

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JOKER MOVIE

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### *Abstract*

*A character has a close relationship to personality and can be changed by the personality that the person has. The change of the character is determined by the conflict they have which leads to the development of the character. This study was aimed to analyze the psychological conflict and the influence of the main character in Joker Movie 2019. To understand the character of the Joker in the 2019 film, this study employed two key theories: Lewin's theory of psychological conflict and Hurlock's theory of character development. Researchers gathered data by analyzing the movie and its script, utilizing documentation and note-taking techniques. The analysis itself was qualitative, applying the aforementioned theories to interpret the Joker's transformation. The finding show Joker express two kinds of psychological conflict which are approach-avoidance conflict and avoidance-avoidance one. The approach-avoidance conflict insists Joker to choose two options when the conflict occurred, they are positive and negative. Meanwhile, the avoidance-avoidance conflict make Joker choose between negative and negative choices in Joker's conflict. That two kinds of conflict influenced Arthur's character development. There are four determinant which affect Arthur's character development. Physical determinant which was the appearance of Arthur made him being bullied, social determinant which Joker hard to interact with the others because of his mental illness, family determinant which Arthur realize he did not receive any love from his parents, and emotional determinant which Arthur realize his life was not a tragedy but comedy.*

**Keywords:** *Character, Psychological Conflict, Character Development*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans are very unique creatures. Humans have a different character that always changes according to their personality. No one in this world does not change, in physical or their character itself. The character of humans changes due to time that made two possibilities occur in character development, good and bad (Foster, 1949). Therefore, personality can change that made two main factors influenced human characters, external and internal (Hurlock, 1976). The external factors derive from the outside of the person, such as other characters, social rules, and also society (Hogan, 2010). The influence of the other characters comes from their treatments and behaviors toward the person. Social habits traditions can also influence the character's changes. However, character development is not only applied in real life, besides, literature work is also involved in character development.

The term "literature" truly shines when referring to creative writing, where the author's imagination takes center stage. Unlike factual documents or historical accounts, literature transcends reality. It crafts entirely new worlds, limited only by the author's inventiveness (Levin, 1949). Literature related to the characters involved such as novels or movies. In this modern era, the movie is one of the literature works demanded by most people. Movies are digital literature that works to relieves stress, provides laugh and

bonding time, even gives moral values to us. In this paper, the author interest to analyze Joker the Movie.

There are similar studies related to analyze similar topics, for the example studies entitled “The Influence of Psychological Conflict Toward Elsa’s Character Development in Frozen Film” by Nor Rahmah. The purpose of this studies was to analyze psychological conflict and the character development toward the main character named Elsa. She explained that Elsa experienced two kinds of psychological conflict, there are approach – approach conflict and avoidance – avoidance conflict. In the other hand there were five from eight determinant that influence Elsa’s character development. Those are social, aspiration and achievement, emotional, intellectual, and family determinant. The difference from these studies is this research analyze approach – avoidance conflict and avoidance – avoidance conflict, meanwhile the researcher analyzes four determinant, physical, social, family, and emotional determinant.

This movie has many implicit messages that describe his rejection of the world's injustices. Joker can represent all sides of evil that are hidden behind crimes that are considered normal, his anxiety about the world and the main character Joker is not hypocritical. Despite his psychopathic demeanor, Joker just a fragile person who has been mistreated in the past and tries to get up and fight back. Joker is a film directed by Todd Phillips whose main character comes from DC Comic's Batman as a villain. The Joker's first appearance was from volume 1 DC Comis. Joker was often shown with a white face, green hair, with red lips which give a creepy impression. Joker used to wear purple, red, or green clothes. The story was taken in the city of Gotham there is a comedian with a problematic mental named Arthur Fleck. He was neglected, persecuted by society, and have to struggle amid the hardships of social society. Because of those conditions, he moves forward to the evil side. This path leads him to his alter ego which he calls the Joker.

Joker is the main character and has a role as the villain in the movie. The researcher is interested in analyzing Joker, one of the main characters in the movie, rather than the other characters because he has gone through experiences that change his personality. Based on the background of the study, the researcher identifies that there are two major problems related to the character development of Joker. This study aims to address two primary objectives related to the aforementioned issues. Firstly, it seeks to provide a comprehensive description of the psychological conflict experienced by the main character portrayed in the movie. Secondly, it aims to conduct an analysis focusing on the character development trajectory of the central figure, "Joker".

This study delves into the psyche of the Joker, analyzing his character from a psychological standpoint. It then explores how his personality transforms throughout the story. In short, the research examines the "why" behind the character's development.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Literature Review**

In preparation for this study, researchers reviewed various scholarly works, including an undergraduate thesis by Asmawati (2016) which dissected Maleficent's transformation from hero to villain, focusing on the character's growth. Asmawati employed a qualitative approach, analyzing the character through the lens of structuralism. The research concluded that Maleficent's journey involved a shift from

hatred and anger to love and compassion. A key strength of this thesis is its detailed explanation of Maleficent's development using structuralism. However, the analysis could be improved by incorporating an examination of the film's characterization techniques.

