



# **An Analysis of Moral and Patriotism Values in The Movie: Disney's "The Little Mermaid"**

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## **Abstract**

This study analyzes moral values and patriotism in Disney's "The Little Mermaid" (2023) using descriptive qualitative methodology with content analysis techniques. The research addresses contemporary society's moral crisis and declining patriotic sentiment, particularly among younger generations, through examining how popular media can serve as educational vehicles for positive value transmission. Utilizing Magnis-Suseno's theoretical framework for moral values and Ginting's patriotism theory, the analysis identified five dominant moral values: courage, integrity, responsibility, cosmic awareness, and reconciliation, categorized across three human relationship dimensions. The patriotism analysis revealed four key values classified into blind and constructive patriotism, with constructive patriotism dominating 75% of examined scenes. Findings demonstrate that courage and integrity are the most prominent moral values, while pro-people leadership and multicultural unity represent significant patriotic elements. The research employed theory triangulation and data source triangulation to ensure validity. Results suggest that Disney's adaptation effectively integrates moral education and patriotic values relevant to Indonesia's contemporary challenges, including elite corruption and political polarization. This study contributes to educational literature by demonstrating how modern film adaptations can serve as meaningful resources for character development and nationalism education.

**Keywords:** Moral Values, Patriotism, Disney Film Analysis

## **Introduction**

Contemporary society faces an unprecedented moral crisis manifesting through various concerning social phenomena on a global scale. These manifestations encompass moral degradation and diminishing patriotism, evidenced through sexual violence, promiscuity, substance abuse, bullying, inter-student conflicts, corruption, street crimes, and fatal acts of violence.

Simultaneously, there exists a notable decline in patriotic sentiment, including reduced tolerance, weakening unity consciousness, diminishing appreciation for Pancasila values, declining mutual cooperation spirit, and waning national love, particularly among younger generations. The gravity of this situation intensifies as these cases involve not only adults but also children and teenagers, with young people serving both as victims and perpetrators of criminal acts (Kompas.com, 2024; Detik.com, 2024).

Recent empirical evidence substantiates these concerns through documented cases including child violence, student indecency violations, intolerance incidents, and child prostitution. Specific instances include the August 25, 2024 case of a six-year-old child killed by his stepmother (Kompas.com, 2024). This case collectively demonstrates the erosion of human values and national character that should be fundamentally upheld, necessitating systematic and comprehensive intervention strategies from multiple stakeholders.

Given the escalating nature of this moral and patriotic crisis, character education and value cultivation become increasingly crucial from early developmental stages. Literature suggests that audiovisual entertainment media, particularly films, serve as effective vehicles for conveying moral messages to younger generations (Wibowo et al., 2019). According to Effendy (cited in Rizal et al., 2014), while audiences primarily seek entertainment when viewing films, these media simultaneously fulfill informative, educational, and persuasive functions. Furthermore, films possess the capacity to broaden audience perspectives regarding relevant social, cultural, and environmental issues, potentially increasing sensitivity to surrounding problems and encouraging value-based decision-making.

Moral values constitute fundamental principles guiding human behavior and character formation. As articulated by Hazlitt et al. (1964), moral values represent mechanisms for assessing good and bad human behavior, reflecting individuals' willingness to sacrifice lesser goods for greater ones (cited in Sulianti et al., 2018). Sulianti et al. (2018) define moral values as societal beliefs and values aligned with normative standards of right and wrong within social behavioral contexts, serving as differentiators between various communities based on their ethical standards. Arta et al. (2023) conceptualize moral values as qualities related to individual good or evil, particularly regarding personality aspects. According to Putri et al. (2022), moral values represent societal foundations for determining individual character assessment, encompassing actions, attitudes, obligations, and community customs generally accepted by society.

Patriotism, etymologically derived from the Greek word "patris" meaning homeland, represents attitudes and behaviors characterized by passion and willingness to sacrifice for national independence, progress, glory, and prosperity (Kartini et al., 2020). The Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) defines patriotism as individual willingness to sacrifice for homeland glory and prosperity, while Ginting et al. (2021) conceptualize it as love spirit for country or individual willingness to

sacrifice everything for homeland glory and prosperity. Contemporary patriotism manifests through various concrete actions reflecting national dedication, including active nation-building involvement, legal compliance, and prioritizing national interests over personal ones.

