HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN ALADIN MOVIE (2019)

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Abstract

Disney movies have been popular among children and teenagers since its first debut in 1937. This popularity was passed down from generations to generations until today's era. Aladdin is one of the Disney films which just released recently which the film was adabted from the another older Aladdin films from 1992. Since, it is believed that a literary work contains ideology, therefore this paper descriptively examines how hegemonic masculinity disseminated through American fantasy film "Aladdin" which released in 2019. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony as well as Raewyn Connells concept of hegemonic masculinity were employed in this study. The main male character Aladdin was used to demonstrate the kind of hegemonic masculinity preferred by the author. The finding found that in Aladdin film, the masculinity is disseminated as being kind, brave, skillful, protector, and clever or has very good intelligence. Moreover, in Aladdin film, power and wealth are described as something which are no longer neccesary as part of being masculine. In addition, gender equality seems to be promoted througout the story of Aladdin.

Key words: Aladdin, Antonio Gramsci, Hegemonic, Masculinity

INTRODUCTION

Disney movies are very popular today and have great influence both in Indonesia and around the world [1]. While Disney films are often viewed as pleasant, yet they contain a lot of underlying messages [2], [3]. It becomes one of the most successful mass media companies in America and have a solid foundation in production and animated films [4]. The target audience is worldwide children who are in early stages of life and gradually grasp gender roles [5], [6]. Many of whom accept the messages and later find their first idea of how from these different films men and women are supposed to act [7], [8]. Children develop gender identity and gender preferences very early in life [9], reinforced by gender roles depicted by television and films [10], [11]. Therefore, it can be no denying the influence of Disney Corporation and its products to the people thoughts and acts [12]. [13] suggests that the Disney Company and the animated feature film are so influential that they "could shape the way children think about what they do and who they should be".

Moreover, both the animation and the live-action of Disney films have been longly entertained children and even adults around the world [14], [15]. Beginning with Snow White in 1937, over twenty-six animated feature films were made by both Walt Disney and

Team Disney (who took control after Walt's death under Michael Eisner's direction) [16], [17]. From the moment Snow White was first published in America's Depression Age, the Disney Corporation has tried to give consumers a happy ending fairy tale [18]; this happy ending often takes place at the expense of common sense knowledge of gender reality [19], [20]. Furthermore, The Disney Company has been selling itself regularly to children and families [21]. [22] argue that Disney marketed itself "in the guise of innocence, packaging itself for mass appeal and strengthening American family values. The stories and characters famosuly known by many people and passed down from generation to generation [23], [15]. Therefore, it cannot be denied if those movies have influenced and shaped people's thought [24]. [25] argues that the Disney movies or the animated feature films are so powerful that they can shape the way children think about who they are and who they should be. One of the famous Disney movies which recently released is Aladdin [26]. This live-action film was adapted from Disney's animated film 1992 with the same name. This film was greatly popular and becoming the sixth highest-grossing film of 2019 according to Forbes [27], [28]. Moreover, the Disney films certainly cannot be separated from its main characters who completely polished up the stories [29]. The male characters in particular are the characters who embody the masculine identity [30]. [31] also argues that masculinity is largely a set of ideological and cultural practices rather than a biological given. It means that the masculinity is a character which received by people through things experienced by themselves and literary work is one of the things that influences [32], [33].

The present study is investigating how hegemonic masculinity disseminated through American fantasy film "Aladdin" which released in 2019. Similar to the present study, hegemonic masculinity has been widely discussed in many studies to find out how the ideology of being masculine implanted in people's mind [34], [35]. Hibbeler (2009) who exemined the representations of male characters and masculinity in Disney animated feature films found that good characters were mostly slender, middle aged and fit but not muscular, single, royalty, and had community as family [36], [37]. They were mostly heterosexual, equally likely to be romantically involved as to be not romantically involved, were sexual in nature [38], and were most often the targets of violence [39], [40]. Moreover, Gürkan and Serttaş (2017) who investigated the representation of masculinity in cinema and on television found that the representation of male in cinema and television are produced with similar myths, symbols, metaphors and messages, similar gender languages

are used in different media, and fictional male characters have common characteristics in film and television [41], [42]. Moreover, similar study was conducted by Kauklija (2018) in which examining masculinity in Children's film found that how male heroes are portrayed are generally believed to affect not only young boys who are forming their identities, but also views on gender behavioral expectations in girls [43].

