

ANALYSIS OF MORAL VALUE IN WALT DISNEY PICTURES “MOANA” ANIMATED FILM

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<p>Keywords: Moral Value; Film; Moana</p>	<p>Abstract: A film is a type of literary work to entertain and convey intended values or messages for the viewers. The purpose of this research was to examine moral values represented in Disney's animated film Moana using the moral classification framework proposed by Sulistyorini & Anggraeni. The researchers focused on this film because it conveys positive moral values and storyline. This research utilized descriptive-qualitative method. This research used Moana film as the primary data source. The data were collected through observation, documentation, and note-taking from the film's scenes and dialogue. The findings showed that Moana performed numerous moral values for the viewers. individual morality such as bravery, honesty, and hard work; social morality such as cooperation, caring, and maintaining harmony; and religious morality such as faith, gratitude, and trust in divine guidance. These values are represented through Moana's journey from self-discovery to embracing responsibility for her people, illustrating a progression from personal moral development to universal moral principles. Therefore, the researchers suggests the viewers to not only derive enjoyment from the movie's plot, but also apply its moral values to enhance their own character to become better individuals.</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

People create literary works that mirror the experiences and realities of human existence. Innayah and Simanjuntak (2022) described a literary work as a conceptual expression derived from an individual's observations of their social environment, articulated through aesthetically pleasing language. Generally, literature can be classified into two principal categories: fiction and nonfiction. Literature is valuable as one form of fiction because it is an imaginative expression, beyond mere narrative or invention, that tells of an author's mental journey of exploration, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas. Moreover, Esten (in Zamzami et al., 2023) asserted that literature presents creative and imaginative truths as an expression of human life and society. From this perspective, literature can be seen as having a positive influence on human existence. This perspective suggests that literature has a positive impact on human life. Literature itself is a creative art form in which humans and their experiences are conveyed through language as a medium for expressing meaning. Both fiction and nonfiction literature encompass forms such as novels, drama, short stories, comic books, songs, and films. These



diverse formats — including poetry, novels, and short stories — offer audiences content that is both entertaining and beneficial (Pardede et al., 2021; Inayyah & Simanjuntak, 2022).

At present, films are among the most influential media for conveying moral values. Every film carries a message or set of values to communicate. Audiences can generally derive meaningful lessons from the films they watch. The messages conveyed are typically structured in a systematic way, allowing viewers to engage with the plot and discern the intended values. A film should communicate moral messages to its audience, encompassing themes such as ethics, motivation, faith, or knowledge. Additionally, films often promote values like mutual trust, responsibility, independence, and cooperation, encouraging viewers to reflect on these important principles.

Due to new technology, the creation of movies with good moral values and live-action or animated characters is now possible. These animations are well-known in the America Disney animated films. Disney animations are feature-length movies and television series produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios based on fairy tales, folklore, and original stories. Disney animated films provide family entertainment with beautiful images and tell wonderful stories. Their animations have received great acclaim globally, and Disney films have elevated to the status of cultural artifacts recognized and cherished all over the world. The Disney animated film *Moana* has achieved global acclaim for its engaging storytelling, memorable music, and inspiring characters. *Moana* is produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and tells the story of a brave young lady who journeys to save her people. *Moana* has also been recognized for embracing culture, nature, and bravery. Analytics from film review websites show that *Moana* has maintained a consistent viewership across diverse audiences and continues to be appreciated worldwide.

Moral values are among the core messages that films aim to convey. Morality refers to positive attitudes and behaviors that individuals are expected to uphold. According to Innayah and Simanjuntak (2022), the term moral originates from the Latin word *mores*, meaning traditions, behaviors, morals, and character, which eventually develop into healthy patterns of conduct. Morality serves as a benchmark for evaluating the goodness or badness of a person’s actions. Additionally, Fajar (in Nofrian & Maisarah, 2024) describes moral values as beliefs about how to lead a good life, shaped by religious and cultural influences through teachings, advice, laws, and guidelines about how to become exemplary human beings. Several types of moral values have been identified. According to Sulistyorini & Anggraeni (2011), there are three types of morality. Individual morality is about how a person treats themselves, such as being obedient, brave, honest, fair, respectful, hardworking, humble, and careful. Social morality is about how people treat others, like working together, helping, caring, keeping harmony, giving advice, and showing concern. Religious morality is about a person’s relationship with God, which includes having faith, obeying God’s rules, praying, being grateful, repenting, and trusting in God’s mercy.