Another relevant study explored the moral journey of Sebastian Wilder in the film *La La Land*. Fitriani et al (2018) analyzed how Sebastian's values evolve throughout the story. The researchers used a qualitative method, applying Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages of moral development theory (Bal, 1997) to track Sebastian's progress. Their findings confirmed the presence of all six stages within the character's arc. Specifically, they identified instances where Sebastian displayed behaviors aligned with stages one and two (obedience and self-interest) – for example, eavesdropping on a conversation and prioritizing his love for jazz. This analysis highlights Sebastian's growth from a self-absorbed individual to a hero who embraces a bigger purpose. A strength of this study lies in its use of Kohlberg's theory, which provides a clear framework for understanding Sebastian's moral trajectory. However, similar to the previous study, this analysis could benefit from examining the film's characterization techniques.

The Analysis of Characters in “Cakes and Ale” by W. Somerset Maugham (2008). The author identifies three methods used to develop the character of Willie: dramatic method, character interaction, and a combination of both. The dramatic method allows Willie to reveal himself through his thoughts and actions. Additionally, the author analyzes Willie through the eyes of other characters, providing external perspectives. This approach paints a picture of Willie's journey from a young boy in a village to a celebrated writer in London. Rosie, the second character analyzed, significantly influences Willie's actions and opinions. Their interactions spark conflict within the story. A strength of this study is its focus on characterization techniques, offering a well-rounded view of the characters. However, the research has limitations. The source of the data (e.g., critical essay, book chapter) is unclear, and the analysis doesn't delve into the three-dimensionality of the characters (psychological, social, and moral aspects).

The following international journal by Efthymiadou & Koukouvinou (2020) titled “The Joker Returns: A New Perspective on the Violent Clown Prince of Crime” examines the character development of the Joker, delving deeper than the typical portrayal of a supervillain. The researchers employed a qualitative method centered on the main character. Their findings suggest that the film's Joker isn't entirely a new creation. Instead, it offers fresh insights and prompts reflection on the character's psychological and social background. This study presents a novel approach to analyzing superhero movies and their protagonists. A strength of the research lies in its use of psychological analysis to explore the Joker's motivations. This allows the authors to pinpoint the factors that contribute to his transformation into a supervillain. However, a limitation of the study is its focus solely on the Joker's perspective. It would benefit from incorporating the viewpoints of other characters or the influence of his environment.

The Development of The Major Characters in The Drama “Les Miserables” by Belevska et al (2017) is the last thesis review on this research. The author analyzing the development of the major character (Main character, secondary, and supporting character) development the two aims to be achieved in this study related to the problems and theory of sociology. They are analyzing the main character, Fantine, and analyzing the sociological elements of the character that supports the development of the story. The strength of this thesis it gives perspective to the writer from another point of view because

the author analyzing the data in a sociological aspect meanwhile the writer only focuses on analyzing data on the psychological aspect. The weakness of this paper is the result of analyzing the data are not as complex as analyzing the data from a psychological aspect. The most influenced aspect that affected the character development is psychological because it analyzes the internal perspective of the character itself rather than the sociological aspect which only analyzes the data from a social perspective.

This perspective suggests that character development can be understood by examining the story itself. The text reveals and shapes the character's complete picture, encompassing their physical attributes, inner thoughts and feelings (psychological dimension), and how they interact with the world around them (sociological dimension).

## **2.2. Concepts**

The concept of this study is the general definition that is used to make a good framework for analyzing the data presented in chapter three. The concepts in this study are divided into three, namely character, psychology, and character development. The explanations of the concepts are elaborated as follows:

### **a. Character**

Character is a figurative element that takes the biggest part in the whole story. A character is made as natural as possible and takes the part in the story. Humans are categorized as a free life, but fictional characters are a gift with newer elements because characters are artistic elements that cover all aspects of life (Kenny, 1966). Characters are made to interacting with other characters and take the part in the story (Stanton, 1965).

### **b. Psychology**

Psychology is a scientific study of mental processes and behavior (Lally & Valentine-French, 2019). There are three words in the definition of psychology i.e science, modern, and an organism (Bruno, 2002). In this research, the writer used psychological conflict as a theory of research.

### **c. Character Development**

Character development is the product of learning during social relationships with people both within and outside his home (Hurlock, 1976). In this research, Arthur as the main character develops his personality along with his relationship with the people who close to her.

## **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

### **a. Character Development**

There are two elements according to Elizabeth B. Hurlock that involves the personality, namely internal and external element. Internal elements are influencing factors that come from themselves, while external elements come from outside such as people's attitudes towards the character or person. Hurlock states eight determining factors that influence the development of personality. They are intellectual, physical, emotional, social, achievements, gender, education, and family.

