

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Masculinity is something that is often associated with men. Whereas in fact, masculinity is socially and culturally constructed that set standard on what is means to be a man, it is not something that a man born with (Pleck 1993). Furthermore, Tyson also defined masculinity as something that is not born within the genetic from male or biological constitution, but it is constructed by culture based on the society or social constructionism (Tyson 2006, 86). As for Craig, he believes that masculinity and men are constructed, made, and reinforced both socially and historically. By that, it means masculinity and men as constructs of social beliefs based on a shared meaning, particularly in the media (Tan, Shaw, and Cheng 2013, 238). Greig, Kimmel, and Lang also defines masculinity is a cultural behavior that encompasses more than gender differences (Greig, Kimmel, and Lang 2000, 3).

More specifically, it proves that masculinity can grow in a person from his cultural habits. This kind of thinking is still very often applied by society today, namely in the way parents educate their children. For example, when a person is young, he shows his masculinity side by always getting used to playing in a harsh environment such as football, guns and other masculine hobbies without ever touching feminine things like dolls.

Still related to masculinity, men are often associated with several things such as strength, lack of emotion, self-sufficiency, dominance, and sexual virility.

According to traditional masculine values, some people believes that men who do not display enough of these traits may fail to become ‘real men.’ Furthermore, this way of thinking can lead to the emergence of toxic masculinity thoughts, where men must have limits in showing or expressing their inner emotions such as anger, sadness, and others.

Toxic masculinity can be interpreted as a demand for attitudes for men to function in accordance with traditional masculinity values that exist in society (Salter, 2019). It is common to found in most culture that men are educated to learn strong-associated duties in order to demonstrate ‘masculine’ psychological traits like aggression, rationalism, and assertiveness, while women are trained to exhibit ‘feminine’ psychological traits like tenderness, sensitivity, and intuitiveness (Jenainati and Groves 2007, 5). As a result of thinking about masculinity like that then it explains how men act in specific ways is determined by how society defines the ideal types of what it is to be a man, not by their male role identity or even their manly features.

A common misconception is that “boys don't cry,” and many men believe this to be true, leading them to become accustomed to concealing their emotions and preferring to keep them hidden. The study conducted by Hess et al. (2000) showed that when faced with a negative emotional scenario, males are expected to react with greater happiness and serenity; they expect themselves to do so more frequently as well as to laugh and smile more, as well as be more relaxed, as a result of this expectation.

Furthermore, while describing bad personal occurrences, they tend to express greater enjoyment. From actual thoughts that demonstrate that masculinity despises expressing emotions, as well as the findings of the study, it is possible to conclude that men are unable to express their emotions freely because of stereotypes that have become prevalent in society, which attribute certain characteristics to being a man.

One of the films that has an element of masculinity in it is *Onward* (2020). *Onward* is a cartoon film produced by two big animation studios, Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios, entitled *Onward* (2020). The film is directed by Dan Scanlon and starring some of the famous actors such as Tom Holland and Chris Pratt. The story was written based on one of the writers' experience, Dan Scanlon, whose left by his father since he was one year old. *Onward* released on the early 2020 and won three nominations namely Film Music category in BMI Film & TV Awards, The Family Movie of 2020 category in People's Choice Awards, and Feature Film category in Dublin International Film Festival. The story mostly tells about the adventure of two elf brothers named Ian and Barley Lightfoot in purpose to bring their father back from death using magic. In this film, the two main characters, Ian and Barley, are depicted as two figures with different personalities. Ian is a shy person, he cannot mingle well with his friends at school, he always feels nervous when he about to talk in front of many people even if it only to ask his friend to his birthday party. He has an anxiety whenever he wants to talk to people and he also has a fear driving in highway. In contrast to Ian, his brother, Barley is a social butterfly person. He is more talkative than his younger

brother and he is very addicted to magical and mythology things. Unlike Ian who does not have any memory about their father, Barley has a few memories about his father. However, despite those very visible differences, these two characters are also described as very emotional characters. They do not hesitate to show their emotions directly such as when they are sad, stressed, and down.