A number of studies have analyzed moral values intended in films. For instance, Septyawanti et al. (2021) investigated moral values in Angga Dwimas Sasongko’s film entitled “Nanti Kita Cerita tentang Hari Ini”. Their research identified 60 instances of moral values within the characters’ dialogues, with love being the most frequently occurring value, while humility appeared the least. Similarly, Sulayani et al. (2021) explored “Miracle in Cell No 7” as a case study, employing Bollen’s theory to examine the moral values and character traits depicted in



the film. Their findings showed that the movie presented a wide range of moral values, including sacrifice, mutual help, love and affection, keeping promises, and justice. It also showcased character traits such as honesty, never give up, return, fair attitude, independent, responsibility, friendship, and curiosity. Moreover, Ayuni (2023) explored and analyzed the moral values portrayed in the animated film “Onward”. It identified several key values reflected throughout the movie, such as honesty, bravery, self-confidence, unselfishness, respect, love, and kindness. A study on animated film was also carried out by Kristanti and Maisarah (2023) by examining how Roland Barthes’s theory informs the moral values presented in the animated film “Luca”, produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios. The findings revealed that the film conveys several moral values, including wise, patience, never give up, honesty, discipline, helpfulness, democratic, cooperation, courage and kindness. Rahmayanti et al. (2020) conducted a research to examine and describe the moral values presented in the “Nusa and Rara” animations as well as the “Upin and Ipin” cartoons. The findings revealed a range of religious and moral teachings, including bedtime etiquette, table manners, saying “basmallah”, giving alms, consistently doing good deeds, showing tolerance and helpfulness, avoiding arrogance, keeping promises, praying on time, promoting brotherhood, honesty, love for animals, respect, responsibility, justice, tolerance, self-discipline, compassion, courage, and democratic values. This research, therefore, focused on analyzing “Moana” film, as it has not been previously examined by other researchers, thereby distinguishing this study from the existing literature.

Understanding the moral values embedded in such a film is important not only for appreciating its artistic depth but also for exploring how narratives can influence and inspire audiences. Based on the background above, the research problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What moral values are found in the movie Moana?
2. How are these moral values represented through the main character in the movie?

By answering these questions, this study aims to identify and analyze the moral values portrayed in Moana and examine how these values are communicated through the actions, dialogues, and development of the main character.

METHOD

This research employed the framework of a descriptive qualitative method. According to Nurfatah et al. (2024), qualitative research is a method that involves analyzing data in the form of spoken or written words from individuals or subjects that can be observed. This approach aims to describe and interpret phenomena, events, social interactions, behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions of individuals or groups. The data in this study were obtained from observing and documenting the animated film Moana as the main source, while supporting sources included e-books, journals, and theses. Data collection involved several instruments: (a) frame-by-frame analysis, (b) movie transcripts, and (c) note-taking, carried out through observation and documentation. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman’s (in Asipi et al., 2022) stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The identified moral values were then categorized based on the framework of Sulistyorini & Anggraeni (2011).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings of the study on the moral values depicted in Moana, analyzed using Sulistyorini & Anggraeni’s (2011) framework, which divides morality into three



categories: individual, social, and religious morality. The discussion then interprets these findings in light of relevant moral development theories, linking them to the research questions.

The analysis identified multiple instances of moral values in the film, as shown in the table below. These values are categorized into individual morality, which concerns how one treats oneself; social morality, which focuses on how one treats others; and religious morality, which reflects one’s relationship with God or spiritual belief.

