Analysis of Gender Representation in the Film *Luca* (2021): A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity

Juang Zuhdi Al Firdaus[1*], Daril Rakha Khautsar[2], Tegar Gunawan Saputra[3], Widya Nirmalawati[4]
English Literature, Faculty of Cultural Sciences and Communication, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto
juangfirdaus09@gmail.com[1*], darilrakakautsar@gmail.com[2], tegargunawan913@gmail.com[3], widya.nirmalawati@gmail.com[4]

Abstract. The animated film *Luca* (2021) contains many social messages related to how society views the role and identity of men. This study aims to analyze how forms of masculinity are represented in the film, particularly in relation to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The method used is qualitative descriptive with a visual content analysis approach to key scenes in the film. Each scene analyzed was selected based on important moments that reveal the dynamics of male characters, whether through emotional expressions, inter character relationships, reactions to social pressure. The analysis results show that *Luca* presents a variety of masculinities, ranging from dominant and competitive to more emotionally open and accepting. The character Ercole, for example, exemplifies aggressive and exclusive hegemonic masculinity, while Luca and Alberto demonstrate alternative forms of masculinity that are more reflective and emotional. The film also depicts the transformation of the main character from a fearful attitude to an individual who dares to express his identity, including in the context of friendship and future choices. This transformation reflects the potential for boys to move beyond traditional masculine expectations and explore more personal versions of themselves. The conclusion affirms that masculinity in the film *Luca* is not presented in a singular manner, but it is diverse and open to interpretation as a critique of rigid gender norms. This study does not aim to generalize all forms of masculinity in animated films but only discusses the representations found in *Luca* based on the author's subjective analysis and interpretation.

Keywords: *film analysis, hegemonic masculinity, identity, masculinity, visual representation*

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INTRODUCTION

The representation of masculinity in children's animated films has undergone significant changes in recent decades. According to Reeser (2023), masculinity is not a fixed or natural identity, but rather a social construct shaped by specific behaviors, values, and expectations that vary across cultures and time periods. In line with this, Anna et al. (2024) explain that male characters in Disney animated films have evolved from dominant and heroic figures to more diverse and emotional ones, reflecting shifts in gender norms within society. This change highlights the importance of critically examining how animated films contribute to the formation or dismantling of hegemonic masculinity, especially in media consumed by children. The term "hegemonic masculinity," which comes from gender studies, describes the dominant masculinity in culture that maintains male control and places different masculinities and femininities in a submissive position. This idea is frequently reaffirmed in movies by using visual narrative tactics, power dynamics, and character archetypes (Willis 2023). According to Keith (2025), film continues to be a potent medium in influencing the conception, performance, and questioning of masculinity. In this way, by reinventing what it means to be a boy who feels, dreams, and dares to be different, *Luca* contributes to that continuous cultural conversation (Keith 2025).

Luca movie is an interesting example of how alternative masculinity is constructed through characters and narratives. Although the film does not explicitly address gender issues, there is tension between traditional masculine values such as strength, competition, and emotional restraint, and a more expressive, empathetic, and flexible form of masculinity. The boys' relationship, demonstrated by their collaboration and support of one another, stands in stark contrast to the competitiveness and emotional detachment that are usually praised in societies that support hegemonic masculinity (Bevan 2023). Similar to Brave, where male and female characters are framed through rigid gender expectations, *Luca* challenges these stereotypes by allowing its male characters to display emotional depth and vulnerability (Sugianto et al., 2024). This theme is relevant to academic discourse on gender representation in media, particularly in the context of children's socialization and identity formation. representation in media, particularly in the context of children's socialization and identity formation.