### **b. Psychological Conflict**

Conflict often causes battles, wars, and feuds. Conflicts can occur between differences of opinion and the ideology of the two parties. However, conflict does not only occur between gaps of opinion between the two parties, conflicts can occur within a

person. In psychology, conflicts that occur within a person are often referred to as psychological conflicts. Psychological conflict occurs because of discrepancies in one's own opinion when faced with two or more choices which make it difficult for a person to choose (Bruno, 2002). According to Lewis (1931), psychological conflicts can be divided into 3 types:

- a. Approach-approach conflict. Conflict is approaching, two forces push in opposite directions, and for example, people are faced with two choices that they both like.
- b. Avoidance-avoidance conflict. Conflict drifts away, two forces hinder in opposite directions, for example, people are faced with two choices that they both dislike.
- c. Approach-avoidance conflict. Close-to-reach conflict, two pushing and inhibiting forces emerge from one goal, for example, a person is faced with a choice that also contains elements that he likes and dislikes.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1. Data Source**

This study delves into the character development of the Joker, the central figure from Todd Phillip's 2019 film of the same name. The movie serves as the primary source of data for the analysis. The Joker, a notorious clown-like criminal and Gotham City's most infamous villain, is the character of interest.

The researcher's fascination with the Joker stems from his unparalleled popularity in modern comics and cinema. Created in 1940, the character has undergone numerous transformations, evolving from a clumsy prankster to a deranged killer (his most well-known and recent iteration). This particular film's unique portrayal of the Joker, not as a hero but as a complex villain offering a fresh perspective, is what piqued the researcher's interest. The iconic line, "I used to think my life was a tragedy, but now I realize, it's a comedy," further fueled the desire to analyze the Joker's development.

#### **3.2. Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

The data of this study were collected through library research and assisted with several techniques. The data were collected by observing the development of the main character in the movie. There were several steps used in collecting the data. First, watched the movie Joker by focusing on the main character. Second, read the script to gain a gap between dialogue and the movie. Third, noted down the main characters behave which each step of character development occurs. Third, observing the data and related to the psychological conflict.

#### **3.3. Method and Technique of Analyzing Data**

The study utilized a descriptive and qualitative approach to interpret the data. The analysis process involved several steps. First, the researcher conducted a thorough review of all collected data. Second, they meticulously categorized the data relevant to the research question. Next, the data was analyzed using established theories of psychological conflict and character development. Finally, after a comprehensive analysis, the researcher arrived at their conclusions.

### **3.4. Method and Technique of Presenting Data Analysis**

Building on Sudaryanto (1993) framework, this study employs both informal and formal methods to present the data analysis. Formal methods involve visually representing the findings through tables, diagrams, graphs, or images. In contrast, informal methods rely on written descriptions or sentences to convey the analysis. This study utilizes both approaches: informal explanations are used to provide a deeper understanding of the data, while formal methods visually present the key takeaways.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Character Development Analysis of The Main Character In Joker Movie 2019**

This chapter presents the discussion of data analysis that has been chosen previously, which is the development of the main character in the movie. The analysis in this chapter is focused on two main points, namely psychological conflict and character development of the main character in the movie.

#### **4.1.1. The Synopsis of Joker Movie 2019**

In 1981, Arthur Fleck, a 40-year-old clown, lives with his mother Penny in the chaotic Gotham City. He had a brain disorder that causes him to laugh at inappropriate times and he often visits social service workers to get his medication. After a group of street kids steal Arthur's board and gang upon him in the hallway, one of his co-workers lends him a gun as self-protection.

During a visit to the children's hospital, Arthur's gun falls out of his pocket, causing him to be fired from his job. Arthur finds out that his medication program is shutting down, which made him out of medicine. On his way home by subway, Arthur is bullied by three young Wall Street businessmen, he shoots them with the gun he borrowed. Arthur didn't realize the murder would start a protest movement against the city's rich people wearing clown masks. A few days earlier, Thomas Wayne had run for mayor because he was uneasy about the chaos in the city that would not stop.

Sophie attends Arthur's solo comedy which goes very badly. Arthur laughed uncontrollably and had a hard time conveying his joke. A popular talk show host, Murray Franklin, streamed the video live as a mockery. Arthur steals a letter his mother wrote to Thomas Wayne who is one of the most respected people in the city and finds himself the illegitimate son of Wayne. He berated his mother for keeping this a secret from him and shortly after, Penny fell ill and was hospitalized. Arthur is also harassed by two detectives who are suspicious of his involvement in the subway shooting, but he denies it.

The situation in the city became even more chaotic with protesters pouring in everywhere. When protesters start fighting with security guards, Arthur sneaks into a building where a special event for a celebrity is being held. Arthur meets Thomas Wayne and questions his status with Thomas. Thomas says that Penny is crazy and isn't even Arthur's biological mother while slapping Arthur afterward. Arthur visits Arkham Hospital to find out the truth of what Thomas said. Arthur steals Penny's case file and discovers that she was indeed adopted after being abandoned as a baby. He also learns that Penny was abusive to him when he was a child, including a serious head trauma that resulted in his pathological laughter. Arthur returned to the hospital and immediately covered his mother's head with a pillow until she suffocated to death. He returned to his apartment building and entered Sophie's room. Sophie was startled by his presence and

asked him to leave. Arthur then realizes that his experience with Sophie was just an illusion.