Gramsci in his writing (1975) stated that "The concept of hegemony is really a very simple one. It means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class [44]. "According to [45], all of the proletariat, to use Marx's term, consents to being ruled by the ruling class, and the consents is the process of the hegemony. The process is a process in which the rulling class disseminate their ideas and gain the consents of the lower classes [46]. For Gramsci, the hegemony is inserted to the society in everyday common sense. In worldly activities, the hegemony is inserted through work, school, entertaiment and church. This secures the consents of capital's subaltern classes [47], [48]. As the results, the lower classes are consenting to being ruled by the ruling class in their daily lives. According to [49], this process of hegemony is never ending or this is an on-going process. Gramsci's theory is absolutely and unconsciously implemented in the daily life of the society. The ideologies of the rulling class are consumed by the society and recieved as something common or even desired. The ideologies are also often inserted in something that entertainful [50]. One of the examples is the ideology of being masculine which portrayed through the main male characters of movies. Through the main male characters, the rulling class is able to maintain or to create the new ideology of being a man. By understanding the theory of Gramsci, it makes people realize of what ideology that tried to be disseminated.

[51] define masculinity as a set of ideological and cultural practices rather than a biological given. Rather than masculinity being what it means to be a man, masculinity acts as a set of assumptions about what men are like; these assumptions are most often imposed on those with male bodies [52], [53]. [54] define hegemonic masculinity as "normative" and argue that hegemonic masculinity requires all men to position themselves on it even if they can not embody it. Even though all men can not embody the dominant form of masculinity, it is assumed that all men benefit from this [55]. It can be difficult to distinguish between

dominance and masculinity, because being male and being masculine have long been the norm against which gender and social power are calculated. Hence, kids who watch Disney films are introduced to the expectations of Disney as they interpret the film for what constitutes masculinity [56]. Disney films unconsciously become tools which shape children thought of becoming masculine [57], [58]. Even though, some of high standards of becoming masculine often cannot being embodied by them, it can be the benchmark of them in reaching the masculine standards.

Walt Disney's history and Disney Corporation's films provide further insight into Disney's gender constancy [59]. Our society is dominated by the Disney films, theme parks and merchandise [60]. Disney retains the power to make the audience long nostalgically for patriarchal realms that are neatly ordered [61]. Giroux (1995) argues that Disney's world has become a place of commodification of memory and the rewriting of identity narratives, especially from a patriarchal perspective. This helps Disney to rationalize "the dominant culture's authoritarian normalizing tendencies which carry through to the present" [62]. Disney produces certain knowledge, values, and desires. [63] argues that "as Disney puts it, being human is defined by gender". In particular, being male means one has to pursue one's dreams and become an active part of society. It is easier for male characters to be part of the social structure in the Disney world than female characters because of the patriarchal structure in the films [64]. From those opinion regarding to Disney animated films, there are lots of arguments that relate the gender, identity and including masculinity to the literary works of Disney which influence people who enjoy the entertaiments [65]. Many studies have found many ideologies that being disseminated in the film published. Starting from masculinity, feminist, marriage, romantic, sexuality and many others [66]. For the example, in a research in Disney animated feature films exploring gender, race, age and sexual orientation. [67] found that Disney films tend to depict gender-restricting pictures. Male characters have been described as violent, emotionally driven and women's rescuers. Themes surrounding sexuality have also been revealed, the most common being that women lack sexual agency when men make advances [68], [69]. Interestingly, villain characters were more likely to be depicted as non-white, reflecting derogatory minority portrayals [70]. Therefore, based on that literature review, the researcher tried to descriptively examine how hegemonic masculinity disseminated through American fantasy film "Aladdin" which released in 2019.

METHOD

The main concern of this study was to investigate how hegemonic masculinity disseminated through American fantasy film "Aladdin" which released in 2019. The main male character Aladdin was used to demonstrate the kind of hegemonic masculinity preferred by the author. In order to collect the data, the researchers required to witness and analyze the phenomenon of the action and conversation of the main character Aladdin as well as the other character's perceptions toward the main male character. Since the researcher gives a systematic description of the data. Therefore, the methods used in this study may be classified as qualitative research.