This study aims to address the existing research gap by providing a critical perspective on how masculinity is constructed and negotiated through the interactions and development of male characters in *Luca*. Previous studies have examined *Luca* from various perspectives. Fanani et al. (2023) examined the themes of bullying and artificial intelligence in *Luca* and found that the technological metaphors in the film reinforce the narrative of social exclusion. Vanda (2023) analyzed the moral values in the film and concluded that *Luca* emphasizes the values of courage, friendship, and acceptance, but does not address issues of gender or masculinity. Despite these findings, there remains a notable lack of research focusing on the representation of male identity in *Luca*, particularly regarding how the film portrays or critiques hegemonic masculinity.

Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze how the film *Luca* represents and critiques hegemonic masculinity through the characters of *Luc*a, Alberto, and Ercole. This research is guided by answering the research question of how hegemonic masculinity is represented and challenged through the male characters in the film *Luca* (2021). This study is expected to contribute to enriching the discourse on gender in media studies, particularly by highlighting the importance of inclusive and non-toxic forms of masculinity in children's media consumption.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach within the framework of film and gender studies. The focus of the study is on how the film *Luca* (2021) constructs and negotiates masculinity through its visual and narrative forms. This study applies interpretive analysis, a method commonly used in cultural studies and literary criticism to explore meaning and representation in films. This approach provides flexibility and depth in understanding the relationship between text, context, and ideology (Hyejin Kim & Bradway, 2017).

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity serves as the main analytical framework in this study, allowing researchers to examine how gender behavior and power relations are represented and contested through cinematic expression. By analyzing several key scenes involving the characters Luca, Alberto, and Ercole, this study identifies patterns of domination, competition, emotional control, and vulnerability. These representations are then interpreted to reveal how the film reinforces or challenges dominant ideals of masculinity. This analysis also draws on Messerschmidt's (2019) discussion of how the concept of hegemonic masculinity is continually redefined and negotiated in cultural contexts.

This interpretive approach aligns with previous research, including that of Anna et al. (2024), who used a similar framework to examine masculinity in Disney animated narratives. Through an in-depth reading of character development, dialogue, and visual symbolism, this study seeks to reveal how *Luca* contributes to the broader discourse on male identity and emotional expression in contemporary media. The aim of this study is not to make generalizations but to provide a critical interpretation of how the film reimagines masculinity within the context of children's animation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To understand how *Luca* (2021) depicts forms of masculinity, this study conducts a visual analysis of several key scenes. This analysis focuses on how characters, dialogue, visual expressions, and inter-character dynamics convey hidden messages about gender construction, particularly hegemonic masculinity. Animated films are often considered light entertainment, but in the context of gender studies, they can also serve as a medium that carries certain social meanings and ideologies. The film *Luca* not only serves as entertainment but also as a form of "edutainment" that conveys ideas about identity and self-discovery through visual and cultural symbols (Nogueira, 2025). Therefore, each scene shown cannot be separated from the

cultural context that shapes it. In *Luca*'s case, the narrative of "being oneself" also implies an internal conflict between the dominant form of masculinity and an alternative masculinity that is more flexible and open to emotions and gentleness. This is in line with the findings of Valentina De Santi, Mangano, & Piana, (2022), who highlight that the film *Luca* depicts a tension between authenticity and belonging, a struggle that reflects the broader human experience of identity and acceptance.

According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity is a form of gender power that not only dominates women but also oppresses other men who are considered "less masculine." In practice, this masculinity rarely appears directly but continues to operate through norms, behaviors, and cultural symbols. Ann Dorte Christensen (2014) also emphasizes that the understanding of masculinity must be viewed in a more complex manner, including through the lens of intersectionality that considers social background, class, and other power relations. In line with this, Shannon R Wooden (2014) argue that male characters in Pixar films often undergo emotional transformations, moving from traditional ideals of strength and control toward empathy and relational growth. A similar pattern is seen in the film *Luca*, where vulnerability and courage appear side by side as part of character development.