An employee of the Murray Franklin show called and asked Arthur to appear on the show. Arthur agrees and plans to kill himself on the show. While he was preening and putting on his clothes, he who was holding a small pair of scissors was visited by two old co-workers who wanted to offer condolences for his mother's death. Arthur instead stabbed one of them in the neck and eye with the scissors, then banged his head over and over again until he died on the spot. Arthur left one of the others alive because of his kindness to him in the past. On his way to the studio, he is chased by two detectives into a train full of clown protesters. One of the detectives accidentally shoots a protester dead, so another protester begins to gang up on the two detectives critically, and Arthur runs away from the commotion.

Before the show begins, Arthur asks Murray to introduce him as the Joker, a joke Murray made some time ago of him. The event went on as smoothly as usual, but Arthur kept on admitting to the subway killings and questioning the hypocrisy of the public who flattered the three young men while demeaning them, saying that people would rather trample their bodies on the highway than properly bury them. Murray tried to calm the atmosphere, but Arthur ignored it. Arthur shot Murray dead right in the head right then and there, so many spectators fled in fear and he was arrested by the police for it. On the way to the police station, Arthur sees Gotham being engulfed in chaos by protesters. One of the protesters chased the Wayne family down an alleyway and shot Thomas and Martha dead, leaving Bruce only stunned by the situation as he mourned the loss of his parents. Arthur's car was hit by an ambulance driven by several protesters, so that the two policemen in the car died, while Arthur survived with several injuries to his body. They immediately rescued Arthur right then and there and put him in a car. Arthur wakes up and wakes up, so the protesters celebrate with great fanfare, which Arthur dances to.

Sometime later, Arthur was interrogated by a social worker at Arkham Hospital and burst out laughing. When asked, Arthur simply said that they would not understand. Arthur left the place, leaving bloody marks from his shoes.

#### **4.1.2. Psychological Conflict Expressed by Joker in the Movie**

The topic of the problem discussed in this subchapter is to analyze the psychological conflicts which occur in the main character named Arthur (Joker) as this psychological conflict changes the personality of the main character. The discussions were divided into two parts, they were approach-avoidance conflict and avoidance-avoidance conflict.

##### **a. Approach – Avoidance Conflict**

People experience approach-avoidance conflict (coined by Foster in 1949) when a single goal presents both desirable and undesirable qualities. This creates a situation where they're pulled towards the goal (approach) while simultaneously wanting to avoid it (avoidance). Imagine wanting to enjoy a delicious cake (positive) but fearing weight gain (negative). This conflicting situation represents an approach-avoidance conflict that needs to be resolved. In this discussion, several data have been analyzed:

##### **a) Time Frame: 05:58-06:20**

In this scene, Arthur is shown doing clown makeup. Arthur's expression looked sad when he looked in the mirror to himself. But Arthur forced his face to be cheerful

with the help of two index fingers supporting his lips into a smile. Even though Arthur forced himself to smile, Arthur's tears started to fall on his face, which ruined Arthur's makeup.



**Figure 1. The Feature of Approach-Avoidance Conflict “forced to smile”**

This scene shows Arthur experiencing approach-avoidance conflict where Arthur has two choices in himself, positive and negative. The positive choice came from Arthur's expression trying to force himself to smile and pretend to be happy. Arthur's negative choice occurred when he smiled in front of the mirror but Arthur's tears began to fall to his eyes as Arthur refused to be happy. Conflict approach-avoidance from this data did not involve any person rather than occur in Arthur's psychology.

b) Time Frame: 16:11 – 17: 03

In this scene, Arthur's co-workers named Randal gave him a gun, but Arthur tries to repel that gun. Randall convinces Arthur to accept the gun for Arthur's sake.

Arthur : Kind of. But different

Randall : Take it. You got protect yourself Out there. Or you're gone get Fucked

Arthur : Randall, I'm not supposed to have a gun.

Randall : Don't sweat it, Art. No one has to know and you can pay me back some other times. You know you're my boy.

*“That lands with Arthur, he smiles to himself. Stuffs the Brown paper bag into his locker and continues getting dressed”*

The scene shows that Arthur experienced an approach-avoidance conflict due to Randall's incitement. Arthur was initially reluctant to accept the gun because Arthur thought it was illegal to carry a weapon. But Randall convinces Arthur to accept the gun to protect himself. This is where the conflict within Arthur comes from. The positive choice comes from Arthur refusing the gun, because he did not want to be a criminal meanwhile, the negative choice comes from Arthur take Randall's gun to protect himself from bullying.

c) Time Frame: 17:43 – 18:55

In this scene, Arthur being called by his boss named Hoyt Vaughn regarding problems with his work:

- Hoyt : I got another complaint. And It's starting to piss me off.  
Hoyt : Kenny's Music. The guy said you disappeared. Never even returned his sign.  
Arthur : No. I got jumped. Didn't you hear?  
Hoyt : For a sign? Bullshit. It makes no sense, just give him his sign back.  
Arthur : Why would I keep his sign?  
Hoyt : How the fuck do I know, why does anybody do anything? Listen, if you don't return the sign I gotta take it outta your paycheck, you clear?