Literature, derived from Sanskrit combining "sas" (meaning to direct, teach, instruct) and "tra" (indicating tool or source), functions as artistic activity created to provide teaching and knowledge to society (Sudirman et al., 2022). Film, as complex and dynamic audiovisual communication medium, effectively conveys messages to specific audience groups in particular locations (Saraswati et al., 2021). Films function as entertainment formats capable of influencing audience mindset, nature, and behavior while serving as audiovisual communication media that effectively deliver messages to audience groups (Munir & Fakhruddin, 2022).

Disney's "The Little Mermaid" (2023) transcends traditional fairy tale narratives about mermaid-human prince romance. Beyond romantic storylines and magical adventures, the film contains various moral messages and patriotism values relevant to contemporary life. Through Ariel's struggles, audiences are invited to reflect on courage, sacrifice, love, and principled commitment meanings, while patriotism elements are implied through character loyalty to their kingdoms and desires to protect and improve surrounding worlds. This research addresses a significant gap in contemporary educational literature, as studies examining latest adaptation works as educational learning resources remain limited. Previous educational research predominantly focuses on the classic 1989 Disney version, primarily examining gender aspects, cultural representation, or original work comparisons.

The primary objectives of this research are to identify moral values and examine patriotism values contained in Disney's "The Little Mermaid" (2023). This research addresses a significant gap in contemporary educational literature, as studies examining the 2023 live-action adaptation of "The Little Mermaid" as educational learning resources remain virtually non-existent. While previous educational research has extensively analyzed the classic 1989 Disney version, focusing primarily on gender representation, cultural aspects, and literary comparisons, the 2023 adaptation presents distinctly different educational opportunities due to its contemporary themes, diverse casting choices, and updated narrative elements that reflect modern social values. The live-action format, enhanced character development, and inclusion of new musical numbers provide fresh perspectives on moral education that may resonate more effectively with today's digitally-native students. Furthermore, the 2023 version's emphasis on multiculturalism and environmental consciousness offers unique patriotism interpretations that align closely with Indonesia's "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" philosophy, making it particularly relevant for Indonesian educational contexts. This gap in research on contemporary Disney adaptations as character education tools represents a missed opportunity to explore how modern film narratives can address current moral and patriotic education challenges. In an era where moral

crises increasingly threaten societal stability, utilizing popular media such as Disney films as vehicles for positive value learning represents an effective strategy for instilling moral principles and patriotism among audiences (Krippendorff et al., 2018).

## Method

This research used descriptive qualitative methods to explore the experience of watching movies through the Disney+ streaming application. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena in depth and make more flexible, natural, and comprehensive observations of the complexity of interactions between users, social media technology, and movie content consumption practices in a digital context.

The research design uses descriptive qualitative methods with content analysis techniques, referring to the thoughts of Creswell et al. (2024) which explains that qualitative research obtains data in descriptive forms such as field notes, recordings, audio transcripts, video recordings, pictures, or other films. According to Krippendorff (2018), through qualitative research, researchers can identify the subject and experience the same thing in everyday life. Krippendorff's content analysis technique includes six stages: utilizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, abductively inferring, and narrating. This approach seeks to uncover the layers of meaning hidden behind a movie's appearance, understanding not only what is seen but also what is implied.

The movie "The Little Mermaid" (2023) became the subject of this research with the main focus of identifying moral values and patriotism contained in the movie. The selection of this movie is motivated by the increasingly worrying situation of moral crisis in society. Social phenomena plaguing the younger generation, ranging from violence, declining sense of nationalism, to various deviant behaviors, encourage the author to look for alternative educational media that can instill positive values effectively and attractively.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data comes from the Disney movie "The Little Mermaid" (2023) by Hans Christian Andersen directed by Rob Marshall with a duration of 2 hours 5 minutes 54 seconds, accessed through the Disney+. Secondary data were obtained from scientific journals, books, movie review websites, and previous research reports relevant to the research topic.

Data collection techniques used qualitative methods by utilizing recordings, archives, images, films, photography, and other documents through electronic media that supported the research. The researcher analyzed and presented findings based on the understanding gained from the observation process of the dialogue and actions of the characters in the film. The utilizing process was done by downloading and watching the film three times with different focuses: understanding the storyline, identifying moral value scenes, and looking for

patriotism values. The recording/coding stage involved recording each dialog and taking screenshots to support in-depth analysis.

