

EXPLORING FATHERHOOD VALUES IN “THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS” MOVIE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Character education and fatherhood figures are crucial for a child's moral development, yet their integration into English Language Teaching (ELT) via multimodal films remains underexplored in Indonesia. This study aims to identify the fatherhood values represented in the movie The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) and analyze their implications for ELT practices. Employing a qualitative descriptive design and content analysis, data were collected from 21 scenes depicting the protagonist's verbal and non-verbal actions based on Lamb's (2010) framework. The findings reveal four integrated fatherhood values: responsibility (5 scenes), sacrifice (6 scenes), care (5 scenes), and perseverance (5 scenes). These values operate not as isolated traits, but as a unified system where responsibility motivates sacrifice, which is sustained by emotional care, ultimately culminating in relentless perseverance. In conclusion, the film represents a holistic paternal identity that provides robust thematic anchors for character-based ELT activities, such as analytical writing and role-playing. Utilizing this movie as a learning medium supports the Indonesian Merdeka Belajar curriculum by simultaneously enhancing students' communicative language proficiency and moral awareness.

Keywords: Character education, English Language Teaching, multimodal text, The Pursuit of Happyness.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan karakter dan figur ayah sangat penting bagi perkembangan moral anak, namun integrasinya ke dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris (ELT) melalui medium film masih jarang dieksplorasi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai keayahan yang direpresentasikan dalam film The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) serta menganalisis implikasinya terhadap praktik ELT. Menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dan analisis isi, data dikumpulkan dari 21 adegan yang menunjukkan tindakan verbal dan non-verbal tokoh utama berdasarkan kerangka teori Lamb (2010). Hasil penelitian menemukan empat nilai keayahan yang saling terintegrasi: tanggung jawab (5 adegan), pengorbanan (6

adegan), perhatian (5 adegan), dan ketekunan (5 adegan). Nilai-nilai ini beroperasi sebagai satu sistem utuh, di mana tanggung jawab menjadi fondasi yang memotivasi pengorbanan, ditopang oleh perhatian emosional, dan bermuara pada ketekunan. Kesimpulannya, film ini merepresentasikan identitas keayahan holistik yang dapat diimplikasikan sebagai landasan tematik untuk aktivitas ELT berbasis karakter, seperti menulis analitis dan bermain peran. Penggunaan film ini mendukung visi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dengan mengintegrasikan peningkatan penguasaan bahasa komunikatif dan kesadaran moral siswa secara bersamaan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan karakter, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris (ELT), teks multimodal, *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

A. Introduction

Character education in the 21st century extends beyond the pursuit of intellectual intelligence, demanding the development of moral intelligence to shape socially responsible individuals. In the internalization of these life values, the family environment serves as the primary agent of socialization and the fundamental foundation for a child's emotional development. Specifically, the figure of a father plays an essential role; he is not merely an economic provider, but also a leader, protector, and a source of discipline and perseverance. Consistent emotional involvement from a father has been proven to contribute positively to building a child's confidence and emotional intelligence in facing various life challenges.

However, social realities indicate that father involvement in parenting remains suboptimal, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia, where the father's role is frequently reduced to that of a breadwinner. This lack of emotional engagement makes children vulnerable to negative impacts on their mental resilience, which subsequently affects their behavior and motivation in educational settings. Furthermore, a review of existing literature reveals a significant research gap; although previous studies have examined moral values in cinematic works, the majority of these investigations remain general and have not specifically explored fatherhood values. Research integrating the analysis of fatherhood values with its implementation in English Language Teaching (ELT)

practices within the Indonesian context is still highly limited.

Given the significant impact of the father's role, educational institutions are required to be proactive in integrating character education through relevant learning approaches, including ELT practices. Modern ELT has transformed from a structural grammar-based approach to the utilization of language in meaningful and communicative contexts. In this regard, the use of movies as multimodal texts holds both practical and scientific urgency due to their ability to present authentic narratives, natural language variations, and visual representations of social dynamics. Through movies, the integration of character education into English language learning can be optimized, allowing students to not only train linguistically but also be encouraged to critically reflect on the underlying life values.

To bridge this research gap, this study utilizes the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) as the subject of analysis. Based on a true story, this movie profoundly represents the struggle of the main character, Chris Gardner, in facing extreme economic pressure without neglecting his

commitment and role as a father. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to comprehensively identify and describe the fatherhood values—specifically responsibility, sacrifice, care, and perseverance—represented in the movie. Subsequently, this research also aims to analyze how these values can be implicated and applied in English language learning practices in Indonesia.