*“Arthur just looks back at Hoyt and keeps smiling, like it hurts his face”*

In this scene, Arthur experiences an approach-avoidance conflict where Arthur must pay for the property he has damaged. Arthur did not want to pay the bill because the one who made the problem was not Arthur but the teenager who bullied him. Hoyt didn't care what happened to Arthur and said it was Arthur's fault because he was a freak and idiot. Arthur held back his anger and smiled at him instead. The approach-avoidance conflict occurs in Arthur where he chooses to show a positive response to Hoyt with a smile rather than a negative response by burst out his anger on Hoyt. Arthur made this decision because he didn't want to be fired from the job, he loves by smiling while holding his anger.

d) Time Frame: 21:06 – 21:46

In this scene, Arthur argues with his mother, Penny Fleck about Thomas Wayne.

- Arthur : Mom, why are these letters so Important to you? What do you think he's gone do?  
Penny : He's going to help us.  
Arthur : Help us how?  
Penny : Get us out of here, take me away from this place and these—these people.  
Arthur : You worked for him over 30 years ago. What makes you think he would help us?  
Penny : Because Thomas Wayne is a good man. If he knew how I was living, if he saw this place, it would make him sick. I can't explain it to you any better than that.

*Arthur Nods. Annoyed, but not worth the argument*

In this scene, Arthur argues with his mother and insists that Thomas Wayne will not come to save them from their poverty. But her mother insisted that Thomas Wayne would come to them. The moment approach-avoidance conflict occurs when Arthur made his positive choice to give up debating with his mother rather than continuing the debate that will never end. It can be proved in the dialogue “Arthur Nods. Annoyed, but not worth the argument”. The negative choice comes if Arthur keeps debating, his mother

would become shocked and Arthur did not want that to happen because she was the only family he loved

e) Time Frame: 36:48 – 38:03

This is a scene where Arthur takes all his belongings to the place where he used to work and meets his co-workers.

HA-HA clown : Did you really bring a gun to the kid's hospital, Artie? What the fuck would you do that for?

Arthur : It was a prop gun and I didn't pull it out, it fell out

Chippendales : So is that part of your new act? If your dancing doesn't do the trick, you just going to shoot yourself?

Arthur : Why don't you ask Randall about it? It was his gun.

Randall : What? Stop talking out your ass, Art

The dialogue "it was a prop gun" meant Arthur convinced his co-workers that the gun Arthur was carrying was fake. Arthur chose not to tell the truth to clear his co-workers' suspicions. Arthur chose to directly ask Randal because the gun belonged to Randall. It can be proved in the dialogue "don't you ask Randall about it? It was his gun". Approach-avoidance conflict occurs in Arthur where he made a choice that the gun was fake. Arthur made this choice because if he said that the gun was real then people's suspicion of Arthur would increase and he would be in danger which means this was the negative choice.

f) Time Frame 48:16 – 50:03

This is a scene where Arthur finds out the fact that Arthur is the son of the mayor named Thomas Wayne when Arthur reads a letter from his mother.

Arthur : What is this? How come you never told me?

Penny : Is, is that my letter? Is that my letter, Happy? You have no right opening my mail. Who do you think you are?!

Arthur : I'm Thomas Wayne's son! How could you keep that from me?

Penny : Stop yelling at me, you're gonna kill me, give me a heart attack!

Arthur : I'm not yelling! I'm just, excited. How can any of this be real it's too much for me!?

From these data, it shows that Arthur experienced approach-avoidance conflict when he learned the truth that his mother had kept it secret from Arthur. Arthur had mixed feelings and didn't know what to do with all the truth he had received. These mixed feelings come into positive and negative responses in Arthur's mind. The joy of knowing that Arthur still had a father was mixed with disappointment that his mother had kept secret from him all this time. This can be shown in the dialogue "I'm not yelling! I'm just excited" identified that Arthur was happy to know he had a father, but he was disappointed that all this truth was shown in the sentence "How can any of this be real? It's too much for me".

g) Time Frame: 1:05:05 – 1:07:00

This is a scene where Arthur meets his father, Thomas Wayne. Arthur informed him that he was his son, but Thomas Wayne denied this claim and tell him that Arthur was an adopted child.

Arthur : My name is Arthur. I'm Penny's son. I know everything.  
Thomas Wayne : Look pal, I'm not your father. What's wrong with you?  
Arthur : How do you know?  
Thomas Wayne : Because you were adopted and I never sleep with your mother.  
What do you want from me, money?  
Arthur : No. What? I wasn't adopted.  
Thomas Wayne : She never told you? Your mother adopted you after she worked for us. She was arrested when you were Four years old and committed to Arkham State Hospital. She's Batshit crazy.  
*Arthur starts to smile, feels a laugh coming on.*  
Arthur : No. No, I don't believe that.