The data of this research was taken from a movie of Aladdin which was released in 2019. This movie was produced by Walt Disney Pictures and directed by Guy Ritchie. It is a live-action adaptation of Disney's 1992 animated film of the same name. Observation was used as the main instrument in this research. Observation is the first instrument of this study as the basis of qualitative and ethnographic studies. This study observed each scene during the film story. Observation was used, as direct data was required in this research to comprehend ongoing behavior, process, unfolding situation or events during the story. Specifically, observation was used to reveal the ideology of hegemonic masculinity inside the story. Observation was also needed to witness the behavior of the main male character Aladdin in expressing his masculinity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers watched the newest life-action Aladdin movie which released in 2019 for several times in order to determine how hegemonic masculinity tried to be disseminated througout the stroy of Aladdin. The researchers wanted to discover the ideology of masculinity or how man have to act according to the story line. The researchers analyzed the characteristics of the main male character Aladdin who being used by the author as the example of a man or the example of being masculine. The characteristics are vied by the researcher through the character behaviors, emotions, his responses toward any situation, thought and etc. The researchers also payed attentions on the character physical appereance and social status. From the analysis the researcher found some points that described as follow.

Kind, Brave, Clever and Proficient

Unlike the other Disney movie princes, Aladdin was not physically strong nor good looking. However, he was clever and skillful instead. This is proven from the scene where he saved princess Jasmine from the guards by running and fooling the guards, instead of fight them. His intelligence impressed princess Jasmine. Aladdin intelligence and expertise also shown when he tricked a merchant to save princess Jasmine when she helped starving homeless kids. It makes Aladdin looks impressive without showing physical strenght. The other proficiencies of Aladdin which could impress the princess are when he could agilely and cleverly get into the palace passing many guards without getting caught as well as his ability in dancing also not only impress the princess but also the other people. Moreover, Aladdin also portrayed as a good man, he has kind heart which make him care to the others. Aladdin kindness shown at the beginning of the story when he was poor, although he was poor, yet he still could give his remaining food to starving homeless. Moreover, Aladdin bravery also shown when he should get into the palace by passing guards, jumping througout pillars, facing princess Jasmine tiger, and getting into dangerous cave to take the magic lamp. At the almost end of the story, Aladdin with no power, bravely faced the most powerful enemy named Jafar. From these explanations, the researcher summarized that the first characteristics of being masculine as disseminated by the main male character of Aladdin film are kindess, bravery, intelligence and proficiency.

Power and Wealth are not necessary

Unlike the other disney films which mostly the main male characters are always placed in the high social status class, given wealth, position and physical strenght as symbol of power. In Aladdin movie, appereance, power and wealth are no longer considered as the main things that should be owned by a man to get a princess or to be masculine. It is proven when a prince from another kingdom tried to propose princess Jasmine. He has power, wealth, position and good appereance. However, he was still rejected because he was brainless and useless (min. 27.00). In other hand, Aladdin had no power, wealth and he was called as a street rat, yet he could impress princess Jasmine because of his intelligence and kindness. To strenghten this opinion, the researcher gives an evidence from particular scenes when Aladdin was given power and wealth and changed his name into prince Ali. Even though, Aladdin had everything, he became prince, had wealth and

power. Since Aladdin pretending to be someone else, he could not make princess Jasmine falls in love to him, until Aladdin become who he is and stopped pretending of becoming prince. Moreover, at the end of the story, Aladdin back to his poor life, yet princess Jasmine still falled in love to him and finally marry him. In Aladdin movies, power and wealth are seen as an old tradition which should be owned by a man. In Aladdin movie, masculinity is seen from the intelligance and kindness of a man. In the scene, when Aladdin was given power, wealth and position, yet still being rejected by princess and have no sense of masculinity.

The researchers assumes that the author of the film tried to prove that wealth and power are not symbol of masculinity as well as to take down wealth and power from people mind as part of masculinity. It can be seen from the story when Aladdin thought that he would never be able to marry princess Jasmine if he had no power and wealth. However, once Aladdin was given power and wealth, he even could not impress princess Jasmine when they first met each other. Until one day, Aladdin was turned back into his poor life and becoming himself, princess Jasmine gladly took Aladdin as her husband, although he comes from lower class community.

Savior/Protector

Protecting the princess and saving her life has always become men's responsibility in every Disney movie, including Aladdin. Aladdin was able to protect princess Jasmine and the kingdom from the most powerfull enemy called Jafar. Neither strenght nor power, but intelligance, Aladdin could beat Jafar and trapped him into a lamp. Thus, whatever the conditions, whether rich or poor, strong or weak, protecting women have become men's obligation. Hence, protecting women is part of being masculine which always disseminated in every Disney's story including Aladdin.

Violance/Aggresion is not necessary

Aladdin is not physically strong, yet he could beat the most powerful wizard Jafar. Unlike the other Disney princes who defeat their enemies by using their physical strenght, Aladdin used his intelligence to provoke his enemy and trapped his enemy into a lamp. In other Disney films, the main male characters are always fight to their enemy by using their physical strenght and showing violances. Even they often use weapon such as sword, bow

and etc. The different act in facing enemy is shown in Aladdin film, violance or agression are no longer considered as masculine act of men. This is really adjusted to the world where violence is no longer necessary.

Empathy

Aladdin always showed his empathy to the others. The acts of Aladdin when he gave dates to a starving homeless and his empathy to the genie who trapped in the lamp for thousands years which finally being set free by Aladdin by sacrisfying his last wish. Thus, kindness and empathy have become the masculine act in the Aladdin movie.

Solidarity

Unlike the other Disney films which introducing the main male character as a strong independent individual which could face any problem and enemy by his own strength. Aladdin never did anything independently, he always helped by his friend Abu (Aladdin's monkey). They were very cohesive in every single thing they did together. Moreover, when Aladdin found a magic lamp and met the genie, he never considered the genie as his servant, yet his friend as well as the magic carpet.

Gender equality

In Aladdin movie, gender equality seems to be promoted througout the story. At the beginning of the story, princess Jasmine was not allowed to inherit the throne and become the next sultan because she is a woman. However, at the end of the story, princess Jasmine showed her struggle and capability in leading the kingdom. Therefore, her father which was the sultan inherited the throne to his doughter princess Jasmine. This made princess jasmine was able to change the law of "must marry prince" and finally made princess Jasmine decided to chose Aladdin as her husband who was from lower class. In Aladdin film, a man does not always need to be a leader, and not being a leader does not mean that there is no masculinity. Whoever could be a leader as long as they have capability to do so.

In summary, the hegemonic masculinity which disseminated through Aladdin film is that a man should be kind, brave, clever, proficient, has strong solidarity and empathy, the last and not least is respecting gender equality. In Aladdin films, masculinity are no longer seen

from men's physical strength, wealth, power, positions, appereance and showing violence. Refers to Gramsci's theory about hegemony in which ideologies of the rulling class are consumed by the society and recieved as something common or even desired, a literary work really does have ideology inside the story. As stated by Giroux (1995, p.47) that Disney produces certain knowledge, values, and desires. In Aladdin films the knowledge, values, and desires had been little bit changed. Power and wealth which usually become parts of masculinity has been removed and changed. On the other hand, intellegence and skillful are introduced to the audiences as somethings important that need to be owned by men as a sign of masculinity. Moreover, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p.832) define hegemonic masculinity as "normative" and argue that hegemonic masculinity requires all men to position themselves on it even if they can not embody it. When Aladdin tried to get power and wealth to marry princess and to be a real gentlemen, it symbolize of what Connel argued. However, it also become something that influences men's mind regarding to how to become masculine. Lot of men are not able to fullfil to be masculine as introduced in films, yet they required to position themselves on it even if they can not embody it. Hence, it make women have high expectation toward men, since they have got standard of a man as introduce from the films..

CONCLUSION

The present study descriptively examines how hegemonic masculinity disseminated through American fantasy film "Aladdin" which released in 2019. Based on the research results, the hegemonic masculinity in the Disney film entitled Aladdin disseminated that being masculine as prtrayed by the main male character, a man should be kind, brave, skillful, protector, and clever or has very good intelligence. Moreover, in Aladdin film, power and wealth are described as something which are no longer neccesary as part of being masculine. In addition, gender equality seems to be promoted througout the story of Aladdin. This Aladdin film ideology of being masculine seems changing or different from the other disney films. Power and wealth which usually become parts of masculinity has been removed and changed. On the other hand, intellegence and skillful are introduced to the audiences as somethings important that need to be owned by men as a sign of masculinity. Another interesting thing of Aladdin film is that the promotion of gender equality in which a leader is not always a man. This proven when at the beginning of the story, princess Jasmine was not allowed to inherit the throne and become the next sultan

because she is a woman. However, at the end of the story, princess Jasmine showed her struggle and capability in leading the kingdom and finally become the sultan although she is a woman. Since this tudy has so many limitation and weakness, the researcher hopes that this analysis could provide another idea that can be usefull to other researchers who analyzing similar topic regarding to hegemonic masculinity.

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