



THE AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM AS REFLECTED IN GARDNER'S AS THE MAIN CHARACTER IN FILM *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS*: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRAK: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan aspek-aspek individualisme Amerika pada tokoh utama Chris Gardner dalam film *The Pursuit of Happiness*. Film ini di sutradarai oleh Gabriele Muccino yang diambil berdasarkan kisah nyata oleh pengarang yang bernama Chris Gardner. Film ini mengangkat masalah kehidupan sosial, khususnya pada tokoh utama Chris Gardner mengenai aspek dari individualisme Amerika. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif-kualitatif. Dalam pengumpulan data, penulis melakukan beberapa tahap penelitian; pertama, menonton film secara teliti, mengidentifikasi ucapan-ucapan dan aksi yang berhubungan dengan individualisme Amerika. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori dari Emerson (1941), tentang self-confidence dan self-reliance. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga bentuk dari self-confidence (personal ability, social interaction and, self-concept) dan satu bentuk dari self-reliance (personal ability). Aspek individualisme yang dialami oleh Chris Gardner ialah untuk menunjukkan kepada masyarakat dan kepada setiap individu tentang perjuangan dan kerja keras itu butuh kemandirian dan rasa percaya diri.

Kata Kunci: *Individualisme Amerika, percaya diri, kemandirian*

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was to find out the aspects of American Individualism as reflected in Gardner as the main character in film *The Pursuit of Happiness*. This film directed by Gabriele Muccino which the story taken from the real life by an author named Chris Gardner. This film raises issues in social life, especially in the main character Chris Gardner regarding aspects of American individualism. This research used descriptive-qualitative method. In this research conducted stages of research in collecting the data, they are : first, watching the film carefully, writing the data on utterance and actions in accordance with the problem formulation and then identifying utterance and actions. This study used the theory of Emerson (1941) about self-confidence and self-reliance. The results showed that there were three forms of self-confidence (personal ability, self-concept and social interaction) and self-reliance (responsibility). The aspect of individualism experienced by Chris Gardner is to show the community and every individual about the struggle and hard work that requires self-reliance and self-confidence

Key Words: *American Individualism, self-reliance, self confidence*

INTRODUCTION

Film is one form of literary work that reflects about social life in society, its politics, economics, education, and culture that reflects human life. In order to support the story and to make the story meaningful and understandable by the viewers, the presence of character in a film is important, because without character a story in a film does not make any sense. Harpham (2008:42) state that

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character is how are presented by author as being endowed with moral, dispositional and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say and what they do the action. The presence of character an all of their traits in a story will make the film more interesting and certainly make the viewers will be brought of situation and the feel of adrenaline of them about the film will be gotten. Character and characterization are something about human psychological and also unique to analyze, and this study the writer used a sociological approach to analyze the character in a literary work such as film.

According to Browne (2011:4), sociology is the science that examines the social life of society on a regular, planned, and organized basis. Sociology is also related to literature where social life is raised in literary works. Sociology of literature written by historians or authors reveals the lives of social, economic and political societies. There for the literary work is in the community and absorbs every aspect of life that occurs in that society. The approach of literary sociology is concerned with the literary documentary aspect with the foundation of the view that literature is a picture of social life. Literary sociology often reveals the struggle of mankind in determining his future, based on imagination, feeling, and intuition. Sociology of literature talks about social and economic conditions of the community in groups and individuals. Based on Hornsby,(1995: 606) individualism is a social theory that supports individual freedom to do things that they want to achieve a certain goal. From this statement, it explains that individualism asserts that an individual can act freely in accordance with his own ability to pursue dreams and reach success even if it is contrary to others, an individual must be able to be responsible for him.