From these data, Arthur's inner conflict began to appear when he was shocked by Thomas Wayne's claim. Arthur's emotions became mixed and became indecisive. Arthur was psychologically shaken when he was an adopted child, but Arthur chooses not to believe Thomas Wayne's claim. It can be proved in the sentence ". No, I don't believe that the psychological conflict in Arthur went to positive choice. He did this because Arthur missed the figure of the father and expected Thomas Wayne to recognize him as his son.

#### **b. Avoidance – Avoidance Conflict**

This passage describes a type of psychological conflict known as avoidance-avoidance conflict, introduced by Kurt Lewin in 1931. It arises when an individual faces two equally undesirable choices, leading to indecisiveness and hesitation. Imagine someone who hates their job but is terrified of quitting and facing unemployment. This situation creates an avoidance-avoidance conflict, as both options are unappealing and avoidance becomes the default tendency. Following this discussion, the analysis of various data points will now commence bellow:

a) Time Frame: 28:19 –29:21

In this scene, Arthur accidentally drops the gun that Randall gave to him while he was working. This makes Arthur fired by his boss. Arthur tried to make a reason to prevent him from being fired, but his boss refused because Randall told his boss that the gun belonged to Arthur.

Arthur : It was, it was a prop gun. It's part of my act now.  
Hoyt : bullshit. What kinda clown carries a fucking gun? Besides, Randall told me you tried to buy a gun last week.  
*Arthur's taken back that Randall would do that to him.*  
Arthur : Randall told you that?  
Hoyt : He was with me when the call came in. You're a fuck up, Arthur. and a wild. You're fired

Arthur : Hoyt, please I love this job—  
Hoyt : Say it, Arthur. Let me hear you say it.  
Arthur : Say what?  
Hoyt : I'm a fuck up and I'm fired.  
Arthur : --I'm a fuck up and I'm fired.

The avoidance–avoidance conflict occurs when Arthur knows the fact that Randall betrayed him. It can be proved in the dialogue " Randall told me you tried to buy a gun last week". This dialogue indicates Randall wants to save himself avoiding the fact that the gun belongs to him. He made Arthur become a scapegoat by telling the boss the gun belonged to Arthur.

The dialogue "Randall told you that?" made Arthur raise an inner conflict in himself. Whether Arthur has two options. The first option was for Arthur to tell Hoyt that the gun belonged to Randall and the second option not to tell him and keep silent. In this case, both of those options have a negative value. If Arthur chose the first option Hoyt would not believe him because from the beginning Hoyt hates him. The second option would be the same and he has been fired. In the end, Arthur chose the second option by not telling the truth the gun belonged to Randall and accepted the fact he had been fired.

b) Time Frame 32:22 – 35:41

This scene was the turning point for Arthur for being a murderer. Arthur in his clown outfit is bullied by a group of thugs on the train when he tries to save a woman.

*And the third Wall Street guy starts kicking him—  
The others join in. Surrounding Arthur on the ground, kicking  
Him deliberately, sadistically, and the music swells—  
BLAM! Blood splattering on the Subway wall behind*

From the data shown, Arthur experiences avoidance - avoidance conflicts within him. Arthur took their life by shooting them with the gun Randall gave to him. Arthur's option at that time only killed or be killed. Both of those options have a negative value. If Arthur chooses the first option by killing those thugs, he would become a criminal. Meanwhile, the second option comes even worse because he would lose his life. Although both choices are detrimental to Arthur's psychology, Arthur chooses to become a murderer because he did not want to die.

c) Time Frame 01:19:50 –01:21:57

This scene shows Arthur meets his mother after learning the fact that he is an adopted child.

Arthur: Hey Ma, what's my real name? Where did I come from?  
*She looks away, she knows what he's talking about.*  
Arthur : C'mon, Ma, who am I?  
*She looks back him, struggles to speak--*  
Penny : H-h-happ--

Arthur : Happy?! I'm not happy. I haven't been happy for one minute of my entire fucking life! I used to think my life was nothing but a tragedy, but now, I realize it's all just a fucking comedy

From these data, it shows that Arthur experiences avoidance-avoidance conflicts which Arthur considers his life a tragedy, but he realizes that his life is just a comedy. Avoidance – avoidance conflict in Arthur occurs in the first decision he thought his life was a tragedy. He always suffers and keeps struggling with his life. His mother is the only reason for being alive. But when he learned the truth that he was an adopted child, Arthur lost his faith and made another decision which was to realize his life was just a comedy. It can be seen in the dialogue “I used to think my life was nothing but a tragedy, but now, I realize it's all just a fucking comedy”.

d) Time Frame 22:18 – 23:56

In this scene, Arthur had a conflict with himself for Randall's gun.

*Arthur is writing in his journal. He speaks softly to himself as he writes...*

Arthur : Why didn't Randall tell me the gun was loaded? I could have killed someone. No, I could have killed myself. Close on the last line, he crosses out "could"... Writes... "should"

Arthur : I should have killed myself.

