
Age	Using age as a hierarchical feature
Intellectual Superiority	Claiming having better critical thinking and literary knowledge
You don't understand the ending	using social capital through understanding of object of interest
Real world politics	Accusing others of being racist or sexist to undermine their point
Toxic Behavior	Behaviors which users deemed as "toxic"
Bandwagoning and gatekeeping	having an opinion without critically analyzing the Object of Interest
Shitposting and Downvoting	Using shitposting and downvoting as a defense mechanism against criticism
Reasons Behind the Fracture	Main thematic points of the reasons behind the fracture
It's not what I wanted	The reasons behind the Fracture which are related to the preferences of the fans
Fanfiction rant	criticisms and displeasure against a popular fanfiction
Favoritism	Favoring a character or relationship more than the coherence of the story
Writer's fault	Displeasure in writers' storytelling and preferences.
Moderation	The hierarchical effect of moderation in subs

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Name and surname: Ahmet Berk Büyükyılmaz

Academic Background

Bachelor's Degree Education: Boğaziçi University

Post Graduate Education: Kadir Has University

Foreign Languages: English

Work Experience

Institutions Served and Their Dates: