

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The term “toxic masculinity” has been a topic of critical discussion over the last few decades. There has been much confusion in defining the term “toxic masculinity”. Therefore, it will be easier to define the phrase itself first. The field of gender studies defines the term masculinity as “the set of social practices and cultural representations associated with being a man” (Pilcher and Whelchan in Brooks, 2019: 1). Masculinity, in its wide definition, can be defined as a set of behaviours and practices that have traditionally been associated with manhood in a culture. Masculinity is not something that a man is born with but rather, as a social and cultural construction, it sets the standard on what it means to be a man (Pleck in Maghfiroh, 2017: 1). The idea of masculinity explicitly explains that men act in certain ways not because of their male identity or even their masculine characteristics but rather how a society establishes the ideal characteristics of being masculine. A society dictates what is expected of men so that those who do not conform to the ideal types of manhood are usually condemned. In other words, men are expected to act a certain way and embody those cultural norms. The modifier “toxic” is used to highlight the fact that these kinds of behaviours carry with them some potentially serious and even deadly consequences.

Terry A. Kupers (2005: 714) describes the term toxic masculinity as the set of socially regressive male traits that serve to foster domination, the subordination of women, homophobia, and wanton violence. Toxic masculinity, then, is a term that is used to refer to a subset of those behaviours which are harmful or destructive. This kind of phenomenon is most likely to happen in a society that adopts a patriarchal system. Related to patriarchy, Sultana (in Fauzia, 2019: 7) defines patriarchy as a term that describes the institutionalized system of male dominance. So we can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men and women, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women. The patriarchal system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. In other words, the practice of patriarchy tends to grant power to men and see women as powerless.

The notion of toxic masculinity is oftentimes portrayed in literary works, one of which is the novel entitled *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by the Afghani-American author Nadia Hashimi. Set in Afghanistan, a place where the opportunities and rights of men and women are dramatically different, the novel centers on a girl named Rahima and her sisters, who struggle in a family run by their drug-addicted father. With no brothers, their ability to leave the house, attend school, or earn money is limited. Rahima finds hope in the ancient custom of “bacha posh”, which allows her to dress and be treated as a boy until she reaches marriageable age. She soon learns that she was not the first woman in her family to embrace this custom, and she goes on a journey of discovery about the story of her great-great-grandmother Shekiba through her aunt Khala Shaima.

In this thesis, the writer is interested in the notion of toxic masculinity in the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi. The reason why the writer decided to choose this novel is because the writer has not found a previous study on the notion of toxic masculinity in the novel. Yet, the notion of toxic masculinity is clearly portrayed in the novel itself. The writer will focus on the traits of toxic masculinity that are depicted in the novel. This study will familiarise readers with the theories of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. More often than not, societal expectations from men to follow conventional masculine roles result in the promotion of toxic masculinity and its harmful effects. Consequently, the writer believes that toxic masculinity is deeply related to the idea of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. By analysing the novel, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, this study traces the toxicity found in traditional notion of masculinity that is rooted in subordination of woman and violence.

1.2 Problem Statement of the Study

What toxic masculinity traits are portrayed in Nadia Hashimi’s novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explain the traits of toxic masculinity depicted in Nadia Hashimi’s *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to help readers gain insights into the traits of toxic masculinity portrayed in Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

There are many aspects of the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* that can be analyzed. However, this study focuses on analyzing the traits of toxic masculinity in the novel.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters, bibliography and two appendixes. In order to make this study clear, it is organized in the following way.

- Chapter I is an introduction. This chapter presents the background, statement of the problem, objective, significance, scope and limitation, and organization of the study.
- Chapter II is a review of related literature. This chapter presents a review of related literature, which consists of previous studies and theoretical framework.
- Chapter III gives an overview of the research method. This chapter deals with the of research design, literary approach, data source, method of collecting the data, and procedure in analyzing the data.
- Chapter IV is the analysis. The chapter discusses the data analysis, which consists of the toxic masculinity traits that are portrayed in Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*.
- Chapter V is the conclusion.
- Bibliography.
- Appendix I
- Appendix II