The data above show that Arthur had avoidance – avoidance conflict with himself. The sentence “I could have killed myself” indicates Arthur that he could kill himself with the gun if he wants to. Arthur then changes his line from “could” to “should” which can be proved in the sentence “Close on the last line, he crosses out "could"... Writes... "should". It means Arthur did not only want to kill himself, but he should kill himself. Those choices between “could” and “should” from the data have a negative value because both of those terms made Arthur may end his life.

#### **4.1.3. Character Development of Arthur Fleck as Joker in the Movie**

The foregoing analysis focuses on the character development of the main character Arthur Fleck which made him change his personality and become the new person named “Joker”. The theory that was applied in this analysis used the theory proposed by Elizabeth B. Hurlock (1976). The discussion is divided into 4 parts. They were physical determinants, social determinants, family determinants, and emotional determinant.

##### **a. Physical Determinant**

According to Hurlock, one of the dominant factors is the appearance which affects the quality and quantity of the character. The types of physical appearance that determine quality in character development include physical attractiveness, body shape, the way the character maintains appearance, environment, body treatment, and health (Hurlock, 1976).

a) Time Frame 15:17-15:50



**Figure 2. The Feature of Arthur Physical Appearance**

The data above shown Arthur has a normal face, like an ordinary person, without large cuts on the lips and cheeks and has long hair. Arthur has a hunchbacked body, emaciated, and looks very well-groomed, a representation of poor people from the middle-class economy.

b) Time Frame 11:22 – 11:30

Arthur : Ma, eat. You need to eat.

Penny : You need to eat. Look how skinny you are.

The data above showed that Arthur physically lacks nutrients. It can be proved in the sentence “You need to eat. Look how skinny you are”. Arthur could barely eat because he had a lot of conflict in his life and made him not eat too much. Besides conflict, he was born as a poor person which made Arthur not have enough money to buy proper food. It can be shown on the data below.

c) Time Frame 21:06 – 21:46

Arthur : Mom, why are these letters so Important to you? What do you think he's going to do?

Penny : He's going to help us.

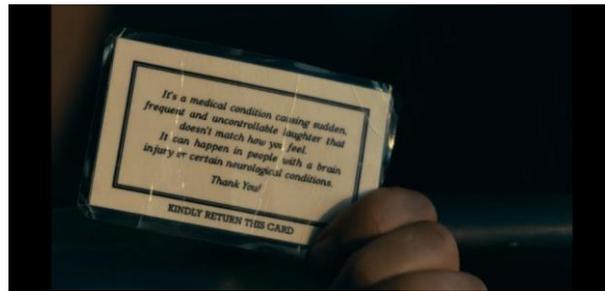
Arthur : Help us how?

Penny : Get us out of here, take me away from this place and these—these people.

Arthur : You worked for him over 30 years ago. What makes you think he would help us?

The data above show that Penny could no longer withstand their poor life. It can be seen in the sentence “Get us out of here, take me away from this place and these—these people”. Penny wants her family to have a better life than before by sending Thomas Wayne letters to help their poor life.

d) Time Frame 06:17-06:40



**Figure 3. The Feature of Arthur Mental Illness**

The data show that Arthur has a disease named Pseudobulbar effect or Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA) that makes a person laugh or cry suddenly, without any trigger. Unlike normal people, someone with PBA often laughs or cries in situations that are not funny or sad. Pseudobulbar effect is depicted in the film through the figure of Arthur Fleck or the Joker. Arthur is described as someone who often laughs for no reason, even in situations that aren't funny. In other words, the mood of a person may conflict with the expression.

e) Time Frame: 32:19 – 33:00



**Figure 4. The Feature of Arthur Being Bullied**

The data above show Arthur being bullied by the youngster. Arthur is always bullied by the people around him because of his weak physical body. This bullying made Arthur's psychology change into a gloomy person, but on the one hand, he tried to deal with those bullying by becoming a street clown to make people happy.

#### **b. Social Determinant**

Because lack of social acceptance adversely affects personality and most people are below average in acceptance, many methods have been tried to make social acceptance. The most effective method to help the person change his characteristic pattern of behavior which follows the ideals of the group and helps him handle his unfavorable reputation (Hurlock, 1976).

In the movie, Arthur has a mental illness called "pseudobulbar effects". This disease causes people to laugh or cry with extreme intensity at inopportune times. They would laugh for a few minutes, whenever you feel sad or nervous. People with "pseudobulbar effects" often make an expression different from their true feelings. Arthur must bring a card with a description of the disease "pseudobulbar effects" so the people around them are aware of his illness (see picture 3.3).

a) Time Frame 07:43 – 09:03

In this scene, Arthur tries to amuse the child but the mother's child interrupted.

Woman on bus : Can you please stop bothering my kid?