Table 1: Moral Values in Moana Based on Sulistyorini & Anggraeni’s (2011) Framework

Category of Morality	Specific Moral Value	Moral Scene from Moana	Explanation
Individual Morality	Bravery	Moana sails beyond the reef despite her father’s warning.	Shows courage to face the unknown for the greater good.
	Honesty	Moana admits to Grandma Tala her doubts and fears about the voyage.	Demonstrates truthfulness and self-awareness, fostering trust and authenticity in relationships.
	Hard Work	Moana practices navigation skills repeatedly despite early failures.	Reflects persistence and dedication to mastering a necessary skill for her mission.
	Obedience (initially)	Moana follows village rules before her calling becomes urgent.	Shows initial respect for tradition and authority before shifting to moral autonomy.
		Moana listens attentively to elders’ stories about their ancestors.	Demonstrates valuing cultural heritage and wisdom from older generations.
	Respectfulness	Moana plans her journey by gathering supplies and preparing her canoe.	Reflects foresight and responsibility before undertaking a dangerous mission.
	Carefulness		
Social Morality	Cooperation	Moana works with Maui to restore the heart despite personal differences.	Prioritizes teamwork for a common purpose over individual pride.
	Caring	Moana is motivated to save her people from famine and environmental decline.	Shows empathy and responsibility toward the well-being of others.
	Maintaining Harmony	Moana avoids escalating conflict with Maui and reconciles for the mission.	Demonstrates conflict resolution and emotional maturity.
	Giving Advice	Moana encourages Maui to believe in himself after regaining his hook.	Supports others’ confidence, showing moral encouragement.



Category of Morality	Specific Value	Moral	Scene from Moana	Explanation
	Concern		Moana helps injured or endangered sea creatures during the journey.	Reflects compassion beyond human relationships.
Religious Morality	Faith		Moana believes in the guidance of the ocean and her ancestors.	Shows trust in a higher moral order and spiritual guidance.
	Gratitude		Moana thanks her grandmother’s spirit for guidance during hardships.	Demonstrates appreciation for both human and spiritual support.
	Trust in God’s Mercy (symbolic)		Moana continues the journey despite dangers, trusting the ocean’s plan.	Symbolizes surrender to divine will and cosmic order.
	Repentance		Moana recognizes her mistakes and returns to her mission after self-doubt.	Reflects moral growth through acknowledging errors and recommitting to duty.

Discussion

Moana is a Disney animated film rich in color and detail. The movie portrays the adventures of a young Polynesian girl named Moana, set in the Pacific Islands. The narration starts in a tranquil village where she is the chief’s daughter. The Polynesian people have lived on that island for many ages, but on the horizon of life on the island a mysterious darkness looms. There is an acute shortage of fish in the lagoon, and crops are dying.

As the story develops, the village elder (her grandmother) narrates an age-old tale about the demigod Maui and a pressing task to be undertaken. Moana learns why their people need to be saved. She discovers that Maui had stolen the heart of goddess Te Fiti; hence, a horrible curse which now threatens all life is unleashed. Though her father’s fears are justified, he doesn’t organize for her and, much like a lot of other people, he is relegated to the background with respect to the fight for the life-giving waters.

Setting off on a dangerous ocean voyage, Moana encounters Maui, an initially unenthusiastic and loud demigod. Together, they embark on battling Te Ka the lava monster, as well as coconut pirate “better” the ultimate villain while learning what true heroism, identity, and restoration actually is. The journey entails much more than simply saving the land; it encompasses the multifaceted process of healing, reclaiming, and reconnecting with one’s purpose and heritage.

The results showed that the moral values depicted in Moana are not simple narrative additions but rather the foundation of the character development. Moana’s journey demonstrates a complex process of moral development within the context of the individual and the society, which both conforms and deviates from conventional moral development frameworks, in accordance with Sulistyorini & Anggraeni’s (2011) triadic individual morality, social morality, and religious morality.