Data analysis used Krippendorff's content analysis method with systematic stages starting from utilizing, then sampling by selecting the 10 most prominent moral value scenes and 8 patriotism scenes with specific timestamps. The recording/coding process uses an analysis table with timestamp, description, dialog, type of value, and analysis columns. The reducing stage eliminated similar or repetitive scenes, combined related short scenes, and focused the analysis on the 5 main moral values and 5 main patriotism values. The abductively inferring process calculates the dominant value pattern based on frequency and compares with Lickona's theory for morals and Ginting's theory for patriotism. The narrating stage compiled the results of the analysis systematically with an introduction to the movie, discussion of values based on significance and theory, and a summary table. To validate the data, this research uses theory triangulation and data source triangulation. Theory triangulation combines several theories to compare and analyze the data comprehensively, while data source triangulation collects information from various sources to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

Results

This study conducted a content analysis of eight key scenes from Disney's The Little Mermaid (2023) using Magnis-Suseno's (1987) theoretical framework. The analysis identified five dominant moral values categorized into three types of human relationships according to Mahpudoh et al. (2024): relationships with oneself (courage and integrity), relationships with God/nature (cosmic consciousness), and social relationships (reconciliation and responsibility).

Table 1: Moral values findings table

No	Moral Value	Theoretical Definition (Magnis-Suseno, 1987)	Key Scene (Timestamp)	Evidence (Dialogue/Visual)	Contextual Analysis
1	Courage	A resolute stance in upholding truth	Ariel saves Eric (00:28:21)	Visual of Ariel rescuing Eric while drowning	Ariel violates kingdom rules for humanitaria

		despite risks			n reasons, showcasing moral bravery.
2	Integrity (Authentic Values)	Consistency between beliefs and actions	Ariel rejects human stereotypes (00:47:49)	"But that doesn't make us enemies" (Dialogue)	Challenges familial dogma through critical reasoning, reflecting authentic selfhood.
3	Responsibility	Willingness to accept consequences of choices	Ariel signs Ursula's contract (00:58:37)	Visual of Ariel singing and agreeing to Ursula's offer to trade her voice for a human leg	Demonstrate s accountability by risking her voice for her aspirations.
4	Cosmic Awareness	Recognition of one's place in the universe	Ariel's song "Part of Your World" (00:31:50)	Visual of Ariel longing for the surface	Expresses a desire to transcend natural boundaries, indicating existential awareness.

5	Reconciliation	Efforts to restore harmony after conflict	Triton and Ariel's reunion (01:55:45)	"All that matters now is that you're safe and home" (Dialogue)	Restores familial harmony, emphasizing forgiveness and mutual understanding.
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Courage and integrity emerged as the most dominant values (3 out of 8 scenes each), followed by responsibility and reconciliation (2 scenes each), and cosmic awareness (1 scene). Ariel embodies all five moral values, making her an ideal multidimensional character for in-depth moral exploration.

The analysis of the value of patriotism uses the theoretical framework of Ginting (2021) and Sulianti (2018), categorizing the findings into two types according to Staub (2013): blind patriotism (uncritical loyalty) and constructive patriotism (critical and inclusive loyalty).

Table 2: *Patriotism values findings table*

No.	Patriotism Value	Category (Staub, 2013)	Key Scene (Timestamp)	Evidence (Dialogue/Visual)	Contextual Analysis
1	Pro-People Leadership	Constructive	Eric leads crew rescue (00:26:45)	"Save the crew first!" + Direct action (Visual)	Reflects an ideal leader prioritizing collective welfare over self-interest.
2	Loyalty to the Kingdom	Blind	Ariel rejects Ursula's offer (00:57:13)	"This is wrong, I can't do this" + Determined expression (Visual)	Demonstrates unwavering allegiance despite the kingdom's imperfections.
3	Elite Sacrifice	Constructive	Triton surrenders trident (01:48:00)	Close-up of the thrown trident + Dramatic music (Visual)	Symbolizes leadership sacrifice for

					national preservation.
4	Multicultural Unity	Constructive	Visuals of royal citizens and mermaids together on the beach (02:04:58)	Wide shot of kingdoms uniting + "Two worlds become one" (Dialogue)	Mirrors Indonesia's "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," promoting unity in diversity.