This analysis was conducted by noting key moments in the film that contained important scenes and including screenshots as supporting data. Each scene is then critically interpreted using Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and other relevant ideas to show that masculinity is not only shaped by dominant characters such as Ercole, but also through characters such as Alberto, Luca, and even Massimo as father figures who challenge stereotypes. Therefore, this section will gradually describe the important scenes in *Luca* (2021) along with their interpretations, to show how masculinity in this film is produced, negotiated, and even challenged.

Figure 1. The Initiation of Masculinity and Identity Challenges in the Transition of the Land World

Figure 1 was captured in 00:10:00-00:12:00 from *Luca* (2021), which lasts about two minutes, Luca and Alberto decide for the first time to leave the sea and go ashore. When their bodies transform into human form, expressions of awe and fear are evident, particularly on Luca's face. This moment marks the beginning of an exploration of self-identity and masculinity that unfolds throughout the film. The transformation from sea monster to human can be interpreted as a symbol of the identity transition process experienced by many young men. When facing a new social world, there is significant pressure to conform to established norms. In this context, Alberto acts as an initiator figure who encourages Luca to suppress his fears

and "be brave" in facing the outside world. Alberto's repeated phrase, "Silenzio, Bruno!", becomes a kind of mantra for ignoring inner voices or doubts that are often associated with weakness or unmasculine traits within hegemonic masculinity.

According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity works by encouraging men to hide their vulnerability and show courage and control over situations. In this scene, "Silenzio, Bruno!" is a concrete manifestation of emotional repression, where fear must be denied in order to prove that one is worthy of being part of the male world. This aligns with the findings of Damien Ridge (2011) which show that in social contexts, many men feel the need to hide their fear and emotional vulnerability to remain consistent with the image of a "true man." Even in experiences of depression, many men refuse to appear weak out of fear of being perceived as unmasculine.

This narrative not only conveys the process of personal courage but also shows that courage in patriarchal culture is often measured by how much one can suppress emotions considered "weak." Yet, fear, doubt, or anxiety are natural parts of human growth, regardless of gender. Luca, as the main character, shows that the initiation of masculinity does not always go smoothly. He is anxious, hesitant, and very cautious, which, in the logic of hegemonic masculinity, could be seen as "not manly enough." However, it is precisely from this hesitation that the audience can see that masculinity is not a single form but a broad spectrum full of negotiation. This scene also opens up the possibility of reading *Luca* as a narrative containing queer subtext. The transformation of form and the fear of appearing "different" resemble the experiences of individuals who hide their sexual or gender identities in a normative society. However, this interpretation will undoubtedly develop further in subsequent parts of the film.

Figure 2. Men's Dreams: Vespa as a Symbol of Freedom and Masculine Autonomy

Figure 2 was captured in 00:22:03-00:23:33 from *Luca* (2021). Luca and Alberto lie on top of a tower, gazing at the stars in the night sky. While drawing and talking, they imagine riding a Vespa around the world. They envision a life of freedom, without rules, and without adults imposing restrictions. The dialogue and visual expressions in this scene depict the dreams of two young boys who want to escape from a suffocating reality. In this context, the Vespa is not merely a vehicle. The Vespa in *Luca* symbolizes freedom, adventure, and self-determination particularly in the way it represents the boys longing to shape their own futures. When Luca dreams of exploring the world and Alberto imagines them sleeping under the stars, constantly on the move, the scooter becomes more than just a vehicle; it embodies their desire for autonomy and escape from societal constraints. This idea connects to a broader cultural link between mobility and masculinity. Throughout history,

vehicles from horses to motorcycles have been tied to ideals of male independence, strength, and rebellion. Advertisements and media often reinforce this, depicting cars, bikes, and scooters as extensions of a rugged, unrestrained masculine identity. As Mellström (2018) notes, machines do not just provide physical freedom, they also help define what it means to be a man in many societies, acting as tools for both personal and cultural expression. In *Luca*, the Vespa is not just a means of transportation, it's a promise of possibility. For two boys who've been told to hide who they are, the scooter represents a future where they call the shots where they are free to go, be, and become whoever they want.