Through the conducted analysis, this article is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the development of knowledge, both in theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, this study will enrich the discourse on the integration of character education and fatherhood values within applied linguistics based on multimodal texts. Practically, the findings offer a strategic reference for English teachers to design contextual ELT materials, utilizing movies not merely as a medium for improving language skills, but as an effective instrument for the holistic moral and character education of students in Indonesia.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, utilizing Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as the primary method. This design was purposively selected because it allows the researcher to systematically investigate, classify, and interpret meanings expressed through dialogues, actions, facial expressions, and visual scenes without relying on statistical or numerical data. The research was conducted in 2026 and carried out independently in a library and home setting, as the nature of this film-based study did not require a specific field site or direct engagement with human participants.

Given the qualitative and textual nature of this study, it did not utilize a traditional population or sample. Instead, the primary data source was the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), directed by Gabriele Muccino. The data comprised dialogues, scripts, character actions, facial expressions, and visual depictions specifically related to the main character, Chris Gardner. This film was selected because its narrative deeply portrays a father's struggle under challenging life events, offering

rich, authentic representations of fatherhood values that are highly relevant to character development and English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts.

In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument, holding the main responsibility for observing, interpreting, and analyzing the audiovisual data directly. To support the data gathering process, several supplementary instruments were utilized, including a structured data sheet checklist categorized by Lamb's (2010) fatherhood framework (responsibility, sacrifice, care, and perseverance), film transcripts, subtitles, and scene screenshots. The data collection procedure was conducted systematically by repeatedly watching the film to comprehensively understand the context and storyline. Subsequently, the researcher identified, documented, and classified significant verbal and non-verbal cues—such as spoken dialogue, body language, and emotional situations—that accurately reflected the targeted fatherhood values.

The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach based on three

interactive stages adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2023): data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data condensation, relevant scenes and dialogues were selected and simplified, which were then organized descriptively in the data display stage according to the specific fatherhood categories. Finally, conclusions were drawn regarding the values' implications for ELT. To guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied four rigor criteria: credibility was maintained through repeated observations and peer discussions; transferability was achieved by providing thick, detailed descriptions of the analyzed scenes; dependability was ensured through a consistent, documented classification process; and confirmability was established by strictly grounding all interpretations on actual audiovisual evidence rather than personal assumptions.

fatherhood values through the main character, Chris Gardner. The identification and classification of these scenes are systematically presented in Table 1 below.

C. Result and Discussion

Result

Based on the qualitative content analysis of the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), 21 scenes were found that consistently represent

Table 1. Summary of Fatherhood Values Representation in *The Pursuit of Happiness*

Fatherhood Value	Lamb's Component (2010)	Number of Scenes	Main Scene Representations
Responsibility	Responsibility	5	Chris prepares Christopher for school; Chris's moral commitment to consistently be physically and emotionally present in his son's life.
Sacrifice	Responsibility/Commitment	6	Chris accepts an unpaid internship; staying overnight in a subway station restroom; donating blood to repair medical equipment.
Care	Accessibility & Engagement	5	Chris encourages Christopher to protect his dreams while playing basketball; emotionally comforting his son at the shelter.
Perseverance	Long-term Commitment	5	Chris perseveres through his internship amid financial crisis until successfully being offered a permanent position at a brokerage firm.

Based on Table 1, the value of sacrifice emerges as the most dominant category (6 scenes), indicating that fatherhood functions during extreme crises demand the surrender of physical comfort and personal dignity for the child's safety. The interpretation of these scenes—such as when Chris silently cries while holding his son in the subway restroom or when he donates his blood for money—confirms that a father's sacrifice is not a momentary heroic act, but a sustained, daily

endurance to ensure his son's emotional and physical stability.

The value of responsibility, appearing in 5 scenes, serves as the moral foundation underlying all of the protagonist's actions. This responsibility is interpreted not merely as material fulfillment as a breadwinner, but is manifested through active participation in the child's daily routines and a conscious determination to break the cycle of father absence that Chris experienced in his own past.

In the findings for the value of care (5 scenes), the data reveal that the quality of a father's nurturing is centered on fostering the child's psychological intelligence. This is strongly represented in the basketball scene, where Chris proactively corrects his own discouraging words to protect his son's self-confidence, demonstrating a high level of emotional accessibility in guiding the child's mental resilience.