Arthur : I wasn't bothering him, I was—

Woman on bus : Just stop

*And suddenly Arthur starts to laugh. He covers his mouth trying to hide it-- Shakes his head, laughter pausing for a moment, but then it comes on stronger. His eyes are sad. It looks like the laughter causes him pain. People on the bus are staring. The little boy looks like he's going to cry again.*

Woman on bus : You think that's funny?

*Arthur shakes his head no, but he can't stop laughing*

The data above showed Arthur being scolded by the woman because she thought Arthur made her son cry. Arthur just wants to amuse him but because of his illness, Arthur cannot control his emotion and he bursts to laugh even though he does not want to. This made the people around them get away from Arthur. The scene indicates Arthur had a hard social life as the people judge him for his mental illness.

### **c. Family determinant**

The family influences the development of personality through founding and communication. Indirectly, this influence comes from identification, unconscious imitation of attitudes, behavior patterns, etc., and from the mirror image a person develops by seeing oneself through the eyes of family members “(Hurlock 352).

Arthur since childhood was raised by his mother, Penny Fleck without a father. Thanks to the existence of his mother, Arthur was able to survive his tragic life. But Arthur's life begins to change when he learns that Arthur has a father.

a) Time Frame 48:16 - 40:03

Arthur : I'm Thomas Wayne's son! How could you keep that from me?

Penny : Stop yelling at me, you're going to kill me, give me a heart attack!

Arthur : I'm not yelling! I'm just excited. How can any of this be real? It's too much for me!?

The data above shows that Arthur's emotions become uncontrollable because he has a father. His father's name was Thomas Wayne who is the mayor of Gotham City. The form of emotion shown to Arthur is pure because he is happy to know that he has a biological father, and hopes to get the attention and recognition he has been looking for.

### **d. Emotional Determinant**

The character's emotion affects the personality which can make his / her social life change. It means emotion has a big influence on the character itself. Deprivation of love has a devastating effect on the personality, it is generally believed that the more love a person receives, the happier he is and the better personality he becomes (Hurlock, 1976).

In Joker Movie 2019 the most prominent emotion that Arthur feels is despair. Throughout his life, Arthur has always been treated unfairly since childhood. Bad things always happen to him. Arthur has never felt the love of a father, he is always looked at strangely by people around him because of his illness, the loss of the woman he loves, and many other things that make Arthur think that this world is unfair. Arthur's despair began to peak when he found out he was just an adopted child.

a) Time frame 01:19:50 – 01:21:57

Arthur : Hey Ma, what's my real name? Where did I come from?

*She looks away, she knows what he's talking about.*

Arthur : C'mon, Ma, who am I?

*She looks back him, struggles to speak—*

Penny : H-h-happ

Arthur : Happy?! I'm not happy. I haven't been happy for one minute of my entire fucking life! I used to think my life was nothing but a tragedy, but now, I realize it's all just a fucking comedy

The data above showed that Arthur was desperate when he found out that he was an adopted child. He became disoriented and became indecisive. The dialogue "Happy?! I'm not happy. I haven't been happy for one minute of my entire fucking life" indicates Arthur felt desperate. Arthur was so distressed by the truth he had just known. He thought his life was just a tragedy. He was disappointed with his mother who did not tell him the truth since he was born. He felt his mother's love was fake and made Arthur fall into despair.

b) Time frame 01:41:54 – 01:42:05

In this scene, Arthur is invited by Murray Franklin to a Talk Show and he accepts the invitation. Arthur then changed his name become Joker.

Murray Franklin : You're serious, aren't you? You're telling us you killed those three young men on the subway. Why should we believe you?

Joker : I got nothing left to lose, Murray. Nothing can hurt me anymore. This is my fate, my life is nothing but a comedy.

The data showed that Joker (Arthur) felt relieved because he got nothing left in his life. The dialogue "Nothing can hurt me anymore. This is my fate, my life is nothing but a comedy" indicate Joker had escaped from his ruined life. He threw away everything in his life, lost his family, friends, even his emotions. Arthur changed his name to Joker as a representative of a clown who always smiles whatever it takes. He no longer needs to wear the face of Arthur Fleck who is always sad, gloomy, and pretends to be accepted in society. Arthur has determined his path in life without thinking about the other happiness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In exploring the character development of Arthur Fleck in the 2019 Joker film, this study examined the psychological conflicts that shaped his transformation. Two key types of conflict emerged: approach-avoidance and avoidance-avoidance. When faced with situations offering both positive and negative outcomes, Arthur chose to confront his hardships rather than escape them. However, he also grappled with situations where any decision resulted in a negative outcome. For instance, when bullied, he felt trapped between harming his attacker or suffering the consequences of inaction. These conflicts ultimately contributed to his downward spiral.

Furthermore, the study investigated eight factors influencing character development and found that four significantly impacted Arthur's transformation: physical, social, family, and emotional determinants. His frail appearance made him a target for bullying (physical determinant). His condition also made it difficult for him to connect with others (social determinant). Discovering his abandonment by his father deeply affected his personality (family determinant). Finally, the despair stemming from these conflicts ultimately pushed him towards becoming the Joker, a character who embraced chaos and villainy (emotional determinant).

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