However, there is something intriguing about the dynamics of the relationship between Luca and Alberto. Although the Vespa is depicted as a symbol of masculinity, their way of dreaming about it is not dominated by competition, machismo, or control over others hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, their imagination is filled with warmth, equality, and emotional support. They envision shared adventures not as an attempt to conquer the world, but as an escape from the pressures of life and the social expectations that weigh them down. In this sense, the Vespa dream they share becomes an alternative form of masculinity that is more intimate and emotional. They do not only imagine a physical escape, but also an escape from societal expectations that often force men to be overly tough, independent, and rational.

Hegemonic masculinity often marginalizes the experiences of men who express vulnerability or form emotional bonds with other men (Connell, 2005). Therefore, this scene shows that masculine relationships can take a softer and more accepting form. In fact, in certain contexts, the desire to "run away together" can be interpreted as an expression of affection that transcends traditional masculinity, although it does not necessarily have to be interpreted romantically or sexually. Research by Randell et al. (2016) further emphasizes that teenage boys have their own ways of balancing "toughness" with sensitivity and sincerity in forming relationships that often fall outside the framework of dominant masculinity. This scene also opens up space for interpreting masculinity in children who have not yet been fully "regulated" by the adult world. They have not yet been fully constrained by norms, so there is still room to imagine forms of masculinity that are not hard, not dominant, and do not always have to win. *Luca*, in this case, becomes a narrative that opens the door to a more human and flexible representation of masculinity.

Figure 3. Masculine Competition: The Social Arena and Power in the Portorosso Cup Race

Figure 3 was captured in 00:30:00-00:50:00 from *Luca* (2021). The figure shows that the audience is introduced to Ercole, the male character who acts as the main antagonist in the film *Luca*. He arrives dressed in flashy clothes, speaks harshly, and treats others with contempt, including Giulia, Luca, and Alberto. Ercole proudly

refers to himself as the champion of the Portorosso Cup for several consecutive years. He mocks those he considers weak or different, and even intimidates other children into submitting to him. Ercole's behavior and manner of speaking reflect the classic image of hegemonic masculinity, dominant, competitive, anti emotional, and feeling superior. He considers himself the center of power in the small community of Portorosso. In other words, he not only wants to win the race but also to maintain social dominance over others. In this context, the Portorosso Cup is no longer just a bicycle race but a symbolic arena where masculine power is displayed and upheld.

Ercole also displays anti inclusive attitudes. He is bothered by the presence of newcomers, especially children like Luca and Alberto who do not fit his definition of a "winner." Such attitudes reflect how hegemonic masculinity creates rigid social boundaries that determine who can be considered a "real man" and who must be excluded. Gini (2006) shows that bullying behavior in children often stems from patterns of masculinity that demand dominance and control over others, especially those considered weak or different.

According to Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinity often manifests itself in the form of power that does not necessarily involve physical violence, but rather through the enforcement of norms and symbolic domination. In this case, Ercole becomes a figure who upholds the status quo of masculinity through competition, mockery, and social exclusion. He not only rejects those who are different but also mocks and humiliates them to assert his position above them. As explained by Burns (2017), toxic masculinity can create a space where symbolic violence is built and maintained by social actors through the denial of alternative values such as empathy, inclusion, or emotional diversity. Additionally, the way Ercole speaks often interrupts others and refers to himself as the *"hero of Portorosso"* demonstrates a form of narcissism often associated with toxic masculinity. He wants to appear strong but cannot accept challenges or diversity. In children's movies, characters like Ercole often act as a quiet but powerful critique of toxic masculinity the kind that's all about dominance, aggression, and putting others down. He is the classic bully, the guy who has to prove he is the "alpha" by mocking Luca and Alberto. But here is the magic of Luca: he is not the hero. Instead, the film shines a light on characters like Luca, Alberto, and even gruff but kind Massimo, who show that real strength is not about control it is about friendship, vulnerability, and lifting each other up. By making Ercole so obviously insecure and unlikeable, the film invites us to question his brand of masculinity. Why would anyone want to be like him when there are better, kinder ways to be a guy? In the end, Luca does not just challenge old school masculine ideals it shows us how to move beyond them, one Vespa ride at a time.