Furthermore, the value of perseverance is represented in 5 scenes as a manifestation of endurance and long-term commitment. Chris's persistence—ranging from enduring an unpaid internship to ultimately securing a permanent job—is interpreted not as the achievement of personal career ambitions, but as an instrument to fulfill the absolute duty of a father in guaranteeing his son's future. Overall, the results conclude that these four fatherhood values do not operate in isolation; rather, they form a fully integrated role system where responsibility acts as the fundamental motivation that engenders sacrifice, which is sustained by intense emotional care, culminating in relentless perseverance.

Discussion

The identification of this highly integrated, interdependent system of fatherhood values strongly corroborates Lamb's (2010) theoretical framework, which posits that effective father involvement necessitates a combination of active interaction, emotional accessibility, and enduring responsibility. Rather than operating as isolated moral traits, these values construct a holistic paternal identity. Furthermore, the cinematic medium through which these values are conveyed validates Bezemer and Kress's (2015) assertion regarding multimodal meaning construction; this study confirms that interpreting paternal sacrifice and emotional care requires an analysis of visual and auditory elements alongside spoken dialogue. This multimodal perspective aligns with Jensen and Schirmacher's (2024) argument that social and cultural values in contemporary media are inherently constructed through complex audiovisual interactions rather than mere textual narrative.

When situated within the broader landscape of character analysis research, this study provides a significant theoretical extension.

Previous research by Fitri et al. (2023) analyzed the same cinematic narrative but focused broadly on general moral values, identifying responsibility and perseverance as the most dominant themes. The current study deepens this discourse by specifically contextualizing these traits within the paradigm of fatherhood, introducing sacrifice and care as equally critical, interconnected dimensions. By demonstrating how responsibility functions as a catalyst for sacrifice, which is in turn sustained by emotional care, this research reveals a complex hierarchical relationship among the values. This structural understanding elevates the analysis beyond a simple inventory of moral traits—a methodological limitation frequently observed in broader cinematic character studies, such as Hidayah's (2021) analysis of general moral messages in animation.

Despite offering a more nuanced framework for analyzing parental roles in media, the contextual boundaries of this research must be acknowledged. The reliance on a single Western cinematic narrative presents a limitation in generalizing these fatherhood constructs across varying sociocultural landscapes.

Consequently, this conceptual framework invites further scholarly testing; future investigations should critically examine whether this integrated system of fatherhood values manifests consistently across diverse cultural cinemas, particularly within Indonesian cinematic works, to determine the universality versus cultural specificity of these paternal representations.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the cinematic narrative of *The Pursuit of Happyness* consistently portrays four interconnected fatherhood values—responsibility, sacrifice, care, and perseverance—which function collectively as a holistic paternal identity rather than isolated moral traits. These representations strongly align with Lamb’s (2010) theoretical framework of involved fatherhood, demonstrating that responsibility serves as the foundational motivation that engenders sacrifice, which is in turn sustained by intense emotional care and relentless perseverance.

Practically, these findings hold substantial implications for English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Indonesian context. The identified fatherhood values provide a robust thematic framework for designing character-based ELT activities—such as reflective discussions, analytical writing, and empathetic role-plays—that effectively shift the pedagogical focus from rigid grammar instruction toward authentic, communicative language use. This dual-purpose pedagogical strategy aligns seamlessly with the character development goals of the Indonesian

Merdeka Belajar curriculum, positioning the language classroom as a space for fostering both linguistic proficiency and moral awareness.

Scientifically, this research contributes to the interdisciplinary nexus of applied linguistics, character education, and media studies by demonstrating how multimodal audiovisual texts can be systematically analyzed and utilized for holistic language education. It elevates the discourse on cinematic moral analysis by mapping a hierarchical, integrated relationship among specific fatherhood values, moving beyond the conventional methodology of merely inventorying general moral messages.

While this study establishes a strong conceptual framework, its scope is limited to a single Western narrative. Future research should explore the representation of fatherhood values across a wider spectrum of cinematic works, particularly within Indonesian cinema, to determine the cultural universality or specificity of these paternal constructs. Furthermore, empirical, classroom-based studies are highly recommended to quantitatively measure the practical impact of

integrating these value-rich multimodal materials on the communicative competence and moral development of EFL learners.

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