Moana’s bravery, honesty, diligence, and respectfulness reflect an evolving sense of self-governance. Initially, she exhibits obedience in the conventional sense by honoring her father’s rule forbidding sailing beyond the reef. At this stage, she aligns with Kohlberg’s conventional



level, where moral reasoning is bound by social rules and the desire for approval (McLeod, 2024). However, as her awareness of her people's plight deepens, she shifts toward post-conventional reasoning, prioritizing universal principles (the survival of her community and restoration of balance) over local customs. Furthermore, her bravery in sailing into the unknown, coupled with carefulness in preparation, illustrates a balance between moral courage and prudence. Aristotle would describe such a blend as part of the "golden mean" of virtue ethics. Rather than being a reckless adventurer or passively compliant, she takes moral risks that are well calculated (Alpert, 2024). As with all moral identities, honesty shapes this and in Moana's case, she does so by telling her grandmother the fears, which allows her to shatter the heroic stereotype of invulnerable stoics and demonstrate a more moral leadership marked by vulnerability and self-awareness.

Moana's social morality is most vividly illustrated through her interactions with Maui, the demi-god who is reluctant to cooperate. Their progressive partnership illustrates that moral action is not solo heroism but rather, requires others to work together. This, in part, is the essence of Piaget's theory of moral cooperation where moral development is the capacity to enter into reciprocal social relations that recognize equality and mutual respect (Carpendale, 2009). Moana's concern for her people is the moral reason for her empathic action and without the empathetic drive, the actions risked would hold no moral justification. The willingness to maintain harmony, even when Maui's arrogance is in full swing, demonstrates her conflict resolution skills, a social skill in the domain of emotional intelligence (Goleman in Chintya & Sit, 2024). When Moana offers advice and moral encouragement to Maui after his failures, she embodies the principle of moral support, reinforcing that leadership involves uplifting others rather than dominating them. Notably, Moana's concern extends beyond human relations, as seen when she aids sea creatures along her journey. This expands Sulistyorini & Anggraeni's social morality into an eco-moral dimension, aligning with contemporary environmental ethics that frame the natural world as part of the moral community.

Religious morality in Moana is not expressed through institutionalized religion but through a culturally rooted spirituality. Her faith in the ocean's guidance and her ancestors' wisdom functions as an internal compass, suggesting that moral action often requires trust in an unseen order. This resonates with Fowler's (in Jones, 2022) Stages of Faith, where a mature faith integrates personal experience with a broader, transcendent worldview. In addition, gratitude is evident when Moana thanks her grandmother's spirit during hardships, reinforcing that moral endurance is often sustained by appreciation, not just determination. Trust in divine mercy, symbolized by her surrender to the ocean's plan, reframes her journey as not merely an act of personal will, but as cooperation with a higher purpose. Her repentance, when she momentarily abandons her mission and later recommits, illustrates the cyclical nature of moral growth: doubt, reflection, renewal.

What distinguishes Moana as a moral narrative is the integration of the three dimensions. Her individual morality provides her courage and self-discipline to act, her social morality ensures those actions serve a collective good, and her religious morality sustains her during moments of uncertainty. This holistic moral identity reflects Sulistyorini & Anggraeni's assertion that morality is not fragmented but interdependent. Rest (in Thoma & Bebeau, 2013) offers a different approach to the interdependence of morality with the Four-Component Model of Moral Behavior, which focuses on moral empathy, judgment, motivation, and character. The film also challenges the compartmentalization of morality: for Moana, bravery (individual) is



often exercised in the service of others (social) and underpinned by trust in a transcendent order (religious). This suggests that moral categories, while analytically useful, are lived in a blended, dynamic way. In sum, Moana’s representation of moral values is a narrative of moral transformation — from rule-bound obedience to principled autonomy, from personal ambition to communal responsibility, and from human-centered problem-solving to spiritually anchored stewardship. The film, therefore, operates as both a cultural text and a moral exemplar, embodying the universality of moral struggle and growth.

CONCLUSION

The animated movie Moana is rich with moral values based on the mapping by Sulistyorini & Anggraeni (2011) which includes individual morality, social morality, and religious morality. Moana’s character and her moral development is illustrated by her actions and interactions which evolve from self-centered to selfless and altruistic. Based on these findings, the film can serve as a lively medium for character education, which is the focus of the critique. It is suggested that parents and educators use Moana as a springboard for character education by guiding self-driven discussions so that the young audience is able to assimilate and appreciate the values underpinning the film. Moreover, educators are invited to use motion pictures with rich moral values as curricular materials, and further research is intended to deepen the analysis of moral values in the media from other cultures.

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