Figure 4: Jealousy and the Crisis of Masculinity in Male Relationships.

Figure 4 was captured in 00:53:28-1:04:54 from *Luca* (2021). In children's movies, characters like Ercole often act as a quiet but powerful critique of toxic masculinity the kind that's all about dominance, aggression, and putting others down. He is the classic bully, the guy who has to prove he is the "alpha" by mocking Luca and Alberto. But here is the magic of Luca he is not the hero. Instead, the film shines a light on characters like Luca, Alberto, and even gruff but kind Massimo, who show that real strength is not about control it is about friendship, vulnerability, and lifting each other up. By making Ercole so obviously insecure and unlikeable, the film invites us to question his brand of masculinity. Why would anyone want to be like him when there are better, kinder ways to be a guy? In the end, Luca does not just challenge old school masculine ideals it shows us how to move beyond them, one Vespa ride at a time. When these two forms of masculinity meet, an inevitable conflict arises.

Alberto's jealousy is not just a matter of losing a friend, but also an identity crisis. Until now, he has been the center of Luca's world, his guide, protector, and even a mentor in the real world. When that role begins to be replaced by Giulia and Luca's dreams of school, Alberto feels he no longer has a place. In the context of masculinity, this shows how relationships between men can be shaken when one of them shifts the fundamental values of that relationship. According to Connell (2005), masculinity is never stable, it is always in a process of negotiation and compromise. When there are changes in the power structure between men, such as between Alberto and Luca, strong emotional tension arises. This situation is exacerbated by social expectations that men should not openly show feelings of jealousy or loss. Therefore, Alberto's response is not an expression of sadness, but rather anger and betrayal. Male friendships during adolescence are often shaped by the principle of exclusive togetherness. When that bond is disrupted by a third party, especially a woman, conflict tends to arise in the form of jealousy and competition for closeness. Alberto feels he has lost his masculine role because Luca is no longer "his alone." (Walton, 2016) notes that competition within friendships, though often not acknowledged directly, is a source of tension in male relationships, especially when life paths begin to diverge.

Additionally, the film subtly conveys that masculinity does not always have to manifest as dominance or control. In this moment, the audience is shown the vulnerable side of a male character, not in a dramatic way, but through facial expressions and impulsive actions. This demonstrates that emotional vulnerability is also a valid part of the male experience. Luca, who begins to take an interest in school, also exhibits a more aspirational form of masculinity. However, as noted by (Whitehead 2003), male interest in the academic realm often clashes with dominant stereotypes of masculinity that disregard the value of education. Hence, when Luca

becomes interested in the world of learning, tensions arise not only between him and Alberto, but also within himself as a teenage boy searching for direction.

Figure 5: Betrayal as a Survival Strategy in Masculine Social Pressure.

Figure 5 was captured in 1:02:09-1:04:54 from *Luca* (2021). In this scene, the emotional tension reaches its peak. During the conflict with Luca and Alberto, who are at the seaside, Giulia appears as a mediator. Alberto spontaneously jumps into the water to show that he is a sea monster, causing Luca and Giulia to panic upon seeing Alberto transform into a sea monster. In this high-pressure situation, Luca suddenly pretends to be surprised and shouts, "Sea monster!" Giulia immediately reacts negatively toward Alberto, and Luca does not admit that he also comes from the same world. Alberto can only stare at him with a broken heart, betrayed.

