

**PONDERING RELIGIOUS WORK ETHICS IN *THE PURSUIT OF
HAPPYNESS* (2006) AND *DOA YANG MENGANCAM* (2008)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the Bachelor's

Degree in English Department



By:

Dendri Endrian Ramadhan

20101050058

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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Jl. Marsda Adi Sucipto, Yogyakarta, 55281, Telp./Fax. (0274) 513949

Web: <http://adab.uin-suka.ac.id> Email: adab@uin-suka.ac.id

NOTA DINAS

Hal: Skripsi

a.n. Dendri Endrian Ramadhan

Yth.

Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
UIN Sunan Kalijaga
Di Yogyakarta

Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

Setelah memeriksa, meneliti, dan memberikan arahan untuk perbaikan atas skripsi saudara:

Nama	: Dendri Endrian Ramadhan
NIM	: 20101050058
Prodi	: Sastra Inggris
Fakultas	: Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Judul	: <i>Pondering Religious Work Ethics in The Pursuit of Happiness and Doa Yang Mengancam</i>

kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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Yogyakarta, 11/01/2024
Pembimbing

Danial Hidayatullah, S.S, M. Hum.
NIP: 19760405 200901 1 016

MOTTO

"A paradox emerges: the only way to make freedom meaningful is through boundaries. The only way for boundaries to be meaningful is through freedom."



DEDICATION

For all my endeavors, I dedicate this thesis to myself and one percent of the process I struggled with. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my parents and sister, who always supported, motivated, and advised me. In particular, I would like to dedicate myself to Mr. Danial Hidayatullah, my lecturer, and Natasya Lawrenceia, my precious partner. I appreciate and love you all forever and eternally.





KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto Telp. (0274) 513949 Fax. (0274) 552883 Yogyakarta 55281

PENGESAHAN TUGAS AKHIR

Nomor : B-216/Un.02/DA/PP.00.9/01/2024

Tugas Akhir dengan judul : Pondering Religious Work Ethics in *The Pursuit of Happiness* and Doa yang Mengancam

yang dipersiapkan dan disusun oleh:

Nama : DENDRI ENDRIAN RAMADHAN
Nomor Induk Mahasiswa : 20101050058
Telah diujikan pada : Senin, 15 Januari 2024
Nilai ujian Tugas Akhir : A

dinyatakan telah diterima oleh Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

TIM UJIAN TUGAS AKHIR



Ketua Sidang

Dr. Danial Hidayatullah, SS., M.Hum

SIGNED

Valid ID: 65b1f6644fa66



Penguji I

Dr. Witriani, S.S. M.Hum.

SIGNED

Valid ID: 65b1e63b873a0



Penguji II

Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S. M.Hum.

SIGNED

Valid ID: 65af7f3524d7e



Yogyakarta, 15 Januari 2024

UIN Sunan Kalijaga

Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Wildan, M.A.

SIGNED

Valid ID: 65b1fea588368

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I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researchers opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards. Furthermore, this graduating paper was part of the article, which is published in LEKSEMA: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Vol. 8 No. 2 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.22515/ljbs.v8i2.6513>

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Dendri Endrian Ramadhan
NIM. 20101050058

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA

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NIM. 20101050058



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***PONDERING RELIGIOUS WORK ETHICS IN THE PURSUIT OF
HAPPYNESS (2006) AND DOA YANG MENGANCAM (2008)***

By: Dendri Endrian Ramadhan

ABSTRACT

The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) and *Doa yang Mengancam* [Threatening Prayer] (2008), which represent Protestants ethics and Islamic values, show significant implications for the dynamics of the work ethic of each main character. Both films show the adventures of the characters to achieve prosperity and the finding for the meaning of a prosperous life which indirectly shows the form of work ethic in a struggle. The problem discussed in this comparison of two literary works is the influence of two different religious values on a person's work ethic. The foundation of the comparative literature paradigm is that by analyzing literary works from various cultural and linguistic contexts, we can better understand how historical and cultural situations shape human experience, such as the religious work ethic. The theory used in solving this case is Stuart Hall's representation theory using his third paradigm, constructivism. This paradigm revolves around 4 variables: (1) Symbolic Function: Certain things symbolize or represent an ideal concept and convey meaning. (2) Image Function: The image as an ideologically framed signifier, message, and meaning. (3) Discursive Function: A group of statements providing language to discuss a particular topic that conveys meaning. (4) Myth Function: Giving meaning to something that is essentially cultural into something that manifests naturally (Hall, 1997, p. 22). The method used in this research is a qualitative research method that emphasizes the process of interpretation in an analysis. The findings of this study are that Chris, as a Protestant, has a higher work ethic than Madrim as a Muslim. This is due to the influence of Max Weber's Protestant Ethics principles that have flourished in America. However, this has an impact on the Protestant's more materialistic attitude, whereas Muslims always balance between worldly wealth and good deeds in the afterlife.