Constructive patriotism dominates by appearing in 3 out of 4 scenes, indicating a progressive narrative that supports inclusive patriotism. Eric embodies constructive patriotism in 75% of the scenes, while Ariel in 25%, showing the complementary roles of the two.

Table 3: *Social relevance table*

Film Value	Indonesian Context	Educational Implication
Triton's sacrifice	Prevalence of elite corruption (ICW, 2023)	Anti-corruption education for public officials
Unity of two kingdoms	Political polarization and SARA issues (PPIM, 2023)	Tolerance education for the younger generation

The uniqueness of the 2023 adaptation lies in the emphasis on human-sea collaboration that reinforces the patriotic narrative, different from the 1989 animated version that focused more on romanticism. However, fantastic elements such as Ursula's magic may limit the direct applicability of moral values and patriotism to real-world contexts. These findings provide a basis for discussion on the relevance of moral values to the character crisis of contemporary youth and the potential of film as a medium for nationalism-focused character education.

## Discussion

The moral values found reflect human relationships with self, God/nature, and the social environment, providing lessons relevant to the moral crisis of today's younger generation. Courage is evident when Ariel saves Prince Eric from danger (00:28:21), showing moral courage that transcends royal rules. This attitude confirms that human values can overcome formal restrictions. Integrity emerges when Ariel rejects stereotypes about humans with the statement "But that doesn't



make us enemies" (00:47:49), reflecting moral autonomy and critical thinking which according to Mahpudoh et al. (2024) are part of the relationship between humans and themselves. In the context of Indonesia, which is experiencing an increase in cases of violence and intolerance (Kompas.com, August 25, 2024), Ariel's courage and integrity can serve as an example for the younger generation to resist social dogma and act on humanitarian principles.

Responsibility is seen when Ariel signs a contract with Ursula (00:58:37), exchanging her voice for a chance to live as a human being. This action reflects a willingness to accept the consequences of personal choices, an essential moral characteristic according to Magnis-Suseno (1987). In real life, this kind of responsibility is relevant to addressing deviant behavior among teenagers such as substance abuse (Detik.com, September 25, 2024). Cosmic consciousness is found in Ariel's song "Part of Your World" (00:31:50), showing a longing to go beyond natural boundaries and understand her place in the universe. Reconciliation is seen in the scene of Triton and Ariel's reunion (01:55:45) with the dialogue "All that matters now is that you're safe and home," which emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and mutual understanding, highly relevant to the social polarization facing Indonesia (PPIM, 2023).

The patriotism value analysis identified four main values categorized into blind patriotism and constructive patriotism according to Staub (2013). Pro-people leadership is reflected in Prince Eric's actions when leading the rescue of the crew with the order "Save the crew first!" (00:26:45). According to Ginting (2021), this value reflects patriotism that prioritizes collective welfare, a leadership quality that Indonesia desperately needs in the midst of rampant elite corruption (ICW, 2023). Elite sacrifice is seen when King Triton gives up his trident (01:48:00) to protect the kingdom and Ariel, symbolizing personal sacrifice for national interests according to Sulianti (2018). The multicultural unity at the film's climax (02:04:58) with the dialogue "Two worlds become one" reflects the spirit of Indonesia's "Unity in Diversity", offering a solution to the issue of political polarization and SARA (PPIM, 2023).

Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of how moral values and patriotism can be integrated in modern literary works, especially films. Practically, the findings can be integrated into the Indonesian English curriculum to teach tolerance, responsibility and ethical leadership through film analysis. Although rich in insights, this study has limitations due to the fantastic elements of the movie that might reduce the applicability of the values to real contexts. Future research could compare the 2023 adaptation with the 1989 version or analyze audience perceptions of these values.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, this study successfully identified five dominant moral values and four patriotism values in Disney's "The Little Mermaid" (2023) through comprehensive content analysis of key scenes. The analysis demonstrates

that animated films serve as rich sources of figurative language that can enhance EFL students' understanding of non-literal expressions in authentic contexts. The contextual interpretation of each figurative expression, determined by situational factors within the movie, provides meaningful insights for language learning applications. This research contributes to the growing body of literature examining multimedia resources for language education, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context. The findings suggest that incorporating popular animated films like *Sing 2* into English language curricula can effectively support figurative language instruction while maintaining student engagement. Future research should explore comparative studies across different animated films and investigate student comprehension levels when exposed to figuratively rich audiovisual materials in classroom settings.

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