This scene illustrates how social pressure can compel individuals to betray even their closest loved ones to maintain an image acceptable to the general public. In the context of masculinity, Luca's actions can be interpreted as an adaptation to dominant norms that reject alternative forms of male identity sensitive and non aggressive. In other words, Luca feels the need to hide his alternative masculinity in order to be accepted in a social space that symbolically represents the normative world. Luca's act of "outing" Alberto is a form of repression of alternative masculinity. Alberto represents a man who lives outside the norm; he does not go to school, does not have a permanent home, and does not submit to rules. He also openly shows his emotions, such as anger, fear, and disappointment. These characteristics contrast with hegemonic masculinity, which emphasizes control, stability, and emotional denial. When Luca pretends to be "normal" and joins in ostracizing Alberto, he is actually succumbing to pressure to mold himself into an acceptable man. This situation illustrates how traditional masculine pressure, shaped by social norms from childhood, still operates in subtle yet powerful ways. In this social process, men are often taught to suppress fear, deny emotional intimacy, and adapt to dominant values in order to survive (Rivera, 2020).

Luca's actions also illustrate the internal conflict that is characteristic of the development of masculine identity in adolescents. Boys often experience a dilemma between emotional honesty and the need to appear "strong." They learn that showing empathy or loyalty can be considered a weakness. Thus, Luca's fear of being rejected by the human world leads him to choose betrayal, a tragic but realistic response to the pressure of an exclusive masculinity.

Figure 6: The Climax of Emancipation: Declarations of Identity and New Forms of Masculinity.

Figure 6 was captured in 01:15:00-01:18:00 from *Luca* (2021). This is the scene where Luca stops being just a fun adventure and becomes something revolutionary. After a whole summer of hiding, of pretending to be someone they are not, Luca and Alberto finally stop running. In front of the entire town, they shed their human disguises and stand together, fully visible as sea monsters. The villagers stare in shock, but the boys don't flinch. For the first time, they are not just acting brave they are brave. And their courage has nothing to do with muscles or fighting. It is the kind that comes from saying, this is me. Take it or leave it. That moment cracks open everything we've been taught about what it means to "be a man". Traditional masculinity tells boys to dominate, to never show weakness, to fit into a narrow box of toughness. However, Luca and Alberto rewrite the rules. Their strength is not about power is not about truth. By standing together, fully themselves, they prove that real courage is not hiding your fears, it is facing them.

That solidarity not superiority is what makes you strong. That being "a man" can mean many things, but never pretending to be something you are not. And here is the kicker, this is not just about sea monsters. It is a metaphor for anyone who is ever been told, do not cry. Do not be soft. Do not stand out. Luca and Alberto's transformation is a quiet rebellion against all of that. When they stop disguising themselves, they are not just embracing their scales they are rejecting the idea that masculinity has to be rigid, unfeeling, or cruel. The film's real magic it does not make a big speech about it. It just shows us two boys, hand in hand, refusing to apologize for who they are and that is how you change the world one act of fearless honesty at a time.

The courage to show oneself fully, with all one's flaws, fears, and differences, is a form of emancipation from rigid gender boundaries. In a society that often associates masculinity with physical bravery or social dominance, such emotional courage is rarely displayed. This film creates space for a more reflective and relational masculinity, one not built on the strength to subdue others, but on the strength to accept oneself and others as they are. As Clowes (2013) explains, opening up space for vulnerability in expressions of masculinity is a form of resistance against social structures that have long pressured men to always appear strong, logical, and unemotional.

This declaration of identity also serves as a way to dismantle stigma. Those who once hid their true selves out of fear of rejection finally show that difference is not a threat. When some residents begin to accept them, such as Massimo who chooses to stand with them, the film conveys the message that social change begins with the courage of individuals to be honest and open a quality rarely associated with the "true man" in traditional masculine culture. In addition to being the narrative climax, this scene also marks the success of *Luca* in delivering a subtle yet powerful social critique of masculine norms. It invites the audience, especially young men, to question whether being "strong" always means suppressing fear and hiding parts of themselves. Rather, true strength can emerge from honesty, interpersonal connections, and the courage to stand in one's truth..