The individualism is one of concept of America. The most important thing to understand about Americans is probably their fidelity to individualism. They are trained from very early in their lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies. They are not trained to see themselves as members of a close-knit, interdependent family, religious group, tribe, nation, or any other collectivity. Individualism is idea, that the individual should possess the freedom to define himself as opposed to a government definition of which he is and what he is, and also freedom to achieve based upon one's own talents, abilities and ambition. Individualism has become the identity of American social life. American Individualism is a person who prioritizes human freedom to act, think, be confident, and be accountable to them. Because many Europeans left their country and went to America to get their wishes without pressure from others and the government, they had to be confident in surviving in the wilderness and leaving their lives in Europe. Their determination to make author interested in deeper about the values in American Individualism (Eduard, 1954:56). In this case, American literary works emerged to describe their lives through films taken from the real story, such us film *The Pursuit of Happiness*. This film is American film. The writer chose American films to explore America's individualism. A film can describe stories like other literary works, and have the same intrinsic aspects. So, viewers can get stories from audio visualization in the film. This explanation to achieve happiness depends on us not from others. Happiness must be pursued, because happiness will not come alone without any hard work, effort, and never give up. This film tells about the struggle of a father who really loves his child and has to fight alone to raise his young child in a state of no money, home and work. So based on the description above, the purpose is to find out the aspects of individualism as reflected of Gardner as the main characters in film *The Pursuit of Happiness*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

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Individualism is the ideologies used in the United States. Individualism has two meanings. The first is a feeling or action that can make people happy to do it in their own way without thinking of other people's feelings and the second as a theory those talks about individual freedom in every act and belief. According to Althen (2003:42) the individual that Americans idealize prefers an atmosphere of freedom, where neither the government nor any other external force or agency dictates what the individual does. For Americans, the idea of individual freedom has strong, positive connotations.

Based on Bellah (1986:43) state that the Individualism and Commitment in American life believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual anything that would violate our right to think of ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our live as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. Individualism becomes a bigger social concept that believes people as an individual. Americans can do whatever they want and defend themselves if someone else violates their right. That is their right to be an individual. As stated by Emerson (1941:8), individualism means believing in your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius. This means as individuals, we must believe to do the right thing for ourselves, be responsible for ourselves for the actions and thoughts that we do.

Individualism has several aspects that can show its characteristics. According to Emerson There are two aspects of individualism they are self-confidence and self-reliance. According to Prestor (2005:156), self- confidence is a person's belief in all aspects of their strengths and that an individual feels capable of achieving various goals in his life. Self-confidence is a very important factor for everyone, because the attitude of confidence will make individuals feel optimistic and be able to adjust to their social environment. Self-confidence is a person's belief in the excess aspects possessed by an individual and that belief makes him able to achieve various goals in his life. Those human needs are basically the need for confidence and a sense of superiority. Trust self can also be interpreted as a belief in one self-owned by everyone in life and how that person looking at him as a whole by referring to his concept (Goldsmith, 2010:234). According to Goldsmith (2010:234), self-confidence had a same definition with self-concept. There are two kinds of self-concepts, Positive self- concept and negative self-concept. A positive self-concept is formed because someone has continuously received positive feedback in the form of praise and appreciation while negative self-concepts are associated with negative feedback such as ridicule and humiliation.

Self-confidence is an attitude or sure on one's own ability so that in his actions not too anxious, feel free to do things as he wishes and responsibility for his actions, being polite in interacting with others, having encouragement of achievement and being able to recognize strengths and lack of self. People having self-confidence has the characteristics of not being selfish, does not need encouragement from others, optimistic, and happy. Confidence arises after someone does something proficiently and satisfies his heart. Someone will never be a person who is truly confident, if that confidence arises only related to skills certain he has. Confidence the true is always sourced from conscience, not artificial Confidence starts from the determination of yourself to do everything desired and needed in one's life, which is built from self-confidence. Confidence starts with yourself, how we are determined to do what we want and need to do in the process life. To be able to form self-confidence basically begins from our own beliefs, how we can deal with everything challenges in life, there for we are able to do something for face all the challenges that exist (De Angelis, 2002: 57).

From the statement above, it can be concluded that what is meant by self-confidence is an attitude of trust and confidence in the ability that is owned, which can help a person to see himself positively and realistically so that he is able to establish relationships with others. Individuals who have



a supportive background will gain a high level of confidence there for they are able to socialize well. Self-confidence is an important aspect of personality in a person. Without the existence of self-confidence will cause many problems for him. Self-confidence is the most valuable thing in a person, because with the existence of self-confidence, a person is able to actualize all the potential that is in him. This self-confidence can also be influenced by abilities and skills possessed. There are three forms of self-confidence. They are personal ability, social interaction and self-concept. The first is personal ability. The ability of someone developing himself where the individual concerned is not too intelligent in action, not dependent on others and their own abilities. The second is social interaction. This aspect describes how individuals build relationships with others in adjusting with the environment, tolerate and can accept and respect others. The last is self-concept. In this case the individual views and evaluates himself positively or negatively, knows his strengths and shortcomings. People who are confident always know the purpose of their life. This is because they have clear reasons and thoughts about the actions they take and the results they can get.

Self-reliance is an ability that is owned by someone in managing all the actions they do. Independent individuals need direction from others in detail and continue to struggle to achieve the final results. Self-reliance regards to tasks and skill about doing something to achieve its goals (Emerson, 1941:11). According to Emerson (1941:12), self-reliance is a belief in ideas that arise from oneself. Self-reliance regarding the ability to complete something until it's finished. Self-reliance is related to the level of competence possessed by individuals to carry out an action without any doubt in setting goals, and not limited by strength and failure. Based on Emerson (1941:272), self-reliance is a business attitude to break away from others with the intention of finding to be able to find their true identity. From all the statements above, it can be concluded that self-reliance is an effort of an individual, to sustain his life so as not to depend on others. Individuals must be able to take action on their own, to make their way to success. According to Emerson (1941:15) there are the forms of self-reliance is responsibility. Responsibility is the ability to complete a task and can be accounted for what he did. This point an individual must have principles about what is right and what is wrong in thinking and acting.

METHODS

The study attempted to make analysis of the fact in literary work. In this study, it described the aspects of American individualism at the film *The Pursuit of Happiness* that showed how the Chris Gardner as the main character struggle of her life and had spirit to pursuit of happiness. In describing it, descriptive qualitative was employed. The data were taken from the film *The Pursuit of Happiness* particularly from the action and utterances of Gardners as the main character. This film was released in 2006 directed by Gabriele Muccino with the duration 1 hours, 57 minutes and 27 seconds. Watching the film *the Pursuit of Happiness*, writing the utterances and action that show the aspect of individualism, and identifying the utterances and action that shows the aspect of individualism as reflected in Gardner as the main character in *The Pursuit of Happiness* film were adopted to collect the data. In analyzing the data, some steps were administered, namely classifying the action and utterances and analyzing the aspects of individualism as reflected in Gardner as the main character in *The Pursuit of Happiness* film, and drawing a conclusion based on the data analysis.

DISCUSSIONS

Aspects of Individualism

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In this point found two aspects of individualism of Chris Gardner as the main character in film *The Pursuit of Happiness*. They are self-confidence and self-reliance.

Self Confidence

Self Confidence is one aspect of personality that is very important in human life. The people that believe confident in their own abilities and have realistic expectations, even when their expectations do not materialize, they still positive thinking and can accept it. Someone who has self-confidence is a person who has the ability to work effectively, responsibly and mature in doing tasks and future goals. Someone who has self-confidence usually has the courage to face every challenge and is open to new experiences, thanks to his belief in his own abilities.

Self-Confidence is not formed by itself but is related to one's personality. Self- confidence is influenced by factors that originate in the individual itself, such as family experience, habits and social environment or group where the family originates. Confidence makes the individual must be able to give an impression on the outside world that he is sure of and believes in himself personally. Confidence is born in terms of one's abilities, communication, firmness, and feeling control. Individuals who have a supportive background will gain a high level of confidence so they are able to socialize well. Self-confidence is an important aspect of personality in a person. Without self-confidence, it will cause many problems for someone. Self-confidence is the most valuable attribute in a person in social life, because with the existence of self-confidence, a person is able to actualize all the potential that is in him. This self-confidence too can be influenced by abilities and skills possessed. Self-confidence have three forms, they are personal ability, self-concept and social interaction.

Personal ability

The ability of someone developing himself where the individual concerned is intelligent in action, not dependent on other and knows their own abilities. Chris Gardner's ability to support his family is to sell two medical devices to be able to finance their lives for one month. He worked for ten years, and he did it himself without help from others of this in accordance with the definition of a person's ability to bend a thing without any help from others with the intelligent action. This was done by Americans in 1981, where they experienced an economic crisis, so every individual must have the ability to survive, as illustrated in Chris Gardner's character. The utterance '*I needed to sell at least two scanners a month for rent and daycare*' means that Chris Gardner has the ability to sell medical devices from city to city; he was able to support his family for 10 years. The action taken by Chris Gardner as the main character in *The pursuit of Happiness* film shows the lives of Americans when experiencing an economic crisis, thus an individual must have a smart ability to take action by working hard to be able to achieve happiness. The next is that Gardner as a personal ability is shown when he can play the game which was considered difficult, even by a mathematics professor, but Gardner could finish the game well, the action was shown by Chris Gardner to Mr. Twisle's to show ability to play numbers to work in his office.

Furthermore, since childhood Chris Gardner has the ability to read a mathematical book within a week therefore he believes and believes in himself if with that ability he can work as a stock broker. By saying '*when I was a kid, I could go through a math book in a week*' belongs to one that must use the ability possessed since childhood to be able to achieve something, in America every individual must have the ability to be able to achieve happiness because everything is done alone does not expect help from others, someone must work, and have the ability to be able to achieve his dream, which is called as the American Dream.



Self-concept

In this case, the individual views and evaluates himself positively or negatively, knows his strengths and shortcomings. People who are confident always know the purpose of their life. This is because they have clear reasons and thoughts about the actions they take and the results they can get. The conversation took place in the kitchen when the Gardner, Linda and their son Christopher were having dinner. Linda asked Gardner about the tax allowance they hadn't paid yet, Gardner explained to Linda that he would take note of the prospect's name, but Linda scolded Gardner for always doing the same thing, but Gardner assured Linda with a confident look and said "Yeah, well, I gotta to file another one. That's its \$650. I'll have it in the next month." It describes that experience to his wife, even though he had done the same thing but he believed and continued to work to be able to pay taxes. Besides, the Utterance between Gardner and Linda occurred in the kitchen when Gardner asks Linda not to doubt her because Garner believes everything will be fine. 'Look, why don't you let me do this? All right, just relax okay?' indicates that Gardner has a sense of trust. He is sure and believes in himself if he will pay all taxes. Also, Gardner saw a man coming down from a red luxury car. He felt interested in being able to have a car like that, so he asked the man's job. In the heart of the Gardner say that 'Why couldn't I look like them?' This encourages the Gardner to be like person, he believes and believes in himself that he can. When Gardner told Linda he wanted to become a stockbroker, but Linda wasn't sure if Chris Gardner would be accepted at a brokerage company. Garner answers the question from Linda confidently, that he would become a stockbroker. Linda asked with a sense of distrust. "Don't talk me like that, Linda! I'm gonna down and see about this and I'm gonna do it during the day!" means that Gardner doesn't want Linda to underestimate her. This shows that Gardner has confidence; he must try to be able to work as a stockbroker. That confidence arises because he doesn't want to fail.