Keywords: *Islam, Protestant, Religious Work Ethics, Comparative Literature, Film.*

PONDERING RELIGIOUS WORK ETHICS IN *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS* (2006) AND *DOA YANG MENGANCAM* (2008)

Oleh: Dendri Endrian Ramadhan

ABSTRAK

The Pursuit of Happiness (2006) dan *Doa yang Mengancam* (2008) sebagai film yang merepresentasikan umat Protestan dan Muslim menunjukkan implikasi yang signifikan terhadap dinamika etos kerja masing-masing tokoh utama. Kedua film ini menunjukkan petualangan para tokoh untuk mencapai kemakmuran dan pencarian makna hidup sejahtera yang secara tidak langsung menunjukkan bentuk etos kerja dalam sebuah perjuangan. Permasalahan yang dibahas dalam perbandingan dua karya sastra ini adalah pengaruh dua nilai agama yang berbeda terhadap etos kerja seseorang. Landasan paradigma sastra bandingan adalah gagasan bahwa dengan mempelajari karya sastra dari berbagai konteks budaya dan bahasa, kita dapat lebih memahami bagaimana situasi historis dan kultural membentuk pengalaman manusia, dalam hal ini adalah etos kerja religius. Teori yang digunakan dalam memecahkan kasus ini adalah teori representasi Stuart Hall dengan menggunakan paradigma ketiganya, konstruktivisme. Paradigma ini berkisar pada 4 variabel, yaitu: (1) Fungsi Simbolik: Hal-hal tertentu yang melambangkan atau merepresentasikan sebuah konsep ideal dan menyampaikan sebuah makna. (2) Fungsi Citra: Citra sebagai penanda, pesan, dan makna yang dibingkai secara ideologis. (3) Fungsi Diskursif: Sekelompok pernyataan yang menyediakan bahasa untuk membicarakan topik tertentu yang memberikan makna. (4) Fungsi Mitos: Memberi makna pada sesuatu yang pada dasarnya bersifat kultural dan terjadi secara alamiah (Hall, 1997, hlm. 22). Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode penelitian kualitatif dengan menonjolkan proses interpretasi dalam sebuah analisis. Temuan dari penelitian ini adalah Chris sebagai seorang Protestan memiliki etos kerja yang lebih tinggi daripada Madrim sebagai seorang Muslim. Hal ini disebabkan oleh pengaruh prinsip-prinsip Etika Protestan Max Weber yang telah menjamur di Amerika. Namun, hal ini berdampak pada sikap umat Protestan yang lebih materialistis, sedangkan umat Muslim selalu dianjurkan untuk menyeimbangkan antara kekayaan duniawi dan amal baik di akhirat.

Kata kunci: *Islam, Protestan, Etos Kerja Religius, Sastra Bandingan, Film*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) depicts a meaning that happiness comes from a process and consistency. This film based on the true story of an afro-american, Chris Gardner, tells a story about his struggle to pursue the American Dream. Chris Gardner, the main character, tries to escape his family's poverty by selling his Bone Density Scanner and trying his luck in an internship program at Dean Witter, a stock brokerage firm. Eventually, thanks to his consistency and high regard for the difficult process, he lives the prosperous life he had hoped for: the American Dream.

The Pursuit of Happyness also shows the value of work ethic and religious values. This is shown in the scene when Chris is working as a salesman. He found it difficult to sell bone density scanners. But after the struggle, he succeeded in selling a Bone Density Scanner after finding himself rejected many times at several previous hospitals. The next scene that shows the religious values is when Chris Gardner and his son, Christopher, attend church for worship. It is obvious to say that this is one example that Chris is religious and obedient to Protestant values.