Figure 7: Two Paths to Masculinity: Academic Achievement and Emotional Acceptance..

Figure 7 was captured in 01:20:00-01:24:00 from *Luca* (2021). The ending of *Luca* beautifully shows that there is no single "right" way to be a man just different paths, each with its own kind of strength. Luca hops on that train to school, his head buzzing with dreams of the wider world. He is not chasing brute strength or trying to prove himself as the toughest guy around. Instead, he embraces a quieter kind of masculinity one built on curiosity, learning, and the courage to step into the unknown. His journey is not about dominating others it is about growing, asking questions, and connecting with people and ideas beyond his little seaside town. That train is not just taking him to school it is carrying him toward a future where being a man means staying open, thinking deeply, and never stopping exploration. Then there is Alberto, who stays behind in Portorosso with Massimo. He is choice is not lesser just different. While Luca seeks knowledge, Alberto finds his strength in roots and relationships. Massimo, the strong but gentle fisherman, becomes a kind of father figure, showing him that masculinity does not have to be loud or aggressive. It can be steady, patient, and full of care. Alberto's arc is about learning that real strength is not just independence it is also trust, belonging, and the quiet pride of building a home.

The film does not judge one path as better than the other. Instead, it says here are two ways to be a man, and both are valid. Luca's intellectual bravery and Alberto's emotional grounding are not opposites they are just different flavors of the same truth. Masculinity is not a box to fit into it is a spectrum, and every guy gets to find his own place on it. By giving it is heroes these equally meaningful but distinct endings, Luca quietly dismantles the idea that masculinity has to look one certain way. Whether you are a dreamer boarding a train or a protector anchoring yourself to people you love, you are enough exactly as you are. Their relationship highlights

the affective side of masculinity, rooted in care, cooperation, and unconditional emotional acceptance. Alberto, who had previously lost his father figure, now finds emotional stability through a more supportive and human connection.

This difference in choice is not contested in the film. On the contrary, both are positioned as valid and complementary paths in life. The main message of this scene is that masculinity is not singular. It does not always have to be tough, competitive, or uniform. The film shows that being a man can mean caring, learning, dreaming big, or simply being present and accepted without pressure to *"be like a typical man."* This interpretation aligns with the view that masculinity is not fixed but can manifest in many forms depending on social context and individual choice. In the context of education and adolescent development, it is important to recognize that boys are not directed toward a single way of being a man but should be given space to shape their own version of masculinity (Imms, 2000).

The film's ending gives young viewers, especially boys, the opportunity to see that there are many ways to grow and become themselves without having to conform to narrow standards of masculinity. Luca and Alberto's choices broaden the understanding that courage and masculinity do not always take the form of strength, but can also take the form of honesty towards one's heart's desires, or a commitment to love and care for others.

CONCLUSION

Through the film *Luca* (2021), viewers are invited to understand that masculinity does not always have to be expressed through dominance, strength, or emotional control. The film depicts the characters' journey in finding their true selves while challenging the social boundaries that have long been attached to male identity. Conflict, jealousy, acceptance, and the courage to be oneself are depicted as important parts of the process of true human growth. From the analysis, it appears that *Luca* offers an alternative representation of masculinity a form of masculinity that values empathy, emotional openness, and mutual support. This perspective has important implications for media and gender studies, as it shows that animated films, often considered light entertainment, can actually shape children's views on gender roles and emotional expression. By portraying vulnerability and affection as natural parts of male identity, *Luca* promotes a healthier and more inclusive understanding of masculinity. More broadly, this research implies the importance of gender representation in children's films as a means of challenging cultural stereotypes and supporting emotional education. Thus, *Luca* is not only a subject of study on masculinity in the media, but also an example of how animated films can serve as a medium for positive social change.

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