Another utterance describes of self-confidence that shows Chris Gardner is talking to himself. He thinks that Jay Twistle is a good person. He was sure for himself if Jay Twistle could give him a job. 'I was waiting for Witter resource head Jay Twistle, whose named sounded so delightful. Like he'd give me a job and hug. I just had to show him I was good with numbers and good with people' means Chris Gardner believes in himself. He believes that he can play numbers and can interact with others well.

Social Interaction

This aspect describes how individualism build relationships with others in adjusting with the environment, tolerate and can accept and respect others. Social interaction contained in the film *The Pursuit of Happiness* describes the life of an individual in America. In the story, Chris Gardner and the man managed to help each other in the diving complex. In America, at that time there were those who could be interconnected but there were those who worked alone in pursuing their dreams of becoming successful and happy. The action taken by Chris Gardner who showed interacting was that he always asked everyone about a job. He was never shy and always ran and struggled in pursuit of his dreams. The social interaction of Chris Gardner is when he gives the money for others to keep the goods because he will do an interview at a company.

Self-reliance

Self-reliance is a behavior whose activity is directed at oneself, does not expect much help from others, and even tries to solve its own problems. Independence behavior is shown by the ability to take initiative, the ability to overcome problems and the desire to do something without the help of others. People, who independently show initiative, strive to achieve achievements, show great self-



esteem, relatively rarely seek protection from others and have a feeling of wanting to stand out. Self-reliance is an attitude that is able to take care of one's own life and does not become a burden on others. Self-reliance is not selfish or living alone, but an attitude of willingness and ability to build one's own life in the framework of togetherness. Individuals who have high confidence will get a good life because they always think positively and believe in their own abilities. Independence has different meanings for different people. However, the meaning that always underlies is that the self refers to the individual; dependence refers to a person, place, or thing, therefore self-reliance is a state in which a person is fully responsible for himself. Self-reliance is now the dominant form, and is often simply referred to as individualism. Theorist Radolf Emerson uses the term self-reliance to know American individualism. Self-reliance have three forms, they are responsibility, initiative, and autonomy.

Responsibility

The utterance of 'All right. Because I'm happy. And if you're happy and I'm happy, then that's a good thing, right?' explains about responsibility of Chris Gardner for his child. It means with independence there is a sense of comfort and happiness in a person, as found in the conversations of Chris and Christopher. Both have very independent traits in pursuit of happiness. An independent person is someone who can be responsible for himself for achieving happiness and success. Chris Gardner refers to self-reliance when he encounters an impeccably-dressed man in a red Ferrari. Curious, Chris asks the man about his career. The man told him he was a stockbroker and, from that moment on, Gardner's career path is decided. Without any money or a wife, but committed to his son, Chris sees a chance to fight for a stockbroker internship position at Dean Witter, offering a more promising career at the end of a six-month unpaid training period. The next action is Chris as a father who is full of love and is responsible for making a living for his children and his wife faces many challenges and difficulties. This situation makes Chris have to work hard to be able to support his family by selling CT scanner medical equipment from one hospital to another hospital. Various difficulties continued to approach Chris and make his situation worse, even his wife, Linda decided to go to New York leaving Chris and his son. After the departure of his wife, Chris had to do some homework, take care of Christopher by himself, from which he became a very independent man, he did all the work himself with full responsibility. There was no word for Chris to Chris. Every day he always worked, even at night he had to work to be able to achieve happiness for himself and his child. This explains that, someone who is independent is someone who always does everything possible to achieve his future; someone who has an independent personality is someone who does not want to bother others, all the work is done alone.

CONCLUSION

This study is done to find out what are the aspects of American individualism of Chris Gardner as the main character in film *The Pursuit of Happiness*. Aspects of American individualism found are self-confidence that Chris Gardner defines the confidence in terms of American individualism, which always includes some element of descent from previous generation. The self-confidence includes ideas of American individualism. The three forms of self-confidence are self-concept, social interaction, and personal ability; self-reliance that has one form in a responsibility.

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