Same goes for *Doa yang Mengancam* (2008). The film revolves around Madrim, a market porter who is desperate to work his way out of poverty. Therefore, Madrim prays, threatening God to get what he wants. However, Madrim is cursed by God by being struck by lightning and given superpowers as a punishment. Although he managed to gather wealth from these superpowers, he was still

unhappy because he still could not find his wife. Madrim had an epiphany after the death of his wife and began to establish a balance between being happy in worldly life and sustaining merit for the afterlife. One of the religious values and work ethic shown in this film is when Kadir, Madrim's friend, advises Madrim that all wealth that we hope for comes from Allah. This is the same as the film's moral message, which is that all effort and work ethic must be accompanied by prayer. The scene is as follows.

From the simple comparison above, both depart from their own religious beliefs and rationale. Spirituality constituted by religion nowadays represents a new flowering in individual and cultural religious expressions (Zinnbauer et al., 1997, p. 549-564). Chris Gardner's stance here can be supported by the United States Declaration of Independence, which is the setting of *The Pursuit of Happiness* indeed has a significant Protestant influence. The sentence is as below.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The second film, *Doa yang Mengancam*, in contrast, upholds Islamic values as in the Qur'an, surah Al-Qasas verse 77, which has the meaning:

"Seek by means of the wealth that Allah has granted you the Abode of the afterlife, but forget not your share in this world and do good as Allah has been good to you and do not strive to create mischief in the land, for Allah loves not those who create mischief."

This message encourages Muslims to equalize the affairs of the world and the afterlife.

The comparison of these films and religions raises a problem. Admittedly, religion can influence a person's personality; a motivational construction (Gorsuch, 1994). Chris Gardner, an American and Protestant, tries to get out of his impoverished state by plodding and praying. He has one goal that he manages to achieve: wealth and happiness. And after all, he gets those things. Just like Madrim, as a Muslim, he also tries to live a prosperous and happy life by working hard. Thanks to his superpower, he did get the wealth, but he is unhappy. In the end, he finds happiness by living simply and not relying on wealth. The problem addressed by this comparison is the influence of two different religious values on a person's work ethic that yields happiness, which is seen as the aim of living. From this problem, a hypothesis can be formed that Protestants who unconsciously practice the act of Protestant Ethics tend to have a higher work ethic than Muslims who adhere to Islamic values.

If interpreting a film using a religious perspective is a normal moral act, what if it is reversed? Interpreting religion through a film as a cultural product that is highly demanded in society will be wrong if we are not aware enough and critical in interpreting it. We must agree to the contrary that films can facilitate us to interpret and understand religion and varied perspectives on religion (Blizek et al., 2011, p. 478). This has turned into an urgency. Popular culture, such as films, can portray good religious values and vice versa. An understanding of what religion is being discussed in the films is no less crucial. Although all religious teachings teach goodness, each religion has its way of delivery.

From the preceding consideration of two literary works to a comparative viewpoint, it is obvious that looking at works in pairs can help us understand both the specific texts and the larger literary canon. The foundation of the paradigm of comparative literature is the idea that by studying literary works from various cultural and linguistic contexts, we can better understand how historical and cultural situations form the human experience. By contrasting two literary works, we can draw attention to themes, styles, and techniques that are similar and dissimilar, as well as hidden links between seemingly unrelated writings. Using this lens, we can examine the intricacies of the human experience across cultural and historical boundaries using the comparative literature paradigm. Comparative literature studies the relations between different literary systems and traditions, whether they come from different cultures, languages, eras, or genres. This inquiry is about the reputation and penetration, influence, and fame of a major work (Wellek & Warren, 1948)

1.2 Research Question

- (1) What kind of work ethic is represented in *The Pursuit of Happiness* and *Doa yang Mengancam*?
- (2) How are religious values represented in the work ethic in these films?