This is then interesting to analyze because the two characters managed to break the concept of masculinity. This film shows that it is okay for young men in particular, to express their emotions. It shows the opposite to how the society works nowadays which gender is commonly understood as a social process that divides people and social processes along sex lines (Beasley 2005, 11). By that means, it is purposed to determine how man and woman should act in the society, like female have to be feminine and male have to be masculine (Scharrer and Blackburn 2017). Clark also said that men are not always depicted in the way that general masculinity has defined them (Clark 2004, 14). It means that guys do not have to be courageous and bold all of the time; instead, they can simply act like women, which in this case means expressing their feelings. It also gives a sense of how the media tries to construct alternative portrayals of masculinity. In this film, Ian and Barley are depicted as boys who still having masculinity such as aggressive nature against the orders of Officer Bronco, a centaur who is a police officer and also their mother's boyfriend. However, in some scenes it is also shown that they often show their emotions such as regret, sadness, disappointment, and others. The fact that they went on a mission to bring back their dead father together shows that the thought of asking for help can lead to feelings of inadequacy, weakness, and the perception

of being ‘lacking a man’ is wrong. This needs to be reduced and even stopped in society so that this Toxic Masculinity thought does not give a burden or difficulty to men. The depiction of characters like this is very influential on the view that men are also allowed to show their feelings without being afraid of being considered unmanly. Because if unchecked toxic masculinity and the behaviors are not followed up immediately, it can cause may lead to a variety of issues, such as bullying, school discipline, academic challenges, jail or prison time, domestic violence, sexual assault, risky behaviors, substance abuse, suicide, psychological trauma, and lack of friendships or genuine connections. Several theories suggest that toxic masculinity plays a role in physical health. Toxic masculinity may prevent some men from seeking help for possible health problems and other potential problems.

The characters in this film provide an overview of allegory or anthropomorphism, particularly the two main characters, Ian and Barley Lightfoot, who serve as the film's central protagonists. The depiction of anthropomorphism in the characters in this film is demonstrated by using numerous symbols that are closely associated with human sociocultural features, such as clothing, school furnishings, cars, and other similar items of equipment. Ian and Barley's characters have physical parts that are identical to those of humans in general. Namely, they have two eyes, one nose, one mouth, two ears, two hands, and both legs. In their daily lives, they dress in clothes similar to the actual world, such as shirts, jeans, sneakers, hoodies, and hats. Even their mother, Laurel Lightfoot, practices yoga in the morning. The furniture presented in the characters' lives also serves to support

real-life scenarios such as driving a car and attending a school with chairs and tables in their classrooms, among other things.

In addition, the fact that this animated picture addresses the problem of masculinity in its narrative makes it an attractive subject for discussion. Many films from a variety of genres, including cartoons, have addressed the problem of gender-related issues on a frequent basis. *Onward* (2020) is not the only animated picture that addresses gender issues, particularly masculinity. *Brave* (2012) and *Inside Out* (2015) are two additional animated films that do the same thing. According to Sari's (2019) research, the gender construction of Merida's character in the 2012 film "*Brave*" was made more realistic, and Disney demonstrated that Merida's macho side was more dominant than her femininity side. As part of the Disney Princess franchise, Merida is given the authority to challenge the patriarchal system in which she lives. When it comes to Disney films, this myth demonstrates both masculinity and femininity, particularly in the case of aristocratic women. She debunks the clichés of masculinity and demonstrates that women are capable of expressing themselves through their maleness. Similarly, Paramita and Chaniago (2018) performed research on the portrayal of tomboy identity in the film "*Inside Out*," and were successful in identifying an emotional representation of the tomboy identity in the main character Riley through the use of emotion. As depicted in the film *Inside Out*, tomboy identity is a way to transform a feminine woman with character (who is beautiful, white, slender, and a princess) into a masculine woman with character (who is strong, tenacious, and determined to succeed) (brave, tough, adventurous and has abilities). Because of these two studies' findings, it can be

inferred that gender issues remain a source of worry in American society, and that an individual's gender identity does not have to conform to the preconceptions imposed by culture.

Approximately half of all Americans (53 percent) believe that most people in our culture today regard males as manly or macho, according to the findings of a survey performed by the Pew Research Center in 2017. It is still vital for certain men in American society to be perceived as manly or masculine by others, according to some of their peers. Many males reported feeling at least some pressure to participate in activities that are sometimes associated with “traditional masculinity” in the study, which was conducted in November. More than eight in ten males feel they are under pressure to be emotionally strong, with 41 percent stating that they are under a great deal of pressure in this area of life. Based on the findings of the survey, it can be stated that the issue of masculinity in American society continues to be intimately associated with the concept of traditional thinking, according to which men must be macho and masculine in order to be perceived as men. While all of this is going on, the film *Onward* (2020) attempts to build and share a contrary perspective, which is that masculinity does not have to be something toxic that prevents a person from being themselves. It is not necessary for a man's masculinity to be determined by his ability to remain powerful and manly at all times to be considered masculine.

More importantly, because the film is of the animated picture genre, the topic of masculinity highlighted by the producers is frequently regarded as a serious one. However, because the *Onward* film has been given a PG rating by the MPAA,

which stands for Parental Guidance, it is also required that young audiences watch the film under the supervision of their parents. This is due to the fact that films with a PG classification may contain some content that may not be appropriate for children to view. For parents, it is recommended that they watch the film in its entirety. Language, violence, and short nudity are all possible sources of content, although they are not so intense that more than general warning is recommended. As a result, when their children watch the *Onward* movie, their parents will very certainly be around. Having this discussion on toxic masculinity thinking can also provide fresh insights for parents, allowing them to lessen their own toxic masculinity thinking while simultaneously applying these perspectives to their own children. Like the vast majority of parents that force their children to play and behave in accordance with their gender identity.