1.3 Objective and Significance of Study

This research aims to analyze the form of work ethic shown in the films *The Pursuit of Happiness* and *Doa yang Mengancam*, which are affected by each different religious value. It aims to elucidate how two distinct religious values influence the manifestation of work ethic, which takes Max Weber's concept of

Protestant Work Ethics (PWE) and Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) outlined in sources like Al-Qur'an and Hadith in Islam. The researcher also hopes that this thesis can be used to expand the scholarly repertoire of comparative studies that focus on comparing two different cultures and religions. It can also serve as a suitable reference for further research, particularly with similar objects. In addition, the researcher hopes that this study can show readers how comparative literature can stimulate the growth of literature and culture that affects plurality.

1.4 Literature Review

In Ren Junhong's "Cultural Interpretation of *The Pursuit of Happyness*", he aims to interpret the scope of American culture and how representative the film is. *The Pursuit of Happyness* successfully carries the American cultural connotation of the American dream (national ethos) with its unrelenting effort and spirit of hard work. This finding connects to the related topic of work ethic, bridging Chris Gardner's unyielding spirit attitude. Further research is needed to delve deeper into the influence of Protestant Work Ethics (PWE) on the formation of Chris' American work ethic. It is essential because the characterization of Chris as an unyielding person has never been explored in more detail, especially regarding the causes and influences of the formation of this trait.

Furthermore, *Doa yang Mengancam* has been researched by Badrut Tamam entitled "Da'wah Messages about Kaifiyah Do'a in the Movie *Doa yang Mengancam*." He aims to find preaching messages in *Doa yang Mengancam* related to kaffiyeh prayer/ good prayer. The findings in this study are very clear that Allah SWT will grant prayer if it is not in a hurry, does not easily despair, and does not

pray to other than Allah SWT. From this finding, it is clear that the aspect of religiosity in Islam has a great influence on life, especially work ethic and an unyielding spirit. This finding is very suitable if it is connected to this research topic, which alludes to aspects of religiosity. The findings of this study also provide serious implications for the participation of religious aspects in forming a person's work ethic.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Comparative literature is an academic and interdisciplinary study that compares and analyzes literary works' similarities, differences, and patterns. Comparative literature studies the relations between different literary systems and traditions, whether they come from different cultures, languages, eras, or genres. Comparative literature studies aim to bridge cultural differences, develop a holistic perspective, and deepen the understanding of literary works. Comparative literature aims to study literary works from different cultures, languages, and times and understand how they represent reality (Auerbach, 1957).

Representation is the creation of concepts of meaning in the mind through language (Hall, 1997, p. 22). Representation can be said to be how we use language to convey something meaningful to others. Representation can be interpreted as representing a sign of what is displayed by sound, images, etc. Film Representation as a medium can be examined to show that the film can provide a concept of meaning or sign contained in each scene and shot.

The researchers use the constructive paradigm of representation theory by Stuart Hall, which consists of 4 variables: (1) Symbolic Function: Particular things symbolize or represent an ideal concept and convey meaning. (2) Image Function: Image as the signifier, ideologically framed message or meaning. (3) Discursive Function: A group of statements that provides a language for talking about a particular topic that provides meaning. (4) Myth Function: Gives meaning to something essentially cultural into something that manifests naturally (Hall, 1997).

In this research, film theory is applied to the intrinsic elements, especially setting and character & characterization. In Villarejo's (2007) book entitled "Film Studies: The Basics," he outlines the role of *mise-en-scène*. It is in the film to emphasize how it designs, frames, and organizes visual elements on the cinematic stage (Villarejo, 2007, p. 28). This integration of reality into *mise-en-scène* is crucial as it immerses the audience into the 'real world', which shapes their film experience. Villarejo highlights the key components of *mise-en-scène*:

1. Setting: This organizes the scene, giving the audience insight into the situation and conditions that affect the emotional character of the film.
2. Lighting: Shapes the atmosphere, guiding the viewer to feel the mood - whether it is tense, frightening, or pleasant.
3. Costumes and Hair: Essential for creating a character's visual identity.
4. Makeup: Similar to costumes and hair, makeup adds an imaginative dimension.
5. Figure Behavior: Involves movement, expression, and action, defining the nuances of the actor's behavior.

Villarejo emphasizes the importance of cinematography, placing it on par with *mise-en-scène* in film analysis. Cinematography, according to Villarejo, records all elements through the camera, framing them as information presenters (Villarejo, 2007, p. 37). Cinematography techniques play an important role. It influences how the audience perceives the visual composition. Villarejo introduces various shot techniques:

1. Extreme Long Shot (ELS): Objects or actors are almost indistinguishable.
2. Long Shot (L.S.): The object or actor is recognizable but overshadowed by the background.
3. Medium Long Shot (MLS): Objects or actors are treated as objects, framed from the knees up.
4. Medium Shot (M.S.): The object or actor is framed from the waist up.
5. Medium Close-Up (MCU): Objects or actors are framed from the waist up.
6. Close-Up (C.U.): Objects or actors are partially isolated.
7. Extreme Close-Up (ECU): Objects or actors are visible only a small part of the whole.

From the theoretical elaboration above, researchers will only focus on lighting, figure behavior, and cinematography in the setting and character and characterization section.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Type of Research

The research method uses a qualitative method that focuses on the constructivism paradigm in Stuart Hall's Representation theory. Qualitative methods are used to understand how individuals and groups understand and interpret their own world and use techniques such as interviews, close reading, and document analysis to collect data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The qualitative method was applied by reading and collecting data from each scene in both films.

1.6.2 Data Sources

The researcher used two data sources in this research. First, primary data sources are taken from the two films that are the object of research, *The Pursuit of Happyness* and *Doa yang Mengancam*. The data is collected in the symbol, image, discourse, and myth, considering the theory. Second, secondary data sources are taken from books and other data sources that have related topics.

1.6.3 Data Collection Technique

In the data collection process, many steps are simplified into four steps to collect it from the films *The Pursuit of Happyness* and *Doa yang Mengancam*. First, the researcher watched both films conscientiously several times to fully understand the content of both films. Second, after fully understanding, the researcher captured all important information on each element in both films. Third, the researcher selected still photos and dialogues related to the research, especially the research questions. Finally, the researcher sorted all the data and reviewed it further based on the intrinsic elements, as well as considering the theoretical concepts.

1.6.4 Data Analyzing Technique

The data analysis technique begins with reading and collecting data from each film. Throughout the research, the religious values shown by these films will refer to the tenets of their religions. *Doa yang Mengancam* refers to Islamic Values as a conceptual framework. This film refers to verses of the Qur'an and Hadith related to the Islamic Work Ethic. Meanwhile, *The Pursuit of Happyness* is analyzed by using the conceptual framework of Max Weber's Protestant Ethics theory and Protestant Values. As per Weber, Protestant Ethics theory shows that a person's religiosity can be seen from the work ethic that each individual gives to economic sustainability, which means Protestant Work Ethic (Weber, 1905, p. 34). From this assertion, it can be justified that Chris Gardner's work ethic is a religious practice considered pious.

1.7 Paper Organization

This study is organized into four distinct chapters. Chapter I serves as an introductory section, encompassing the research's background, research inquiry, objectives, and the study's significance. It also encompasses a review of relevant literature, an explanation of the theoretical framework that defines the theory employed, and the research methodology, detailing the data collection methods and techniques employed. Chapter II delves into intrinsic elements such as the setting, plot, characters, and characterization. Following this, Chapter III delves into the analysis and forms within each film, considering the representation theory. Lastly, Chapter IV serves as the concluding chapter, offering conclusions and suggesting avenues for future research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

The Pursuit of Happyness, representing the Protestants and *Doa yang Mengancam*, representing the Muslims, show significant similarities and differences. Indeed, it can be said that Chris, as a representation of Protestants, has a higher work ethic than Madrim, as a representation of Muslims when looking at these two films. Because the meaning of hard work in the Protestant perspective can already be said to be a worship of God; unlike Islam. However, Protestants, with PWE as their guideline, have serious implications for materialism. Success in Protestants only focuses on indicators of individual wealth and prosperity due to the work ethic. Whereas the IWE, as a Muslim guideline, because it emphasizes the narrative of equality between hard work and prayer, has an impact on a work ethic that is not higher than that of Protestants. Positively, Muslims have a higher level of religiosity due to the suggestion of equality between worldly wealth and good deeds for the afterlife.

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