There is a previous study discusses about toxic masculinity conducted by Noviani Maghfiroh in 2017, a student of Diponegoro University entitled “*Toxic Masculinity as Depicted in Barry Jenkins’s Moonlight*.” The results of her study indicate that there are three characteristics of toxic masculinity, namely homophobia, emotional suppression and violence. The author also finds that Chiron is not only a victim of this toxic masculinity but also has its own characteristics. There is also a study conducted by Richardo Pranata Salim in 2020, a student of Widya Kartika University. The title of his study is “*Toxic Masculinity Portrayal in David Fincher’s Fight Club*.” His study shows that the characteristics of masculinity are the values most respected by men even though masculinity is not a biological factor but an event of social construction. In every characteristic of

masculinity there is a possibility that it can turn into poison. It takes the right mindset, to know which masculinity is considered positive or toxic. The other previous study is a study conducted by Elizabeth Anne Grimme in 2019 entitled “*Toxic Masculinity in Children’s Animated Films: The Importance of Portrayal.*” The results of this study concluded that, statistically, there was no significant difference in toxic behavior between sympathetic and unsympathetic men across the 21 films. Both sympathetic and unsympathetic men are toxic. There were significant differences, however, in non-toxic behavior. Statistically, sympathetic men performed more nontoxic behaviors than unsympathetic men. This suggests that the films children watch do not diminish toxic masculinity or challenge it in any way. If the sympathetic male characters only exhibit less toxic behavior, and do not engage in less toxic behavior, this children’s film is just covering up the problem. The explanation for this result is found in gender stereotypes and social determinism theory. The three previous studies discussed the same topic, namely toxic masculinity. Those three previous studies discuss the consequences of toxic masculinity attitudes possessed by men. In contrast to several studies that have discussed toxic masculinity, this study attempts to explain how a film depicts disagreement to the existing concept of toxic masculinity. This study will later provide an illustration that men are also allowed to show their weakness and also emotional side, not only the toxic and strong side of masculinity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. How is expression of emotion depicted by Ian and Barley Lightfoot in the film *Onward*?

2. To what extent does this depiction shows the breakdown of Toxic Masculinity?

1.3 Objective of the Study

1. To express the depiction of breakdown of Toxic Masculinity by Ian and Barley Lightfoot.
2. To discover more about the depiction of the two characters in breaking down the Toxic Masculinity.

1.4 Significance of the Study

There will always be debates about gender, especially masculinity in society. Therefore, on this occasion the author focuses this study on breaking the concept of toxic masculinity which is a busy issue in today's life. This study takes cartoons as objects with the aim that the audience also knows that learning about breaking down toxic masculinity can be taken implicitly from films, not just books or journals.

In addition, the author conducted this study in order to provide a broader understanding and insight in the community regarding the meaning of masculinity that is not always toxic, and if toxic masculinity appears in society, it should be addressed immediately so as not to have a negative impact on many parties.

This study also provides something different compared to several studies that have been conducted, among others, the author attempts to break the existing concept of toxic masculinity. This study will later provide an illustration that men are also allowed to show their weakness and also emotional side, not only the toxic and strong side of masculinity.

In the future, this study can be used as a reference to help other Universitas Airlangga's students who want to raise the issue of masculinity in men especially the opposite of toxic masculinity. They can use this study as a related study that can help in developing their research.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Masculinity	: Masculinity is always interpolated by cultural, historical, and geographic context, and the combined influence of feminism and the gay movement has destroyed the notion of uniform masculinity, and even sexuality is no longer thought to be fixed innately (Beynon 2002).
Toxic Masculinity	: Involving the need to compete and conquer others fiercely. Also, as a collection of socially regressive male characteristics that promote dominance, devaluation of women, homophobia, and indiscriminate violence (Kupers 2005).
Emotional Suppression	: Suppression of emotion does not imply that people are emotionless; rather, it is a state that people deliberately maintain and develop in order to keep their emotions in check (Butler & Gross 2004).
Sadness	: A typical emotion to a difficult situation such as a loss, disappointment, issues, or other difficulties. Feeling down from time to time is an unavoidable

aspect of being human. In these instances, emotions of grief subside fast, and you are able to resume your normal activities (Canadian Mental Health).

Fear : A feeling that happens when specific stimuli are encountered, a motivational state is elicited that leads to protective or evasive behavior (McFarland 1987).